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PAMFIL ȘEICARU - A DEMON OF THE PAMPHLET

ABSTRACT

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PAMFIL ȘEICARU - A DEMON OF THE PAMPHLET

ABSTRACT

Keywords: argumentative arsenal; journalistic discourse; nationalism; press; rhetoric.

Pamfil Șeicaru, a controversial personality of the Romanian interwar journalism, represents a challenge for an academic endeavor. The journalist impressed by his work through various publications, own or others, through his special relationship with the state's institutions and the consistency with which he campaigned to defend the national interests in the international problematic context. Many voices claim that Pamfil Șeicaru was only *a press gangster*; this situation has its origins in the efforts of the representatives of the communist regime to block the information on the fabulous media work achieved by Pamfil Șeicaru throughout a career that lasted more than six decades, such efforts remaining visible even after the political events from December 1989. The status *sentenced to death*, which the journalist had many years after leaving the country, has led the Romanian researchers to ignore easily the achievements of Pamfil Șeicaru. Only with the "permission from the party," Marin Preda was allowed to evoke him in his book *Delirul/The delirium*, under another name evidently.

This paper aims first at covering the "white spots" in the journalist's biography and from the exegesis of his writing, he was in the collective memory and became the subject of many legends. Publishing activity undertaken by Pamfil Șeicaru in exile is presented in two reference works published by Victor Frunză, *Destinul unui condamnat la moarte - Pamfil Șeicaru/The destiny of a person sentenced to death - Pamfil Șeicaru* (2001) and René Al. de Flers, *Pamfil Șeicaru aşa cum a fost / Pamfil Șeicaru as he was* (2009). The two books are completed by several other studies conducted by Sorin Gabriel Ionita, Nicolae Florescu and Marian Popa. The mentioned authors' works do not cover the stage of Pamfil Șeicaru spent in the country. We also mention that the works of the Stavrophore Justina Popovici, *Mănăstirea „Sfânta Ana” și ctitorul ei Pamfil Șeicaru/ The Monastery of "St. Anna" and its founder Pamfil Șeicaru* (2008) contains numerous inaccuracies. However the author's effort is commendable. We should mention the

recently published work of George Stanca – „*Santajul și etajul*”. *Pamfil Șeicaru, între legendă și adevăr /“Blackmail and the floor.”* *Pamfil Șeicaru between legend and truth* (2012). From a simple listing of the titles we notice that the monographic approach has enough open field, especially in the journalistic text hermeneutics. In our research, we bring arguments necessary to demonstrate the importance of the role played by Pamfil Șeicaru in the process of media consolidation and modernization in our country.

In the first chapter, *The critical perception of the journalist Pamfil Șeicaru*, we have analyzed how it was perceived critically the work of Pamfil Șeicaru in over 60 years of journalistic career. The approach regarded the memoirs and the journals of those who, in one form or another kept contact with the journalist, but also numerous press articles, especially those published in the interwar period. We also related to some novels, which Pamfil Șeicaru served as an inspiration source. We considered such an approach useful precisely because so far no such study was ever conducted. We have not used everything written about the journalist, only those sources that provide relevant comments, instead we have mentioned them at the *Bibliography*.

In another chapter, *Pamfil Șeicaru, the man and the work*, we have analyzed uncertain biographical aspects to clarify the many uncertainties that have not received the due attention so far, among them being the route of the journalist on his way towards exile, his immense source of wealth, the real name of Pamfil Șeicaru and his short career of lawyer of the person who would later become the founder of the *Curentul/The Current* newspaper. We have also followed the process of “fascist journalists”, as presented in the *Scânteia/The Spark* newspaper, a process where the journalist was sentenced to death in absentia.

We paid a special attention also to the journalistic concept of Pamfil Șeicaru. The termination of the First World War created favorable conditions to the release of a large number of publications. According to some sources, between 1918 and 1935 the number of periodicals increased from 16 to over 2000, the total circulation of the Romanian media being to over 4.5 million copies per day, of which one million in the languages of the minorities. Newspapers and magazines in the country have begun to analyze, in addition to the domestic issues also the European ones. In this context, Pamfil Șeicaru raised the issue of poor professional training

which was proven by most of the national journalists and proposed solutions in this sense, unfortunately history's avatars prevented him to complete them.

As the founder of *the Current* newspaper was convinced that a journalist has the moral obligation to engage, without reservation, in solving political problems related to the national interest, we followed closely the role of the journalist in the Romania's political life. We highlighted how Pamfil Șeicaru, as journalist and deputy, promoted policies with an impact on the entire Romanian society. We focused on issues related to agricultural debt conversion, efficient organization of state administration in the new territories of Romania, the development of state policies that would determine the development of the agricultural sector, including the role of the journalist in the modern state.

The vision of the journalist on the above issues was pursued by us and in the texts sustained by the journalist at the conferences in all major cities of the country. His lectures are reported in *The Current* newspaper. The themes addressed in Șeicaru's lectures cover a large interest area. He wanted that in every city where he would arrive to approach a different topic. The speeches of the journalist are actually continuations of his articles.

The appellants of Pamfil Șeicaru whose main field of activity was the extremist political thinking of the journalist, was exposed by him it in the years that linked the two world wars. Throughout the paper, we followed the position taken by the founder of *The Current* newspaper towards the extremist political organizations advocating the violence policy, and organized terrorism acts, everything related to the context of those times.

The Pamfil Șeicaru journalistic path which we pursued during his highlights had also an important role in our research. We highlighted the Pamfil Șeicaru's contributions to the development of the Romanian cultural press, and his efforts for organizing media schools in Romania. These are all the more remarkable since the interwar era was interested in a lesser extent of such issues.

As hermeneutic and applicative approach we approached in the end the pamphlet theory and practice, as it was designed and implemented by the author who made history in this area and thus entered in the public consciousness. We followed Pamfil Șeicaru's theoretical contribution on defining the role and place of the pamphlet, and how the journalist built his

pamphleteering speech. One of the great injustices of the journalist is related the failure to pay the due attention to his pamphlets, hence the correction we had in view.

If in the texts written during the years of exile, the public attitude is a positive one, the situation is totally different in the case of the pamphleteer production of the interwar era. The pamphleteer was accused of the exaggerations on some of his targets. Șeicaru's appellants forgot that the value of a pamphlet is given by the *strength of belief*, the *passionate temperament*. Within this research, we were interested also the problem of the existence of the arguments that support the idea that Pamfil Șeicaru should be placed with the national pamphlet masters and which are the distinctive marks of the pamphlet style.

The thesis itself is accompanied by Annexes. This part of the paper contains the common elements table of the characters inspired by Pamfil Șeicaru for the novels *Delirul /Delirium*, *Sfârșit de Mileniu/End of Millennium*, *Sectarii/Sectarians* and *Gorila/The Gorilla*, images of Pamfil Șeicaru's life have been taken from the pages of publications from the interwar era and a few essential items signed by the journalist. Most of the images selected by us are unknown to the nowadays public.

The following are some of the conclusions to which we have reached in our research. The journalistic achievements recorded by Pamfil Șeicaru throughout his career are numerous. Despite that, the man of the pen is known to the Romanian public, especially for his alleged extortion committed during the interwar period. It is true that the journalist blackmailer fame arose in the years between the two world wars, but it has been exaggerated by the propaganda apparatus of the Communist regime instituted in Romania after the occupation of the country by the Soviet Russian troops.

The maximum period of Pamfil Șeicaru journalistic fame began in 1928, when the journalist released the newspaper *Curentul/The Current*. The blunt and direct style of the journalist brought quickly the public's adhesion. But journalist's success is accompanied by the criticism of some colleagues who labeled him as a man dominated by mercantile interests. Most journalists, however, considered him the number one figure in Bucharest media. Many voices said that Pamfil Șeicaru is the greatest journalist of Great Romania and the creator of the modern Romanian press.

One of the most controversial episodes in Pamfil Șeicaru's life occurred when he was part of the newspaper *Cuvântul/The word*. In November 1926, the journalist wrote a violent article against the politician Alexandru Constantinescu alias "The Pig", who died a few days before the publication of the text. The language of the article that was written was extremely violent, but not an unusual one for the interwar era. It was not even the first time when Șeicaru wrote about Alexandru Constantinescu.

The mentioned politician represented a favorite target for the journalist, whom he considered to be guilty of many infringements. The article "La catafalcul Porcului/At the catafalque of the Pig" had however a negative impact on the public. Many of his colleagues have condemned Șeicaru's attack, considering it an unpardonable blasphemy. Some have even argued that the mentioned above article is a clear indication that Pamfil Șeicaru is a blackmailer who throws mud into the victims who refuse to pay *the ration*. The legionary guidance publications who wanted to discredit Șeicaru, made reference frequently to this episode. In *Sfarmă-Piatră/Breaking-Stone*, for example, there are published over time, drawing where Pamfil Șeicaru appears as an unscrupulous individual with the hat in a hand and a newspaper in his right hand and the tongue out, waiting for the "cheese" from Constantinescu "the Pig" "or as a wild animal that walks through graveyards to feed on corpses.

The conducted attacks of the journalist against the politician are mentioned also in the novels for which Șeicaru Pamfil served as an inspiration. In *Sfârșit de mileniu - Retragerea fără torțe/The End of the Millennium – The withdrawal without torches*, for example, Pamfil Șeicaru is portrayed by Radu Tudoran as a *man with dirty soul, sold to Satan*, that has nothing holy. Pamfil's alleged attempts to blackmail Alexander Constantinescu "The Pig" were never proven, but the article "La catafalcul Porcului/At the catafalque of the Pig" remains, in our opinion, one of the main sources of Pamfil Șeicaru's fame as blackmailer.

The journalist has become legendary in the backstage journalism professionals in Romania because of his gift of predicting political events that subsequently even occurred. Many personalities of the time talked about him as an *institution of national interest*. His extraordinary ability to give real meaning to the events is recognized by all who read his texts, whether it is about opponents and supporters of the journalist. He enjoyed the appreciation of colleagues in the country who did not hesitate to confess their admiration.

During the research, we discovered that the journalists from Braila thought of Șeicaru as being *a genius journalist* or that many of his peers have recognized his merit, that of being a *self-made man*. The founder of *The Current* Newspaper generated currents, changed the public spirit and forced the representatives of the Romanian journalism to talk about the *school of Pamfil Șeicaru*, understood as a new way of doing journalism. *The novelty of the Current* newspaper founder is the care with which his editors selected and then treated the information that would get from readers. The selection is done taking into account in particular the national interests, a phrase that does not overlap in meaning over the doctrine of the extreme party in interwar Romania.

The articles written by Pamfil Șeicaru treated in most cases, the activity problems of state institutions. The journalist writes about the business of private enterprises, but only when the public interest is at risk. In the pages of *The Current* Pamfil Șeicaru does not spare the great statesmen of Romania, reproaching them some domestic or foreign policy errors. Ionel I.C. Brătianu, Ion Mihalache, Iuliu Maniu and Virgil Madgearu are just a few examples. Carol the IInd knew no mercy from the journalist, despite the fact that many have associated him with the “royal camarilla,” a more than delicate matter.

The journalist not only impressed by his ability to give the correct interpretation of events, but also by the used language. For Șeicaru the journalistic activity is a continuation of the fighting in the First World War. His objective being the same: the destruction of the opponent. But he ensured that the *fall* would be harmonized with the *style concerns*. His *nervous* writing grants to articles the upsurge that conquers the reader and the linguistic inventiveness of the invectives used by Șeicaru managed to impress those who read his texts. Another fact that none of those who are introduced to the work of the journalist can ever deny is that Pamfil Șeicaru is among the most valuable portraitists of the Romanian literature.

For the interwar public, Pamfil Șeicaru was a true star of the press. As any star, he has served as an inspiration for many writers of novels. The writers did not use a single pattern and Șeicaru is described either as an unscrupulous journalist, focused on money-making, or as a patriotic journalist who puts the country's interests first. All the characters which were inspired by Șeicaru had something in common: the passion with which the public followed the journalist, beyond the seduction power of his texts, being the man who fascinated by his simple presence.

The prestige of which the journalist enjoyed is proved by the numerous conferences that he held during the interwar era, in all the major cities of the country. The Șeicaru's themes addressed in his lectures come from different areas of interest. The students represented the most faithful audience of the journalist. Their presence in large numbers made the halls where the journalist lectured to be overcrowded.

Pamfil Șeicaru is one of the first Romanian journalists that made efforts to achieve a theoretical framework for the journalist profession. After First World War, he assumed an important role in the development of the trade union movement of journalists in our country. Șeicaru made significant efforts to strengthen the social role held by the journalists. In this regard, he argues that to be a journalist is not enough to have only *talent*, it should have also a solid intellectual preparation. For this reason, Pamfil Șeicaru proposed a training school for journalists.

Șeicaru Pamfil's talent to understand what the public wanted to read can be observed not only in *The Current* newspaper, but in all of his publications over the years. We consider *Curentul Magazin/The Shop Current*, *Curentul literar/The Literary Trend*, *Curentul pentru copii și tineret/The Current for children and Youth*, *Curentul Familiei/The Family Current*, *Evenimentul zilei/The event of the day*, etc. The success of the journalist can be explained by the fact that he was constantly preoccupied on both the content of its publications and their *technical condition*. We noticed that after the political events of 23 August 1944, all the newspapers of Pamfil Șeicaru got into foreign hands.

Outside the borders, the journalist continued his journalistic work, publishing numerous articles and historical studies, both in his newspapers and in newspapers and magazines of the Romanian emigration. He also had numerous collaborations with Western publications. Șeicaru Pamfil's work in exile is much hampered by the lack of money. However, in January 1978, the journalist will release in Germany the "exile" series of *The Current*. In addition to editorial work in his newspaper, Pamfil Șeicaru has an intense political activity. His entrance into the political arena occurs naturally. He possessed a remarkable political sense and journalism helped him create relationships with the most important political personalities. Șeicaru is elected as deputy on three occasions between 1929 and 1935, each time as an independent one.

One of the major themes of Șeicaru in his double quality of MP and journalist was *the farm debt*. Between 1930 and 1935 farm debt problems were discussed very often in the pages of *The Current* newspaper, occasions that require repeatedly the achievement of the *agricultural debt conversion*. During the Second World War, without holding an official function, the journalist plays an important role in the external propaganda apparatus of Marshal Ion Antonescu. The relation with Antonescu brings Șeicaru's tag of a supporter of the anti-Semitic policies.

From the political point of view, the man of the pen is a follower of the monarchy doctrinaire Charles Maurras. The journalist has a particular connection with King Carol IInd. Obviously Șeicaru reproached the king his relationship with Elena Lupescu and his inability to give a correct interpretation of the events that preceded the outbreak of World War II. He was an admirer of Benito Mussolini, but Șeicaru's nationalism was not a doctrine of hate, but *a realistic discipline imposed by political contemplation*. According to the journalist, once the concept of the abstract citizen is inverted, worthless element in an assembly of votes at every four years, the political parties will no longer have any value, and the national interests will no longer depend on the professional power, which inevitably are tributary to the financial institutions, therefore easy to handle, even corruptible in many cases.

The journalist was convinced that the fascist ideology, with the corporate state as achievement, would mean for Romania a healthy return towards the past, to the time when each person was placed in a category. A special place in Pamfil Șeicaru's texts is occupied by the danger of the Soviet Russia to the whole Europe. The campaign through which the journalist tried to draw public's attention to the danger that Russia represented for the West did not begin with the Second World War, as wrongly sustain some authors, but shortly after the First World War.

The journalist continues to be concerned about the political interests of Romania also during the time spent in exile. He is working towards organizing a volunteer corpus to fight a guerrilla war in Romania, requiring major Western countries to intervene in order to stop the abuses committed by the Soviet troops in Romania, bringing into the attention of Western political leaders the regional federalization issue of Europe, etc. Journalist's efforts proved to be

futile, being important the consistency with which he believed in the transitoriness of the postwar situation.

The Anti-Soviet attitude brings to journalist the death sentence. The punishment was justified by the Moscow's representatives from Bucharest with the pro-nazi position of Pamfil Șeicaru. It is true that in *The Current* newspaper's pages the journalist sustained the Romania's entrance into war with Germany. Șeicaru justified his point of view, in April 1939 in an article, made famous at the time, called "*Garanțiiile militare ce se oferă/Military guarantees which are offered.*" The article showed that military guarantees offered to Romania by England had no value, as the latter country was not ready at that time to go to war.

Outside the country's borders, to the blackmailer's reputation of Șeicaru it is added the collaborator one of the communist regime in Bucharest. The charge was based on uncertain information in the period in which Pamfil Șeicaru would have visit Romania to meet Nicolae Ceaușescu and it has given rise to heated debates among the collaborators from the exile of the journalist. Unfortunately, the link of the journalist with the communist regime in Bucharest and his visit in the country were the topics most extensively treated in the latest years by authors who declared to be interested in the journalistic work of Pamfil Șeicaru, leaving behind the proper journalistic text.

We consider this situation as unfair to the man who was perhaps the most resounding name in the Romanian journalism. Despite numerous discussions on the subject, there is no evidence that Pamfil Șeicaru would have visited Romania during Ceausescu's regime. As we have seen, in this matter, there are some question marks, which do not allow us to draw a conclusion.

Pamfil Șeicaru is part of the leading pamphleteer of our literature, and this, we believe, cannot be challenged by anyone. The Șeicaru's pamphlet is unique in the Romanian publishing. We saw that he did not take his personal battles in public and he did not show on the first page his assets. Șeicaru intervened forcefully where he believed that the circumstances, habits, beliefs of the society had hurt his humanitarian ideal. The targets of his pamphlets include those people that he considered as *sources of evil*. The pamphleteer carries his attacks directly, without hiding, without coward hints and his campaigns took sometimes years. He's not only a creator of the pamphlet, but he expresses the vision of the role of pamphlets and of the pamphleteer in the

articles published in newspapers and magazines, and the conferences which he held on several occasions.

Şeicaru's pamphlet is built most often, as an indictment, the arguments used by the pamphleteer or the ones specific to the judicial discourse. Also note that Pamfil focuses on the defects of the person that he attacks. He regularly calls upon the *antithesis* through which he defines virtually certain social categories, misconduct, etc. This pamphlet puts the target into opposition to the rest of the world, with normal people. When he sketched the portraits of his targets, Pamfil Şeicaru did not avoid the ugliness and the monstrosity, even always looking for contrast situations in order to highlight the hideous. Following the care with which they are achieved, the pamphlets of Pamfil Şeicaru always had the intended effect - to discredit the opponent, followed by the refined performance of the virtuosity of execution through the word. Some authors have tried to minimize the value of texts that belong to Pamfil Şeicaru, labeling them as pamphlet on the entire work as journalist. As it can be seen during our work, with the advent of the political and military tensions on the international political stage announcing the outbreak of World War II, Pamfil Şeicaru used more rarely the pamphlet register.

We consider that the Pamfil Şeicaru was the major interwar phenomenon, who impressed by *his writing*, through the special relationship that he had with the state and the consistency with which he fought to defend the national interests. Loved and hated in equal measure by those who knew him, and the *demon* nickname fits as a glove. While the public sees him as a hero, his enemies considered him a symbol of evil, the proposed denomination goes towards the Greek etymological sense (daimon) of the word.

The results of Pamfil Şeicaru work are an inspiration for many Romanian journalists to have time to live, trying to deal with both in the cultural and in the political life, in a role as important as the one held by the creator of *The Current* in the years between the two World Wars.

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