

Henri H. Stahl, *Epistolar monografist*, edited by Zoltán Rostás, Editura Paideia, Bucharest, 2015, 228 p.

The editing of the present collection of letters sent to Henri H. Stahl (1901–1991) represents an important addition to the study of interwar Romanian sociology. Occasioned by the production of a bibliographic study dedicated to the works of Dimitrie Gusti (1880–1955), the founder of the Bucharest School of Sociology (*Tenovici, D. et al., 2014, Dimitrie Gusti: [cronologia vieții și operei]: 1880–1955. Editura Bibliotecii Centrale Universitare „Carol I” din București*), the book under review furthers our understanding of one of what is arguably one of the most overlooked Romanian scholars of all time. Stahl, who along with Mircea Vulcănescu (1904–1952) and Anton Golopenția (1909–1951) was one of Gusti’s main collaborators, primarily identified himself as a sociologist, in spite of the fact that his career spanned a variety of fields such as anthropology, ethnography, folkloristics, history, law, statistics, paleography, and rural as well as urban development. Although he was also a member of the Criterion group, Stahl never achieved the fame of the likes of Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), Constantin Noica (1909–1987) or Emil Cioran (1911–1995). While it put an end to type of sociology practiced by Gusti, the instauration of communism did not put a halt to Stahl’s research. Indeed, it was during those years that he published his most important research. Despite enjoying a revival in the period of Ceaușescu’s thaw, sociology again became eclipsed by the late seventies, when the liberal phase of the regime came to an end. Virtually isolated by this time, Stahl’s work was better known to foreign researchers such as Daniel Chirot and Gail Kligman than it was among his colleagues. After 1989, a resur-

gence of interest in the Gusti School of Sociology has brought attention to Stahl’s work once again.

Covering roughly the early thirties until the mid-forties, the volume brings to the forefront the challenges faced by the School in the interwar years: bureaucracy, lack of funds, politicking, and internal strives. The letters here also evidence the international collaboration pursued by Gusti and his disciples during the period, which included sociologist from France (Célestin Bouglé), Norway (Marius Gormsen), and the United States (Max Sylvius Handman, *Mosely, P.E., 1936, The Sociological School of Dimitrie Gusti. The Sociological Review, 28, 2, 149–165; Mosely, P.E., 1943, Review of Nerej. Un village d’une région archaïque. Slavonic and East European Review. American Series, 2, 1, 285–286*). The last figure mentioned came to interact with the School by way of a recommendation from Rockefeller Foundation – which provided funds for some of the School’s projects – and after being considerably impressed by the likes of Gusti and Stahl, did his best to introduce them to an English-speaking audience, providing a detailed overview of the School’s activities and orientation (*Mosely, 1936, 149–165*) and also wrote a glowing review of the collective study on the Nerej village (*ibid, 1943, 285–286*). While such relations were significantly impacted by the Second World War – most visibly seen in the canceling of the 14th international Congress of Sociology meant to be held in Bucharest – they were by no means severed completely, as recent research shows (e.g. *Martin, B.G., 2016, The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture. Cambridge (Mass.); London: Harvard University Press*, which includes numerous

references to cultural and artistic contacts between Romania and the Axis states) and as some of these letters prove. The correspondence sent by Traian Herseni (1907–1980) and Ion I. Ioniță (1907–1944) from the period in which they were studying in Berlin, respectively Paris, shows how Romanian sociologists simultaneously appropriated and distanced themselves from the German and French sociological tradition, while trying to develop on the foundation built up by Gusti. I have only scratched the surface in the paragraph above, which I hope is suggestive of the valuable information which can be gleaned from this collection.

As the volume under discussion contains primarily letters *sent* to Stahl, in order to understand his response in the lack of his own missives, one must rely on his memoirs (1981) as well as on the series of interview

conducted by Zoltán Rostás (2000, *Monografia ca utopie: interviuri cu Henri H. Stahl (1985–1987)*. Bucharest: Paideia). Along with Stahl's journalism pieces included in previous collections (*Stahl, H.H., 2007, Oameni de altădată*, edited by P.H. Stahl. Bucharest: Editura Universității din București; Rostás, Z., 2013, *Răfuiala cu scopurile noastre: școala sociologică de la București în cotidianul Ecoul: 1943–1944*. Bucharest: Paideia), and with an study of the Criterion Association in the works which also discusses his membership in this cultural organization (Bejan, forthcoming, *The Criterion Association: Friendship, Culture, and Fascism in Interwar Bucharest*, unpublished manuscript), researchers will have a much more rich image of Stahl's life and work.

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