

## DIPLOMATIC MEMOIRS AND THE VALUE OF SOLIDARITY - EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY AND SOLIDARITY A BOOK REVIEW

Ioan VOICU

The title of these notes is inspired by the reading of the book *Diary* by Constantin Vlad, published in 2020 by Top Form Publishing House, Bucharest.

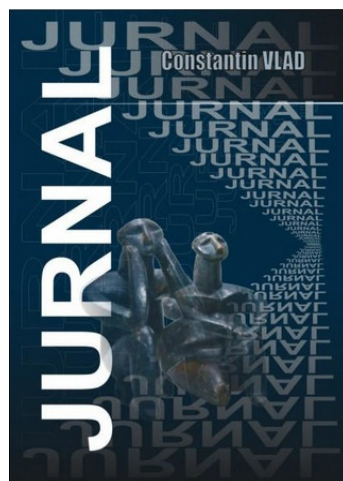
From the preface of the book, we understand that it is an “uncensored and intermittent” journal covering the years 1972-2019. The author of the book informs us: “I also hope that my efforts reflect – of course modestly – the Romanian tradition of this kind of study and memoirs.”

Constantin Vlad (September 8, 1926 – May 20, 2021) defines himself in this volume as a “diligent student, not really a leader, but determined to study thoroughly, then a young professor, researcher, science manager, author of studies and books”. Then comes a confession:

“Later, I added the diplomatic activity, with the orientation of scientific activity and journalism towards the field of international relations and diplomacy.”

Among the 12 books dedicated by Constantin Vlad to diplomacy, it is worth mentioning, first of all, *Diplomația secolului XX* (Diplomacy of the 20th Century), published under the auspices of the European Titulescu Foundation, 2006; *Puncte cardinale îndepărtate* (Distant cardinal points: Helsinki, Tokyo, Canberra, with the subtitle: Notes of a Romanian ambassador), Romanian Academy of Scientists Publishing House, 2011; *Solilocvii* (Soliloquies), 5 volumes, Top Form Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011-2019; *Istoria diplomației. Secolul XX* (History of Diplomacy. 20th Century), Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, Târgoviște, 2014.

When the volume *Diplomacy of the 20th Century* (2006) was published, the author sent a copy dedicated to the venerable historian and member of The Romanian Academy, Dinu C. Giurescu. Ambassador Constantin Vlad notes in the *Diary*: “He was among the few who responded to me, in a letter with the following quoting: ‘It is the first synthesis and analysis of such proportions, where we find the goals and perspectives of the main actors of



diplomacy, but also those of Romania, over a century. Your long practice in diplomacy as well as in research ensures the acuity and quality of interpretation. It is a much-needed reference work for a large number of readers, from students to teachers, to politicians (if they sooner or later decide to read...), to researchers, to young diplomats, to all those interested in world history. Congratulations on this *opus magnum*, which arrives on time and will not be matched in the foreseeable future.” (p. 227)

### **Teachers and expectations**

Referring to his teachers, the author confesses: “I adored my good teachers (and there weren’t too many of them), I’m always hungry for the companionship of valuable books, I’m always looking for life, beyond the often misleading appearances – but I’ve always come back to myself.” (p. 58)

This return to itself inspires interesting ideas and expectations about memorialism in general and especially about diplomacy, still deficient in Romanian literature, militating in favour of cultivating this literary genre. These ideas and expectations deserve to be widely disseminated in the author’s own language: “I know people with high professional qualifications and outstanding academic performance. In addition, the same people held important public – political and state positions at certain times. Of course, I can’t name some person, because I hope that this note will see the light of day. I only notice that such people do not consider it a duty to put their own experience on paper, beyond scientific research, teaching activity etc. and it is a shame. Because, as far as I know, they saw politics from the inside, they coordinated the policy of the Romanian state in matters of historical importance after December 1989. They, I emphasize, they, not their subordinates, even if they were brilliant (which didn’t really happen), they felt like our partners and allies really are, what real interests they defend, beyond beautiful principles and words. I may be wrong. But I think politicians, when they really have something to say, should be their own columnists. Of course, there is a risk of subjectivity, but memorial literature has its specific role in knowing the unfolding of events. And at any time, this literature can and is confronted with realities (facts), both by contemporaries and by those who come after. I recall in this regard the brilliant example of Winston Churchill. He did not limit himself to publishing his speeches, the speeches inherent in his duties, but recorded, by dictation, everything that happened, with his participation or in his presence, during the Second World War. The outcome? Magnificent work in six volumes, a unique work in universal literature, which no serious historian can ignore.” (p. 283)

As a result of these demands, the author proves to be a careful hermeneutic of the diplomatic events he experienced, and his diplomatic diary offers historical evidence for understanding the place of Romanian diplomacy in the world arena, the activity in the field of global and European multilateral diplomacy.

### **Opinions and confreres**

We will give readers the pleasure of navigating through the events described in the journal and through those described in the five volumes of *Soliloquies*. In these lines, we limit ourselves only to highlighting some very current opinions on diplomacy and some points of view on the universal value of solidarity, a topic that has recently returned, as we will see, in the public debate in Romania. Of course, the author's theoretical conception of diplomacy must be analyzed primarily based on his comprehensive work on twentieth-century diplomatic history, but the author's sensitivity in all his journal accounts to the realm of diplomatic affairs directly experienced by him is remarkable.

The author brings into discussion in this context a thesis of permanent interest, namely that it is not the balance of forces that ensures peace and the peaceful settlement of disputes, but the demilitarization of relations between states. "When problems arise between states, the supreme authorities should not call the chiefs of staff, but diplomats, to put them to work." (p. 80)

The academic activity of Constantin Vlad is not separated from the permanent obligation of the diplomat to cherish his confreres. In this context, it is worth mentioning a unique initiative in the Romanian practice of honouring the memory of an elite diplomat post-mortem. It is about the successful proposal to admit posthumously the honourable Romanian diplomat Valentin Lipatti among the members of the Romanian Academy of Scientists.

Here are some ideas from the report prepared on this topic by Constantin Vlad and published in the journal. It is recalled that Valentin Lipatti (1923-1998) studied in Romania and France and was a professor of French literature at the University of Bucharest. His diplomatic mandates are mentioned: Representative of Romania to UNESCO, 1962-1972; Head of the Romanian MFA Delegation to the Preparatory Meeting of the CSCE, 1972-1973; Head of the Romanian MFA Delegation at the Geneva Negotiations, 1973-1975; Deputy of the Romanian Delegation to the First Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Helsinki, July 1975;

Head of the Romanian MFA Delegation at the CSCE Meeting in Belgrade, 1980-1981; Director for Cultural Affairs at the MFA; Ambassador at Large.

Valentin Lipatti has prepared several promotions for graduates in French literature and was one of Romania's most successful representatives at UNESCO, bringing many benefits to Romania – scholarships for young people, restoration of historical monuments, etc. It is noted that "Studies published by him on cultural diplomacy are still models of action in the field." Valentin Lipatti proved to be a high-ranking diplomat in multilateral diplomacy, an active diplomat, deeply devoted to national interests. Such qualities have been concretely highlighted in what is called the CSCE Process. His book *In the Trenches of Europe. Notes of a Negotiator*, Military Publishing House, 1993, is a true treaty of multilateral diplomatic negotiation" (pp. 325-326).

Unknown episodes of Romania's activity in the field of multilateral diplomacy are brought to the readers' attention. Thus, Constantin Vlad reminds that on December 28, 2019 at the European Titulescu Foundation took place the launch of volume 12 documents from the series *Romania – survival and affirmation through diplomacy during the Cold War*, series coordinated by Ambassador Nicolae Ecobescu. The mentioned volume deals with the activity of the Romanian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly since 1971. The documents cover a wide variety of topics, but those on the restoration of the legitimate rights of the People's Republic of China to the UN predominate. Until 1971, China's place at the UN was occupied by Taiwan, with the support of the United States and other UN members. The Romanian delegation was led by Corneliu Mănescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs. His deputy was the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Nicolae Ecobescu. In the weeks leading up to the fall of 1971, Romania made a decisive contribution to the expulsion of Taiwan and the establishment of the People's Republic of China at the United Nations. Week after week, the Romanian delegation insisted on restoring the PRC's legitimate rights. Dozens of telegrams from New York or Bucharest record repeated displacements in power relations between R.P. Chinese and Taiwan supporters. In the end, the supporters of the PRC were victorious and China is now making a decisive contribution to the UNO and to upholding the principles of the UN Charter. (pp. 357-358)

In addition to Valentin Lipatti, the author of the Journal evokes other Romanian diplomats. He regrets that "Mircea Malița left us. He burned like a torch, until he consumed his last painting of energy. When you remember how much he did, when you see the list of books written and published, you

wonder how much I can fit in an ephemeral human life. I have always placed him among the leading diplomats of the country in the post-war period, together with Ștefan Andrei, Corneliu Mănescu, George Macovescu, Nicolae Ecobescu” (p. 251)

Readers will also find interesting references about other leading Romanian diplomats, such as Ion M. Anghel, Vasile Gliga, Sorin Ducaru, Teodor Marinescu, Gheorghe Dolgu, Ion Datcu, Nicolae Mareș and Traian Chebeleu. Ambassador Constantin Vlad is entitled to declare, “I think I have done my duty to the memory of those who, four decades ago, were part of the elite of Romanian, European and world diplomacy, and who are hardly mentioned today” (p. 151)

### **European diplomacy and solidarity**

The author has a critical attitude towards the interpretive excesses found in the evaluation of the results of European diplomacy. Thus, participating in a symposium organized by the European Titulescu Foundation on the topic, “Rome Summit and EU perspectives” follows the interventions of two foreign MEPs and one Romanian, all members of the socialist group. “Many well-known things are said. We hear the loudest statement from the Romanian MEP – usually a well-informed man and a good speaker. He states, *By integrating into the European Union, Romania has regained its identity*. I’m ashamed of his shame and I refrain from asking him for an explanation. Many talk about the goal of social Europe. But, just words. Someone in the audience is asking whether the Socialist Group will aim to remove EU neoliberalism, which has provoked recent crises. The question remains unanswered, apparently due to lack of time. If the talks had continued, what would have happened to those concerned? Judging by what is happening in the EU – and not only –, social democracy seeks only to mitigate the negative effects of neoliberal policies. If it intends to eliminate such policies, it should engage in anti-capitalist positions, that is, proclaim and pursue alternative policies to those that, in fact, support the establishment, and therefore the capitalist rules as a whole. What, obviously, social-democracy, as a political-ideological movement, does not aim at in any way.” (pp. 192-194)

Particularly interesting are the author’s recollections on the work of the Commission for establishing the motto of the Romanian Presidency at the Council of the European Union in 2019. There were 45 proposals submitted by the members of this commission. Five were selected, among which the proposal of Constantin Vlad *Common Destiny by Consensus*. The other proposals selected were “Solidarity, balance, common values”; “European

standards and values for all EU citizens”; “One Europe”; “Europe, solidarity that inspires you”. The author emphasizes, “Maybe I’m subjective, but my choice seems the most appropriate and suggestive. When I decided for it, I didn’t think about the words, but I wanted a form that could be a kind of response from Romania to the current search for reform of the European Union.” The author further informs us that “There is broader support for the *Solidarity, Balance, Common Values* proposal. It is appropriate to eliminate the term *equilibrium*, as it has no obvious meaning in the EU.”

However, the author remains critical of this solution and states, “I personally appreciate that the term *Solidarity* remains abstract, with each EU Member State having its own interpretation of its content. For example, Macron and Merkel want the solidarity of the Member States to be built around them, around the positions adopted by their countries. And the words *common values* has become, over time, part of a jargon, a wooden language specific to Brussels, brought back into public discourse by the elders of the EU, especially when they have something to blame the East. At the same time, I argue that, if each term proposed in the motto has its meaning, this meaning would be enhanced and specified if they were related to each other. For example, in the *Solidarity* formula based on common values. It was not accepted, because in this way the motto becomes... too long. However, I do not oppose the consensus so as not to create difficulties for the Commission. But I remain deeply dissatisfied that Romania will have the Presidency of the Council of the European Union under a slogan without a clear message, which would show openly and (why not: and subliminally) how Bucharest conceives the reform and future development of the European Project. Of course, I would not have changed such a position, but at least we would have adopted a dignified attitude.” (pp. 216-18) Another Commission meeting is taking place. In which a final decision is made, “We are communicated – and required to agree to – the following wording of the motto: *Solidarity – common value*. Those present take it upon themselves. However, it is better than the previous versions. From my point of view, the same shortcoming remains – Merkel and Macron want solidarity in support of their proposals. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and National Identity, I am awarded the Diploma for the special contribution to the process of establishing the Motto of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. It is a distinction received by all members of the Commission.” (p. 218)

It should be recalled that solidarity is already recognized as a universal value proclaimed in the Millennium Declaration, adopted by the UN Summit

on 8 September 2000 and reaffirmed in many other global and regional documents, including at European level. Thus, in the Sibiu Declaration of May 9, 2019, in which the leaders of the European Union unanimously agreed on ten commitments, the second commitment has the following content: "We will remain united, for better or for worse. We will show solidarity in difficult times and we will always stand by each other. We can and will not express ourselves in unison." This commitment must be strengthened by convincing action, given the precarious state of solidarity in Europe in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The issue of strengthening solidarity remains open at both global and European level.

On July 13, 2021, at the Cotroceni Palace, took place the launching event of the national debate on the future of Europe. Solidarity was mentioned 9 times in the speeches made on this occasion. From the transcript of the speeches, we note that the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, stated, "A Union of the Future is, in Romania's view, an indissoluble project linked to the idea of European unity and solidarity for the benefit of all, a project in which we must be concerned with the well-being of all Member States and European citizens alike." The practice of European solidarity must be assessed with the utmost lucidity and responsibility. Constantin Vlad writes in his Diary, on January 11, 2019, "I watched with interest the event at the Romanian Athenaeum dedicated to the official takeover by Romania of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. And with great pleasure, after that, the Concert. Regarding the speeches of the guests and the hosts: many beautiful words, of complacency. A kind of diplomacy that mimics its purpose. On the whole, it was very clear that things remain as they have been so far. So nothing new." (p. 275) Referring directly to solidarity, Constantin Vlad consciously warns, "*The Great Ones* in the European Union want the solidarity of the whole Union with their positions, positions formulated starting first of all from their interests. In other words, *The Great Ones* want nothing more than the subordination of the Eastern and Central European states. Noting that such subordination, if carried out, would affect all small and medium-sized member states of the Community Club." (p. 263)

### **Lessons for the future**

Constantin Vlad's diary, which covers almost half a century, contains valuable urges to vigorously promote multilateralism in the world arena on the basis of fundamental principles of international law and the need for the dynamic re-engagement of Romanian diplomacy in the process of effectively solving the global problems of mankind. In the current circumstances,

diplomatic experience is called upon to have its say. Here is the reflection on this topic of a Romanian diplomat, Ambassador Ion Jinga, in full action, as Romania's permanent representative to the UN. He confesses, "After 28 years spent in the Romanian diplomatic service, I dare say that diplomatic skills are the result of a process of professional training and accumulation, not qualities received at birth. No one is born with the talent to practice international diplomacy, which involves understanding different societies and cultures from the one in which you grew up, the ability to influence foreign governments, the ability to negotiate, the ability to anticipate threats and seize opportunities for your country. These qualities are acquired. Diplomacy is learned from both books and practice. A professional diplomatic service involves the specialized training of staff, career development plan, tools, resources and the authority necessary to carry out the mission."

These findings are immediately relevant and interesting, in a time of unprecedented complexity in international relations, in which the lessons of the past should be a real guide, able to encourage a fruitful activity of Romanian diplomats guided unwaveringly by the perennial national interests of Romania, in a world characterized by vulnerabilities, perplexities and global discontinuities, accentuated even more by the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic whose effects have radically changed the style and ways of action of bilateral diplomacy and especially those of multilateral diplomacy. In this complex and worrying process that diplomacy is currently going through, the guiding light should be the truth convincingly formulated by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, according to which "Solidarity is humanity. Solidarity is survival." António Guterres has a second term as UN Secretary-General since 2022, and his vibrant calls for a new era of "Solidarity and equality" should be treated with genuine responsibility by the entire community of nations.

*IOAN VOICU: Doctor of Political Science from the University of Geneva (1968), doctor honoris causa in international law from the Assumption University of Thailand (1998), career diplomat; Romania's Deputy Representative to the United Nations Security Council (1990-1991); member of the Administrative Court of the United Nations (1987-1993), Romanian ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand and permanent observer with international organizations based in Bangkok (1994-1999), associate professor at Assumption University in Thailand (2000-2019).*