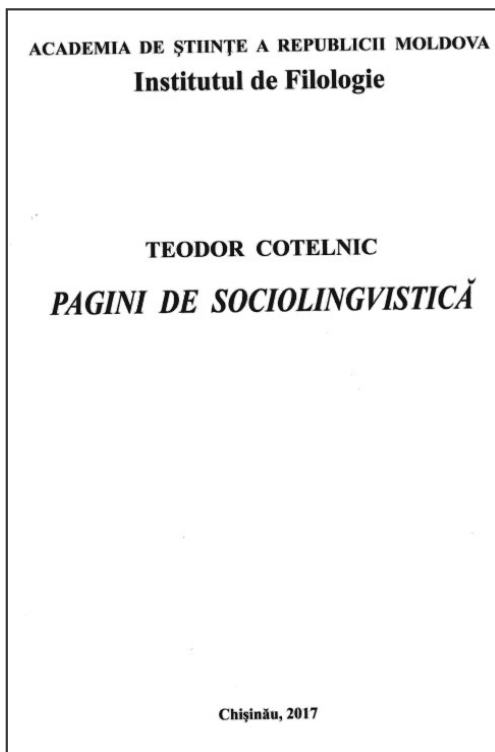


Teodor Cotelnic, *Pagini de sociolingvistică (în baza materialului din Republica Moldova)*, Chișinău, Institutul de Filologie al Academiei de Științe al Republicii Moldova, Tipografia , UPS ,, I.Creangă”, 2017, 263 p. (Mariana Buciu)

The Romanian language is the homeland of Teodor Cotelnic



A habilitated professor in the field of philology at the “Ion Creangă” State Pedagogical University of Chișinău, Teodor Cotelnic is the linguist-patriot par excellence. He is a tireless researcher and defender of the Romanian word, bringing his remarkable contributions to the understanding and defence of the internal functioning mechanism of the Romanian language under the well-known historical conditions in the Republic of Moldova, both during and after the fall of communism.

As a researcher, Teodor Cotelnic has published a multitude of linguistic articles and studies (lexicology, stylistics, grammar, language history, orthography, etc.) in which he has revived the process of development of the linguistic, national, and ethnic consciousness and identity of the Romanian population from Bessarabia, he has demonstrated with strong,

academic arguments, without bitterness and without false patriotism that the Moldovan language is the Romanian language, mutilated by the expansionist Russian language.

Extremely valuable, the researcher’s contribution clarifies some urgent issues of sociolinguistics regarding the linguistic policy within the so-called national-Russian asymmetric bilingualism, the fate of cohabiting ethnic groups and languages, as well as problems related to the language of interethnic communication. In this sense, we mention the titles of such important articles as: *Calvarul lingvistic în anii '20- '30 în RSSM/ 'The linguistic calvary in the 1920s and 1930s in the MSSR'* (1996), *Limba română în contextul sociolingvistic din Transnistria/ 'The Romanian language in the sociolinguistic context of Transnistria'* (1998), *Caracterul unilateral al bilingvismului în Republica Moldova/ 'The unilateral character of bilingualism in the Republic of Moldova'* (2000), *Adaptarea legislației lingvistice și revenirea la grația latină: efecte și perspective/ 'The adaptation of linguistic legislation and the return to the Latin alphabet: effects and perspectives'* (2001), etc. Some of these studies are published, along with other highly objective and scientifically substantiated studies, in the volume *Pagini de sociolingvistică/ 'Sociolinguistics pages'* published in Chișinău in 2017.

Teodor Cotelnic published the work *Pagini de sociolingvistică* at the recommendation of the Scientific Board within the Institute of Philology of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Moldova. The book contains a *Note on the edition* by the author, underlining that the work deals with theoretical aspects, as well as the results of concrete research related to the situation and destiny of the Romanian

language in the Republic of Moldova. There is also an introduction to the vast and prodigious activity of the distinguished linguist entitled *Instead of a preface*, and signed by Nicolae Corlăţeanu, academician, and Ion Eţcu, habilitated professor, then an excerpt from the article published in 2003, in issue 38 of the journal “Literatura și arta”.

The work proper is an anthology of linguistic studies and language history, some of which were previously published in the periodicals of the time or were presented by the author at national and international conferences. The book has four parts: the first two include the prestigious articles of the author published over time, well articulated scientifically and pedagogically in *the Romanian linguistic problem* in Bessarabia and written with a genuine sense of “painfully sweet” Bessarabian patriotism; Part Three and Part Four include articles of other patriots from Bessarabia, erudite intellectuals who have affirmed, over time, the national and linguistic identity of the Romanians in Bessarabia under an oppressive regime, while ignoring all risks. Each article contained in this work is well documented, with its own bibliographic notes. The book ends with a set of *Annexes* in Russian.

The work is fascinating and revealing not only through its scientific content, strongly argued ideas, authenticity of the historical and linguistic document, clear statistical data, patriotic insight, critical lucidity, but also by the fact that it is a real challenge to the reader, inviting him to reflect on historical and linguistic themes of crucial importance for the destiny of the Romanian language in Bessarabia, for the destiny of the Romanian people. The book addresses both the general public, willing to know the *story* of the Romanian language, and especially the specialists in the field, from the country and abroad (philologists, linguists, historians, lexicologists, researchers), literary translators, journalists, being at the same time a useful instrument for teachers and students, in particular those at the faculties in the field.

We will continue the presentation with some studies from this exceptional work, which have particularly caught our attention, which have revived the feeling of a beautiful solidarity with our “brothers across the Prut”.

In his first article entitled *Rusificarea Basarabiei sub dominația țaristă (1812-1918)/ ‘Russification of Bessarabia under the Tsarist rule (1812-1918)’*, Teodor Cotelnic reveals the fraudulent *Peace treaty* concluded in Bucharest in 1812, between the Russians and the Turks, when the Romanian land between the Prut and the Dniester was snatched from the Principality of Moldavia to be given to tsarist Russia, which thus unlawfully annexed a foreign territory that was an important point for the political strategy of tsarism, a theft unmasked by the parents of Marxism-Leninism themselves, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

The author condemns with sadness and revolt the fact that the Russian administration in Bessarabia in 106 years of occupation had a colonial, anti-Romanian character, involving forced Russification, denationalization of Romanian native elements (colonization with foreigners, religious service in the Russian language, suppression of education in Romanian, massive pollution of the vocabulary with Russianisms and loan translations). Here are some lines which were meant to be poetical in 1832: „In otpusci cu podorojne eu ca alții/ n-am ieșit/ sau ostanofce la slujbe in veac/ n-am pricinuit”/ ‘In otpusci with podorojne I like others/ did not go/ or ostanofce to service never/ did I cause’ (p. 18). The 106 years of Russian occupation were years of deep humiliation, bitter loneliness, and terrible despair for the

Romanians beyond the Prut. Russian elements were directed to invade Romanian, so Russian became the official language. But the native population refused to learn the Russian language, so that it became hard for the Moldovans to be educated. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the Bessarabian intellectuals conducted a relentless struggle to defend and assert the Romanian language in the Bessarabian space. Among them, we mention Simeon Murafa, Ștefan Ciobanu, Alexe Mateevici, Ion Buzdugan, etc., who, grouped around the only Romanian newspaper in the country, *Cuvânt moldovenesc*/ ‘Moldovan word’, called the people in 1917 to awaken national consciousness, showing that the struggle for the unity of the language is the struggle for national unity.

The linguistic calvary in the 1920s and 1930s began with the propagation of the idea of creating a new language, different from the Romanian language, the Moldovan language, as shown in the article with the same name. The process of destroying the Romanian language gradually developed, under the close supervision of the political force, as an anti-Romanian current. Madanism (a term derived from the name of Leonid Madan, a man of the oppressive system) promoted the dialectal native pronunciation, including the palatalization of the labials, and excluded and anathematized neologisms, the words that were “too Romanian”, enriching the Moldovan vocabulary with archaisms, regionalisms, artificial constructions, devised according to Russian patterns, which translated into involution and regression of society from a cultural, economic, social point of view, etc. Etymological orthography, non-specific to Romanian, was proclaimed. The Romanian words were replaced by “nouî mai buni”/ ‘newer and better ones’: *apropiat*/ ‘close’—*aprochietnic*, *arhivă*/ ‘archive’—*păstrălniți*, *cultural*/ ‘cultural’—*culturalnic*, etc. Terms translated from Russian were introduced in the language: *dentar*/ ‘dental’—*dentnic*, *de pe malul drept*/ ‘from the right bank’—*dreptumaluruștinic* or words taken directly from the Russian vocabulary: *creion*/ ‘pencil’—*carandaș*, *expoziție*/ ‘exhibition’—*vîstavci*, *creșă*/ ‘nursery’—*iasli*. Moreover, in 1938, all those who resisted the artificial criterion of Moldovanization of the language, all those who fought for the linguistic and Romanianization construction were declared *enemies of the people, fascist agents* or *bourgeois nationalists*; all the Latin-graphy books were destroyed, national schools began teaching in Russian and Ukrainian.

From the study entitled *Politica lingvistică în Transnistria*/ ‘The linguistic policy in Transnistria’ we find out that the situation of the Romanian language in the sociolinguistic context of this area is much harder. The words of the historian Tudor Tabunșic are quoted: “all Romanian children are oppressed. They do not have textbooks, do not have Romanian primary and secondary school teachers, and every year they are subject to a more and more monstrous degradation, not only scientific, but also civic. They do not have genuine, fresh information. Absolute spiritual genocide” (p. 61). The author made compiled tables with conclusive statistical data. Thus, 40% of the Moldovans on the left bank of the Dniester had 20% of the schools, and the Russians, which represented 25% of the population, benefited from 77%, the rest being for the Ukrainians and other minorities. It is a truth recognized by everyone that the prohibition of Romanian as a language of instruction and the removal of the Latin alphabet beyond the law are the most terrible forms of denationalization.

Another article that catches our attention is *Limba română în Republica Moldova în etapa actuală*/ ‘The Romanian language in the Republic of Moldova in the

current phase' at the beginning of the second part of the book. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the linguistic legislation of 1989 came to guarantee, again, privileged positions for the Russian language. All official texts were also translated into Russian. Today the Romanian language has the same "status of Cinderella", as once was. It has not become a language of all state institutions, a language of interethnic communication. Teodor Cotelnic records the words of the great scholar E. Coșeriu profoundly indignant at this unfortunate state of affairs: "I can and I have the duty to be tolerant with minorities of good faith and tolerance, but not with an imperialist and intolerant minority, which claims to impose their language to the native and majority population. To be tolerant does not mean to passively accept the linguistic intolerance of others and does not mean to serve linguistic colonialism and imperialism. This would not be tolerance, but linguistic masochism" (p. 84). The linguist Teodor Cotelnic also raises the question of the appropriate age for a child to learn a foreign language, namely when the child already has a proper psycholinguistic base, knowing the mother tongue very well.

To the question that concerns us all, "*De ce în Republica Moldova limba română nu este mijloc de comunicare interetnică?*" / 'Why isn't the Romanian language a means of interethnic communication in the Republic of Moldova?', the scholar replies that the problem of Romanian and of ethnicity will be solved when it escapes the ominous influence of the political sphere and becomes strictly a problem of the specialists in the field. Closely related to this issue, T. Cotelnic points out that it is necessary for the state to promote a very clear, fair and impartial linguistic policy that must be based on scientific investigations. According to the author, one must require the development of a new linguistic legislation, the Romanian language should be the official language of the state, the practice of translating the documents and advertisements into Russian should be abandoned. Furthermore, the amendments into the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages must be observed, namely minority languages may be used without prejudice to the official language. The language of the majority population must become a true means of interethnic communication, a catalyst for the unification and consolidation of civil society. Therefore it must be spoken by all the citizens of the country.

In the third part of the work we can read memorable pages about the sociolinguistic concerns of the distinguished academician Nicolae Colățeanu. You are deeply impressed by the testamentary words of the great scholar: "Remember! Romanian is the correct and true name of our language, and it must reunite us, become a source of joy for the contemporaries and those who come after us. I believe, I sincerely believe in the victory of the Romanian language and the Romanian nation". Equally interesting are the articles signed by Silviu Berejan as a promoter of scientific truth, Constantin Stere, a defender of the pure language of church books and chroniclers, Nicolae Mățaș, as a defender of the city, Ștefan Ciobanu, Ion Ețcu, the one born under the sign of trials, or Anatol Ciobanu, a defender of the mother tongue. The fourth part contains extremely interesting articles on historiography against the retrograde spirit or on the Romanian language in the context of diglossia.

I have read with interest the book of Teodor Cotelnic and I have noticed that everything makes us aware of the desire to relive patriotism, a feeling well closed in the intimacy of the soul, because of the overthrow of the values of the world in which we live and where we cannot find our place any longer.

We thank Teodor Cotelnic for the memorable history lesson, for the lesson of necessary and steady patriotism he *teaches* us in the pages of this book, which we strongly recommend with the warmth of Romanians everywhere.

Today, in an uncertain and confusing geopolitical context, the linguist-patriot Teodor Cotelnic from the Republic of Moldova demonstrates to the entire world, through this document-book, that the Romanian language deserves all our love and devotion and that, if you truly want to be a Romanian, you have to do everything so that “you can be one”, as another great Romanian, Grigore Vieru, used to say.