

A CULTURAL ARISTOCRACY? ROMANIAN INTELLECTUALS AND THEIR CRITICS

*by Cosmina Tănăsioiu**

Abstract:

This paper uses the pretext of a book review to examine the performance of Romanian intellectuals as public actors. It sets to analyse the reasons behind the latest controversy to emerge within the Romanian intellectual community. This paper identifies two main causes behind the conflict: the personalisation of the argument through the use of a case study and the resemblance between the matrix used to explain the perpetuation of an intellectual group dominance with the matrix used by intellectuals to criticise the Communist Party's policies and the post-communist ruling elite's techniques to maintain control over Romanian politics. The paper considers these causes within the wider context of Romanian post-communism. This paper also investigates the presence of "prestige groups" within the Romanian intellectual community and their ability to dominate the Romanian cultural world and the market of ideas. It considers the mechanisms that make cultural dogmas acceptable. As such, the paper reflects upon the role of intellectuals in post-communist societies, examines their political culture and the public discourses they produce. This paper deals primarily with ideas and language and applies a discourse analysis approach. In analysing written texts, this paper considers them within the nexus of social relations where they were created. The paper argues that the aftermath of the publication of "Boierii Mintii" confirms the thesis of Romania being a status society and the perpetuation of the "them/us" dichotomy as the instrument applied to understand the world.

Keywords: Romanian intellectuals, status society, prestige groups, public discourse

* Dr Cosmina Tănăsioiu is a professor with the American University in Bulgaria, European Studies Programme