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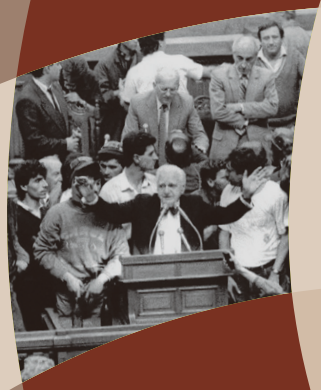


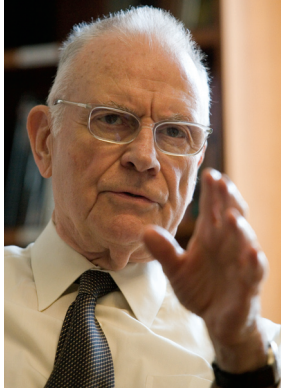
THE ION RATIU DEMOCRACY LECTURE

WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS

Democracy as a Challenge

Professor Anatoli Mikhailov
Recipient of the 2007 Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture Award

The Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture Series
Edited by Christian Ostermann and Mircea Munteanu



INTRODUCTION

Lee H. Hamilton, President and Director
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

I am pleased to present the text of the 2007 Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture, delivered at the Woodrow Wilson Center by Professor Anatoli Mikhailov, rector of the European Humanities University, who is currently in exile in Vilnius, Lithuania.

A highly respected expert in the field of German philosophy, Dr. Mikhailov is the Rector of the European Humanities University, a university he established in Minsk in 1992 in order to provide an alternative to the established educational system inherited from the Soviet Union. After President Alexander Lukashenko took office in 1994, and especially after he began instituting "reforms" to consolidate his power, the European Humanities University became a focal point of civic opposition. In 2004, the Lukashenko regime ordered the university shut down, and Mikhailov was forced to leave the country. He has been in exile in Lithuania ever since. With financial assistance from the European Union, the University reopened in 2005 in Vilnius, and is currently home to 270 graduate students in addition to a number of students who are engaged in long distance learning.

Professor Mikhailov's keynote, entitled *Democracy as a Challenge*, marked the third annual Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture, and was the second of its kind to be held at the Woodrow Wilson Center. The Center's inaugural event, held in 2006 was the first step in our annual cooperation with the Ratiu Foundation and the Ratiu Democracy Center.

The purpose of the Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture is to bring visibility and international recognition to the ideas and accomplishments of individuals around the world who are working on behalf of democracy. The event expresses the deep commitment to democracy of the late Ion Ratiu through his contributions as a Romanian politician as well as his interest in democratic change worldwide.

The Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture strives to enrich the intellectual environment in which ideas about democracy and democratic change circulate, both within and beyond Washington. It seeks to make available for students, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers the experience and insights of individuals whose work and commitment on behalf of democracy are broadly in keeping with those of Ion Ratiu and to provide opportunities to engage a wide range of Washington-based and international audiences to increase their appreciation of the contribution that individuals can make in advancing democratic change.

Equally important, the Lecture aims to be of value for the individuals who are selected to participate, providing opportunities to reflect and learn, and to benefit from individual and institutional resources that are uniquely available in Washington, including meetings with U.S. government officials.

The 2008 recipient of the Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture Award, Ms. Eleonora Cercavschi, the principal of Stephen the Great High School (Stefan Cel Mare Si Sfint Lyceum) in Grigoriopol, Moldova and a dedicated democracy and human rights activist in Moldova's separatist Transnistrian region, will deliver a speech on *Democracy and Freedom as Fundamental Human Rights*.

We very much expect that this year's Lecture will repeat the success of the preceding events and bring a new dimension to the series. The keynote address and the entire proceedings will be available for viewing at www.wilsoncenter.org/ratiu after the event.

I would like to conclude by expressing our gratitude to the Ratiu Family Foundation and the Ratiu Democracy Center for their continued support.

Lee H. Hamilton

THE RATIU DEMOCRACY CENTER

The Ratiu Democracy Center is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization based in Transylvania, Romania. Through its varied programs and projects the Center seeks to promote values and behaviors associated with democracy, open society and multiculturalism. It was founded in July 2004 with the support of the Ratiu Family Foundation based in London, UK and leading faculty members of Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

The Ratiu Center is particularly active in the fields of democratization and civil society building through programs and projects that aim to improve the quality of democratic life and civil participation in the public sphere. The Center's beneficiaries range from specific groups (such as students, academics, women, teachers, pensioners, or those with special needs) to wider audiences such as whole communities (for example as an organizing partner of Turda Fest, a well-established Transylvanian community agricultural festival).

The Ratiu Center for Democracy is also involved in several international projects including the prestigious annual Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture in association with the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington, D.C. This public lecture, launched in 2005, is complemented by an award made by the Ratiu Family Foundation, as a means of encouraging and rewarding men and women of principle, thinkers as well as activists, struggling to implement democratic values and behaviors in parts of the world where these are either emerging or under threat.

The Ratiu Center team combines the energy of its younger members (including over 230 registered volunteers) with the expertise of its 24 professionals (both "town" and "gown," activists and academics) organized according to four principle modes of intervention that constitute the Center's four main departments: "researching," "learning," "informing," and "applying" the values and behaviors associated with democracy.

The Ratiu Center distinguishes itself by promoting "democracy as a way of life," the principle adhered to and promoted by Ion Ratiu (1917–2000), the life-long Romanian opponent of communism and advocate of democracy worldwide. This international perspective is complemented by programs and projects that are also distinctly local, focusing on the particularities of Transylvanian and Romanian post-1989 transition society.

–Indrei Ratiu, Director

INTRODUCING ANATOLI MIKHAILOV

Ambassador David Swartz

I am grateful to the management of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and of The Ratiu Family Charitable Foundation for inviting me to participate in the introduction of Professor Anatoli Mikhailov as recipient of the 2007 Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture Award. Having been closely associated with and a friend of Anatoli for nearly 16 years, I feel at least somewhat qualified to fulfill this role.

It is quite fitting that today's meeting is taking place at, and under the auspices of, the Wilson Center. Belarus' one experience with democratic governance as an independent state occurred during an all too brief period following World War I under the impetus of Wilsonian principles of democracy and national self-determination. Incidentally, Belarus' government then, which went into exile following the country's forced incorporation into the Soviet Union, has continued to exist and function essentially without interruption until the present.

For me to adequately sketch for you a picture of Professor Mikhailov, it is necessary first to establish a context, so I ask for your patience and understanding as I devote a moment to that.

I arrived in Minsk in early 1992, just weeks after Belarus' Stanislav Shushkevich,[1] together with his Ukrainian and Russian colleagues, sealed the demise of the Soviet Union at Belovezhskaya Pushcha, creating the Commonwealth of Independent States.[2] I traveled to Belarus by road, having borrowed a vehicle from the then-U.S. Mission in West Berlin and then transiting Poland. At Brest, on the Poland-Belarus frontier, I found disorganization bordering on chaos. No controls, no border authorities-at least none in uniform. Mysterious individuals in jeans and leather jackets circulated about, selling Soviet gasoline coupons for whatever they could get. In Minsk itself I found a palpable sense of angst among a populace more or less set loose to fend for itself, a cold water shock if ever there was one after the strict controls and discipline of the Soviet era.

Stanislav Shushkevich was the de facto head of state in the new Belarusian government by virtue of his position as chairman of the then-Byelorussian Supreme Soviet (the Parliament). Through a historical quirk of fate and thanks largely to Gorbachev's "new thinking," non-ideologues such as Shushkevich could and were being elected not only to the national Supreme Soviet in Moscow but also to the republic parliaments. As the Soviet Union was collapsing, and thanks to the fact that his predecessor had supported the coup attempt against Gorbachev in August, 1991, Shushkevich was selected by his peers as head of the Parliament. His position, however, was accompanied by very little practical power or authority, and the government was run by the long-time communist Vyacheslav Kebich. Shushkevich's position was also eroded by strong opposition from a relatively small but very vocal parliamentary faction led by Zenon Poznyak.[3]

Of course, Shushkevich was consumed with trying to establish meaningful governance through the legislative process while surviving politically. One day I told him that while I valued our near-daily contacts, he was far too busy to meet me whenever I called him with a new request from

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Washington. I asked him if he could suggest a trusted aide I could maintain contact with. "By all means," he replied with an alacrity scarcely masking his relief over my suggestion. "Anatoli Mikhailov is my closest and most trusted advisor," he said, "and you can rely on him." Anatoli was a professor of philosophy at the Byelorussian State University, Shushkevich said, but I shouldn't hold that against him.

So I called Anatoli and invited him to lunch, and the rest—as they say—is history.

Of course I had grave doubts that a philosopher could be decisive, concrete, and operational in outlook. Anatoli quickly dispelled those concerns, and we established a relationship that changed my life, both professionally and personally, in profound ways. It was at that first meeting that I learned details not just of Anatoli's advisory role as well as his seemingly quixotic plan to establish a new, non-state institution of higher education. I confess, at the time I was rather disinterested with this news. Washington had other priorities in Belarus, denuclearization being item number one.

Our relationship quickly, and I suppose naturally, evolved from one of professional interaction on matters of state-to-state relations to one of genuine friendship and, I may say, affection. Anatoli was the type of person I hypothetically knew existed in the Soviet Union. Yet, the artificial but very effective barriers against interpersonal contacts and relationships between U.S. diplomats and Soviet citizens thrown up by the Soviet authorities had always prevented me from meeting someone like him. Anatoli personifies a value system built on uncompromising integrity, decency, honesty, commitment, loyalty and hard work. His one flaw—one I constantly tease him about—is a tendency toward gloominess and pessimism, a trait no doubt attributable to his academic overexposure to German philosophers. Unfortunately, his pessimism has usually turned out to be amply justified.

One example of Professor Mikhailov's operational acumen in the diplomatic world will probably suffice. In late 1993 Washington announced that President Clinton would shortly be visiting Belarus. The purpose was to demonstrate support for Chairman Shushkevich, following the successful withdrawal of Soviet-era nuclear weapons from Belarus to Russia and Belarus' adherence to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear state.

Quite late in the planning process, I learned from staffers in Washington that the President was scheduled to deliver a speech at a particular factory in Minsk. Unknown in Washington, this factory was a bastion of pro-Soviet recidivist sentiment; how the speech got into the schedule is another story. The embassy strenuously and, ultimately successfully, opposed this event. Anatoli and I were in constant contact on this and related matters, and it was in this period that our so called "cemetery walks" became a regular event.

Anatoli came up with the idea of President Clinton giving a rewritten speech before an audience of young Belarusian intellectuals in the auditorium of the Belarus Academy of Sciences as a substitute for the factory event. At the last minute, the White House agreed. Anatoli and his team went into overdrive organizational mode. Due in large part to his efforts, President Clinton made an excellent and very well received speech before an overflow gathering of the country's future elites. I have no doubt that many or all of those individuals are even at this moment penetrated deep into Belarus' infrastructure, remembering to

this day their session with the American president and working, each in his or her own way, toward Belarus' democratic renaissance.

Throughout the first period of Belarus' post-Soviet independence, Anatoli found the energy and intellectual focus to pursue what he has called—with irony in light of subsequent events—"a romantic experiment of intellectuals determined to challenge the conservative traditions inherited from Soviet higher education." The European Humanities University, founded in those turbulent first months of independence in 1992, was the result. The university's first mission statement set out this goal: "[...] to contribute to the formation of a new generation of highly educated professionals in the field of economics, public life, and culture, capable of leading Belarus away from the heritage of totalitarianism toward an open society, based on the values of European civilization."

Sixteen years of post-Soviet Belarus history confirm that societal transformation is not only a complicated matter—for example the "shock therapy" approach—but one that is supremely country-specific throughout the region. We may justifiably ask: "What is a Belarusian?," or, put another way, what is the Belarusian identity? Can it be quantified? Is it the Soviet Russian military officer from the Strategic Rocket Forces now living in retirement in Minsk with his Belarus-born wife, their children, and their families-all Belarus citizens? Is it the Belarusian industrial manager whose factory during Soviet times was part of the military-industrial complex of which Belarus was a leader? Is it the rural population? Or is it perhaps the urban intellectual elites, politically active and very tuned in, to developments in both the near- and not-so-near abroad? Or perhaps Belarus' youth with their passion for rock music, both indigenous and foreign, and for "Shrek?"

The case can be made that to the extent the current regime in Belarus enjoys popular support it is precisely because Belarus society is not monolithic but very diverse. And its diversity is in large part a function of the fact that Belarus was not only highly Russified (and it was), but also that it was highly and deliberately militarized and infused with large numbers of ethnic Russians to run the military and industrial support infrastructure there.

It may be true that all societies ultimately are transformed through the process of education, which is a key place where values are implanted and *Weltanschauung* formed. But if the proposition is true anywhere, then it certainly is in Belarus. I recall that in my confirmation hearing for becoming ambassador to Belarus, a senator who shall remain nameless

RATIU FAMILY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Ion and Elisabeth Ratiu established THE RATIU FOUNDATION UK in London in 1979. The main objective of the Foundation is to promote and support projects which further education and research in the culture and history of Romania and its people. Projects, undertaken in Romania, are encouraged on different subjects, such as patrimony, civil society, democracy, civilization, and environmental protection. (www.ratiufamilyfoundation.com)

asked me this: "I was recently in Belarus," he said, "and I was shocked to see so many statues of Lenin still in place everywhere. What are you going to do about getting rid of them?" I replied something along the lines of: "If we follow prudent policies for encouraging social transformations, the statues will take care of themselves." To the extent the statues have disappeared, we can thank people like Anatoli and his vision of non-state higher education as the motor driving this process.

But the process of democratization in Belarus is exceedingly, and perhaps uniquely, complicated. Unfortunately, Professor Mikhailov has paid a heavy price for his commitment to that process. His was the vital work of establishing the European Humanities University and nurturing it through a very complicated and—for the past 12 years and more—hostile period. He has been uprooted from his home and compelled to live and work in a different and unfamiliar environment. He has been unjustly persecuted and harassed for simply trying to offer values, ideas, and concepts to the new generation of Belarusians. I say "to offer," not "to compel." We are not speaking of revolution here, but rather a normal process of education. He deserves a better fate than has been his so far, but he also deserves the recognition he today receives in the Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture Award.

I am very pleased and honored to present to you Professor Anatoli Mikhailov.

Notes

1. Stanislav Stanislavavich Shushkevich was the first leader and head of state of independent Belarus after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He occupied that position from September 28, 1991 to January 26, 1994.

2. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional organization comprising former Soviet republics. The organization was founded on December 8, 1991 by Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, when the leaders of the three countries signed an agreement on the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the creation of CIS as a successor entity to the USSR. By 1993, 12 out of the 15 former Soviet republics had joined the CIS.

3. Zenon Poznyak has been a deputy of the Belarusian parliament, a three-time presidential candidate, and the head of the BPF (Belarusian Popular Front) faction "Revival." Under Poznyak's leadership the BFP conducted public investigations of the Chernobyl accident, worked on Belarus' Declaration of Independence (1991), fought to restore Belarusian national symbols, and advocated the return of Belarusian military forces sent to conflict regions in the former USSR. Persecuted by the regime of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Poznyak fled the country in 1996, and was granted political asylum in the United States. Following emigration, Zenon Poznyak still leads the opposition party CCP-BPF (The Conservative Christian Party of the Belarusian People's Front), and continues to be an eminent democracy activist.

AMBASSADOR DAVID SWARTZ served 29 years as a career U.S. diplomat, specializing in Eastern Europe and the geographic region of the former Soviet Union. He was appointed the first American ambassador to the Republic of Belarus in 1992. From late 2001 through 2002 Ambassador Swartz served as Head of the Mission to Moldova of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Currently, Swartz is Co-Executive Director of the Center for Belarusian Studies. Founded in 2006, the Center is the first academic entity in the United States devoted to the study of Belarus. The Center's stated goal is facilitating the revival of the Belarus nation through higher education.

THE ION RATIU DEMOCRACY LECTURE:
Democracy as a Challenge

By Anatoli Mikhailov

The word "democracy" belongs to a category of terms which are intensively yet often superficially or even capriciously used in various contexts of our public discourse such that each additional reference to it should imply hesitation to contribute to a rather deepening confusion of its meaning rather than a necessary clarification.

This needed hesitation is, or at least should be, provoked even more by the fact that far too often the inability to promote principles of democracy in concrete circumstances is substituted by loudly proclaimed rhetoric on the subject. It seems that sometimes our belief in the power of words once again approaches the pagan state of mind that relies on the magic power of our quasi-democratic invocations.

Although we all would like to perceive the advancement to democracy as a vitally important task of the present development of society, still there are more than enough various challenges to be taken very seriously that provoke doubt as to whether the existing practices of spreading democracy are efficient or even appropriate in each particular case.

I come from Belarus, a country that became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. For many of us, it was very clear even then how difficult the process of transforming a post-totalitarian society could be. Decades-long domination by communist ideology and practice had left social reality in ruins. However, euphoria and inspiration during that time were so high that the inevitability of progress toward democracy seemed obvious. Powerful mass demonstrations of hundreds of thousands people on the streets of Minsk, who sincerely believed in the forthcoming radical social changes, reflected, inter alia, this mood.

Now, sixteen years after these processes have begun, we Belarusians still find ourselves in transition. But it is a different kind of transition, the one from an authoritarian to a totalitarian regime.

The present moment is probably not the most appropriate occasion to involve ourselves in a detailed analysis of all circumstances and reasons for such a peculiarly regressive turn of events. In what follows, I would rather like to concentrate on the possible lessons to be learned from this dramatic and negative experience—an experience which could have become a success story of democratic development.

We all know that a democratic paradigm as a way of organizing societal life was created within a specific context of European civilization. Its history of more than 2500 years, involving the interplay of various factors, contributed to the creation of what might be called a necessary social prerequisite and intellectual framework of democracy. All of these important elements enabled not only the very idea of democracy, but what is more important, the ability for its practical application. Nevertheless, there was also a recognition that the existing social and historical conditions are never adequate for securing the stability and permanence of democracy. The dramatic nature of the Twentieth Century's historical upheavals has demonstrated in a very convincing way how fragile societal structures can sometimes be and how catastrophic and outrageous the failures of mankind can be in attempting to secure the very basic values of human morality and dignity, despite all the tremendous achievements of scientific and technological advancement.

True, Western social science, philosophy, religion, literature, and art of the Twentieth Century have provided more than enough insights and warnings alerting all of us to have no illusions regarding democracy as a permanent state of

societal affairs. Within the framework of these radical reflections, questions were raised as to what extent the values emerging in a specific tradition stand up to the challenges of the extreme dynamism of our time. Another important question is whether they still possess—if they ever did—the necessary relevancy and vitality for those raised in a different historical and cultural environment.

Nevertheless, at the end of the Twentieth Century, the common confidence prevailed in the West according to which the totality of world reality was perceived in terms of fixed meaning constants typical of Western civilization. The temptation to interpret the collapse of the Soviet empire as a long awaited signal toward further advancement on the road of democracy has had consequences. An important one is that it stimulated international community actions which seemed to ignore, once again, the complexities involved in the practical application of the principles of democracy in circumstances where there was an evident lack of basic constitutive elements for solving this problem.

To identify those elements and to find the appropriate way of articulating them in a meaningful language that appeals to those who belong to a different system of intellectual coordinates—this gradually becomes the highest priority task in the present world. It is not yet clear that the magnitude of this task is fully understood by the international community.

Education for democracy

Widely spread is the definition of our stage of social reality as a knowledge society. Indeed, remarkable scientific progress, industrialization, and technological advances have drastically changed our world. They have contributed to the growing self-confidence of civilization, which believes that knowledge and technology based on the mastery of nature are providing the necessary instruments for the improvement of all spheres of human life. However, the emerging negative consequences of unquestioning reliance on scientific knowledge as a universal tool for solving of all mankind's problems remained for a certain period of time in the shadow. Only now is there growing awareness of the fact that modern science, with its outcomes like nuclear weaponry, global warming, and predatory exploitation of natural resources, has at the same time provided the power to destroy nature and even mankind itself.

Still, the dominating trend in education remains mainly oriented at the acquisition of knowledge—transmitting skills for the technological mastery of nature and society. It takes predominantly the form of *training* instead of what is implied by the German term "*Bildung,*" which only partly corresponds to what is being referred to in English as "*liberal arts education*." It is becoming now more and more clear that within the framework of such prevailing practice of education, the most important issues are often not addressed at all.

It was the German philosopher Immanuel Kant who emphasized the distinction between knowing and thinking. While questioning the traditional definition of humans as thinking beings, he suggested that our ability to think is something that is not always present at all, and thinking can not be substituted for by providing information. Instead of putting confidence in the efficiency of such knowledge, in each particular case we have to find a way *to provoke* human beings to think, and this task does not amount merely to transmitting a certain content of knowledge within the practice of education.

The famous saying of Martin Heidegger, "science does not think," might sound strange and even controversial, but behind it there is a problem, a real danger that certain content of learned knowledge would create an illusion of the ability to apply it to a concrete and always specific situation—while the very nature of the concrete and specific consists precisely of escaping from being grasped through general principles.

Therefore, in each particular case, we need a special *practical* capability for applying our behavior skills in a specific situation. Addressing this not always properly recognized phenomenon, Kant said in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, "An obtuse or narrow-minded person may indeed be trained through study, even to extent of becoming learned. But as such people are commonly still lacking in judgment, it is not unusual to meet learned men who in application of their scientific knowledge betray that original want, which can never be made good."

This problem is becoming even more acute nowadays with the constant growth of knowledge to such proportions that through conveying it in different forms, we find ourselves at a loss regarding the relevant content and methods of educational practice.

Numerous educational institutions are intensively exploiting the growing need for educational skills by substituting the ability to stimulate thinking with providing informational knowledge. In the course of these activities, those who are exposed to such practices are being persuaded that one needs to be introduced to knowledge consisting of ready-for-use schemes, formulas, and recipes for solving particular problems. It corresponds to our natural inclination to look at things in such a way that we impose upon them standardized visions and clichés. These make our lives much easier and comfortable while, at the same time, we continue to neglect Socrates' wisdom of the necessity of waking up fellow citizens who otherwise might "sleep on undisturbed for the rest of their lives."

What is at stake here is not only the matter of mere intellectual dimension. Inability to think makes people receptive to dangerous ways of conduct, particularly in the epoch of *mass society*. Ideologies of political, nationalist, and religious nature may easily ignite human beings for all sorts of radical and destructive behavior.

Thinking is a special type of human activity that emerges only when we are able to liberate ourselves from routine immersion in day-to-day occupations. It means that the very source of thinking is *freedom*. Therefore, thinking cannot be reduced to the mere application of ideas and concepts imposed upon us and prevailing in each particular time—this only makes our lives easier due to the temptation of resorting to something that is always ready for our use. On the contrary, thinking is an extremely painful process when we have to overcome deeply rooted assumptions of our own lives and to pose questions with regard to what otherwise seems so evident and beyond any doubt.

Hannah Arendt, while analyzing the roots of human behavior that provoke totalitarianism, has discovered them in the human inclination to escape free and critical thinking:

> *"We see here how unwilling the human mind is to face realities which in one way or another contradict totally its framework of reference. Unfortunately, it seems to be much easier to condition human behavior and to make people conduct themselves in the most unexpected and outrageous manner, than it is to persuade anybody to learn from experience, as the saying goes; that is to start thinking and judging instead of applying categories and formulas which are deeply ingrained in our mind, but whose basis of*

Democracy as a way of life originates from a free-thinking which liberates itself from being immersed in the given matter, from taking what is imposed on us for granted and from being satisfied with its dissolution in the world of everydayness.

experience has long been forgotten and whose plausibility resides in their intellectual consistency rather than in their adequacy to actual events."

She appeals, therefore, to clarify this predicament of our ability to judge without being able to fall back upon the application of accepted rules as a necessary prerequisite for intellectual development of the human mind.

What is still not fully understood in educational circles is how, through the process of education, can we meet the difficult challenge of efficiently involving human beings in practical behavior corresponding to the basic principles of a democratic society? Democracy as a way of life originates from a free-thinking which liberates itself from being immersed in the given matter, from taking what is imposed on us for granted and from being satisfied with its dissolution in the world of everydayness. Habitual inertia in the form of thoughtlessness that does not want to be troubled by thought is of particular danger for the present world. Clichés of "thinking" and behavior, disseminated through media and spread in public life at large, impose upon all of us universal patterns which suppress critical thinking and prevent us from initiating impulses to individual and responsible actions. The danger for the principles of democracy in this context consists in the illusion that they could be taught and learned as something available, while being detached from particular circumstances and ready for use without their acquisition through particular personal experience. In too many cases, they are reduced to presenting general rules of conduct universally applicable to all possible situations. This overestimation of abstract theory, imposed upon factual reality and practical behavior, demonstrates its futility particularly when we are confronted with the necessity of conveying democratic values to different cultural environments. Instead of *translating* these values into a language with appeal to those who belong to a different cultural tradition, abstract talking about very irrelevant matters is taking place.

No wonder such activity, whether it occurs in Belarus, Iraq, Afghanistan, or anywhere else, does not bring expected results in spite of spending in each particular case immense resources and energy in expectation of positive outcomes. It is hard to believe, but sometimes such attempts look very similar to the efforts of communist propaganda, with its abstract slogan invocations. The appealing power of such propaganda lies in the temptation it creates to believe in the existence of simple solutions to the challenges of our life.

We have to admit that the preconditions for democratic behavior are much more complicated in their essence. The strategy of their transmission has to be not simply reduced to a highly developed intelligence or sophisticated theoretical issues. Rather, it should be aimed at the ability to live in accordance with principles acquired and applied—not automatically without personal and critical evaluation.

This practical approach of properly addressing the issue of democratic values, principles, and behavior is intrinsically connected with institutional structures—structures not always present in given environments. Where they do exist, they demonstrate a different nature of educational activities and are aware of the challenging issue of involving human beings in basic cultural values.

However, educational institutions existing in certain environments often present strongholds of conservatism immune from, and resistant to, all attempts of their conversion into a space where free-thinking can be practiced. Instead of ability and willingness to engage in activities stimulating critical thinking, they imitate education, the essence of which is understood in very unclear terms.

Particularly troublesome are the widely spread initiatives in education that heavily exploit attractive formulations of programs that only seemingly promoting democratic values, though very often

their way of self-identification is presented at first glance in an impressive manner.

In the beginning of 1990s, we established in Belarus the European Humanities University. We articulated its mission: to neutralize the Soviet-style ideological education and create a critical mass of the young generation in the spirit of free-thinking in accordance with basic values of Western civilization. It was extremely difficult to get support for this project and to modify the traditional fixed format of programs of educational cooperation existing in the West. Strong confidence by Western donors in the final success of any project applied in this field, along with functioning bureaucratic machinery, contributed to the spending of millions and millions of Western resources in various currencies while the loudly proclaimed goal of assisting in democratization of the country finally ended with the reestablishment of Soviet-style indoctrinated education. Could a greater paradox be imagined?

This failure to promote systemic educational reforms in Belarus during the past sixteen years—obviously counterproductive and having extremely scandalous results—is unfortunately by no means exceptional. One can cite numerous similar cases where abstract enlightenment activities were instrumentalized by the old-fashioned institutions of higher learning. There are still no signs that proper lessons have been learned and the redefinition of the strategy is on the far-away horizon, if not beyond.

Without realizing that the resistance of post-totalitarian reality to painful changes is much more profound than had been expected, there is even now the great danger of interpreting imitation and mimicry by the ideologically and professionally corrupt educational structures as readiness for transformation. Thus, further useless spending of energy and resources by the West can continue with the same predictably limited or, worse, counterproductive results.

As far as EHU is concerned, after its brutal closure by authorities of Belarus in 2004, enormous energy has been applied to reestablish this university in neighboring Lithuania as a "university in exile." We are confronted yet with a variety of difficulties to becoming an intellectual stronghold for Belarus and the region to demonstrate through our practical activity the very much needed pattern of alternative education when compared with the still prevailing ineffective, conservative, recidivist educational practices. It is highly important to understand how crucial such innovative "implants" are within the framework of an urgently needed new strategy of education in the post-totalitarian space and beyond. With proper support and realistic intellectual assistance they might become elements of an infrastructure of cooperation that is able to produce a new generation of promoters of democracy.

The Role of Intellectuals

Public opinion and major historic developments were often influenced by those who, through their professional specialization, perceived themselves to be more intellectually advanced than their fellow citizens.

This is becoming even more common in our time, when expertise and knowledge oriented at mastering the social reality are regarded as necessary prerequisites for all actions. However, the great concern here is that the temptation to inspire social change is sometimes based on dreamy and wishful thinking vis-a-vis a particular reality and is not always accompanied by the corresponding ability to take responsibility for possible or negative consequences. Far too often, the claim to possess the final authority in judging things and confidence of giving indiscriminate advice are based solely on some self-anointed role of spiritual leadership without proper understanding that the complexities of the present global situation are becoming less and less manageable through the application of

existing experiences (which were, as we all know, not always successful).

Overestimation of the universal applicability of theoretical schemes seems to be deeply rooted in the minds of those who heavily rely on the belief that the ability to present knowledge in the form of abstract propositions—which claim to be true about the social world—gives to them sufficient reason and moral authority to implement it in practice.

The history of mankind has demonstrated many times the negative and destructive consequences of such practical implementation of what appears to be so evident in the sphere of sterile theory.

"It belongs to the essence of being an intellectual that one fabricates ideas about everything," says Hannah Arendt in her book "Essays in Understanding." Contrary to the self-confident estimation of their own moral authority, she also maintains "intellectuals can as easily be led into crime as anybody else." The same, no doubt, can also be said of pseudo-intellectuals and those who make no claims of intellectuality whatsoever, such as politicians.

The difference (and sometimes even the huge gap) between theory and reality is by no means a recent discovery. Generally, intellectuals are much more comfortable remaining in the realm of "pure theory," convinced of the omnipotence of their theoretical methods as universal tools of changing society.

However, this discrepancy becomes flagrant when theory created in specific circumstances of a particular life-world is extrapolated to different social environments. Attempts to impose knowledge on reality, rather than having the courage to face this reality with all its challenges, is the most efficient way of discrediting the self-proclaimed ambitions of intellectuals.

Politics and Populism

Social reality is not necessarily predisposed to the fulfillment of democratic principles, nor may democracy be regarded as a fixed and stable state of affairs which, once achieved, afterward needs only to be supported. The present world is now confronted with various unprecedented challenges and with the necessity of finding solutions to urgent needs. At a time when traditional ways of responding to challenges and needs often becomes inefficient and obsolete, some politicians, in order to be elected or to stay in power, exploit unrealistic promises regarding their possible fulfillment. Extensive exploitation of democratic slogans and phraseology has nothing to do with very difficult task of applying principles of democracy in practical life, which among other things presupposes abandoning illusions about the potential existence of ideal state of affairs in society where all personal desires can be satisfied.

Such manner of provoking ungrounded expectations for the sake of egocentric interests, brings nothing more than frustration and disappointment corrosive to the very idea of democracy itself.

It is particularly important to acknowledge that at a time of active participation on the world scene of new nations and continents, we are confronted with a new reality never experienced before. On the international scene, nations and continents inspired to democracy should be accompanied by very sophisticated and coordinated activities of various assisting actors who understand the real difficulty of practical implementation of democracy as a way of life in each particular case. Instead, the heavily exploited quasi- (if not pseudo-) democratic rhetoric is not followed by responsible actions toward those to whom it is addressed and there is no clear indication as to how it should be accomplished under present difficult circumstances.

The world of the Twenty-First Century is characterized by the replacement of the previous peculiar stability between two major confrontational ideological systems by various emerging new strongholds of economic and political power. Concomitantly emerging opportunities and

challenges created by this dramatic reshaping of the international situation are, unfortunately, not always properly met with corresponding actions.

The case of Belarus: Lessons to be learned

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and independence in 1991, Belarus belonged to those countries probably most predisposed to transformational changes.

How did it come about that in this country with its relatively highly developed science and technology, strategically located between Western and Eastern Europe, the country that in its pre-Soviet history still had traceable signs of European intellectual tradition that is in this country, events have taken place which demonstrate a dangerous trend of undermining stability in the region and beyond? Though such comprehensive analysis of this case is still the task for future analysts and policy-makers, there are some lessons to be learned that might be useful not only with regard to Belarus.

Of course, it should be acknowledged that at first Belarus did not enjoy the proper attention it warranted from the international community. Rather, the Baltic states—Russia, Ukraine, and other republics of the former Soviet Union—received the lion's share of attention from various national and international institutions. However, numerous initiatives related to transformational processes were introduced also in Belarus, all of them aimed at radical changes in the post-communist reality. Advice and consultancy concerning privatization, financial reforms, effective governance, civil society, education etc., were given by various experts at conferences and seminars organized in Belarus and abroad. Hundreds of millions in various currencies were spent with expectations of positive results. Confidence in the inevitability of the final success of these activities was so high that any "Doubting Thomases" suggesting some projects were ineffective were immediately ridiculed. Even at the point when it became clear that the *opposite trend* of development was emerging, very little modified activity, though on a much smaller scale, was still being continued.

The temptation to think about democratic transformation in the long-term perspective is fully justified, but one should not expect to achieve this goal automatically, simply in due time.

What we are confronted with here could be called the "illusionary optimism" of a naïve state of mind. It was based on assumption that societal development is implicitly inclined toward democracy and progress, and all activities accompanying this development inevitably contribute toward reaching this goal.

However, this optimistic attitude ignores the factor of the *resistance of reality,* which, in order to be balanced and formed in accordance with the principles of democracy, has to be influenced in each particular case in a very sophisticated way. This way of dealing with social reality, especially when we face it in a particular distorted and destroyed form—as after the long term domination by the totalitarian regime—is a special challenge for the international community.

The temptation to think about democratic transformation in the long-term perspective is fully justified, but one should not expect to achieve this goal automatically, simply in due time. The necessary elements of what could be identified as a realistic strategy should be introduced in converting existing social reality into democracy.

When, as far as Belarus is concerned, occasional readiness by the international community to accept previous failures is available, that readiness is connected with a hope that this is a matter of

ANATOLI MIKHAILOV is one of the leading personalities fighting for democracy in Belarus. Professor Mikhailov has been exiled to Vilnius for his opposition to the Lukashenko regime. A highly respected expert on German philosophy, Mikhailov is the Rector of the European Humanities University, a university he established in Minsk in 1992 in order to provide an alternative to the established education process inherited from the Soviet Union. After President Lukashenko took office in 1994, and especially after he began instituting "reforms" to consolidate his power, the university became a focal point of civic opposition. In 2004, the Lukashenko regime ordered the university shut down. Mikhailov was forced to leave the country and has been in exile in Vilnius since. The University was reopened in Vilnius since 2005 with EU help and is educating 270 graduate students in addition to a number of students that are taking long distance learning courses from the university.

the next generation, which will lead the country to democracy. But it could easily become a new ungrounded illusion.

It is hard to believe, but in a relatively short time Lukashenko's regime has succeeded in creating a sophisticated system of ideological indoctrination, and subjecting the next generation, at times even by using Western assistance, to achieve his goal. The young generation is being brought up in increasing isolation, in an atmosphere saturated with feelings of fear and dependency from the authorities, being constantly threatened and harassed in cases of behavior not sanctioned by the regime. In this difficult situation, abstract talk about advantages of democracy without any indication as to how its elements can be practically implemented contributes to the growth of disappointment rather than to the beginning of real democratic changes.

Of course, the duty of transforming the post-totalitarian society lies, first of all, with Belarusian citizens themselves. At the same time, we have to remember that overcoming the totalitarian heritage in other cases of the Twentieth Century, even when the existence of totalitarianism had not lasted so long, was accompanied by much more substantive outside assistance. So far that has not been the case with Belarus, leading to obvious negative consequences.

If one believes that the situation in the heart of Europe cannot deteriorate any further in the near future, one should remember the beginning of 1990s when noone expected such developments in Belarus.

Again, extensive references to the case of Belarus are being made to indicate that the way of confronting the challenges of democratic transformation in this particular case are not exceptional. Behind it is the *state of mind* that understands specific social and cultural realities through uniformity of theoretical schemes and subsequently identifies the way of introducing democracy as imposing upon these realities actions incompatible with their very nature.

If, in this relatively easy case, the results of democratization efforts were mostly counterproductive—and there is still no sign on the horizon that positive developments are forthcoming—what can we expect in much more difficult circumstances where even military involvement does not facilitate *per se* the establishment of democracy?

It is highly unrealistic to expect that the energy needed to overcome rigid and fixed ways of actions in this regard will be generated within bureaucratic structures, whether on the national or international level. That is why such initiatives, as one fostered by Ion Ratiu Family Foundation, are so vitally important in this world. Confronted with global challenges we have to ask ourselves whether we are adequate to these challenges in our ability to respond to them in a concrete way. Intensive rhetoric about democracy can in no way replace or substitute for our practical actions, which always implies refusal of routine behavior and even our own ability to overcome ourselves.

UPDATE:
Professor Anatoli Mikhailov

In 2008, Professor Anatoli Mikhailov, rector of the European Humanities University, a Belarussian higher education institution, currently in exile in Vilnius, Lithuania, and recipient of the 2007 Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture Award, participated in several major European and Trans-Atlantic seminars and conferences focusing on democracy building in Central and Eastern Europe.

Mikhailov spoke at a roundtable panel on "Liberation from Totalitarianism: Significance and Consequences to Europe and the World"—part of the international conference *Fall of the Berlin Wall: from Budapest to Vilnius* held in Vilnius, Lithuania on June 5th and 6th, and organized under the auspices of the President of Republic of Lithuania in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Vytautas Magnus University, and the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania.

Later in June, The European Humanities University celebrated its 15th anniversary and hosted a symposium on *Defending the University: Academic Freedom in Central and Eastern Europe*, along with the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Scholars at Risk (SAR) Network. The two events were held on June 20th and 21st respectively in Vilnius, Lithuania. In the same month professor Mikhailov was awarded the Cross of Commander of the Order for Merits to Lithuania.

Professor Anatoli Mikhailov served on the scientific board of the 14th CEI (Central European Initiative) International Summer School in Cervia, Italy, which hosted a two-week long program from September 7th through 20th on *Beyond Enlargement: The Wider Europe and the New Neighborhood*.

Mikhailov offered opening remarks and moderated the panel "MAPs for Georgia and the Ukraine?" at an E-PINE (Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe) think tank meeting on *The Future of the New Eastern Europe*, which took place in Vilnius, Lithuania on October 2nd, and was co-organized by the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University, the Center for Transatlantic Relations, and the European Humanities University.

In November, Professor Mikhailov spoke at the second annual conference of the International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT) entitled *Democracy and Globalization*. The event was held on November 10th in Budapest, Hungary.

Professor Mikhailov is invited to participate in the conference *In Defense of Learning: The Past and Present* scheduled to take place on December 4th and 5th at the British Academy in London.

Future involvements:

Professor Mikhailov will take part in the symposium *Free Inquiry at Risk: Universities in Dangerous Times*, which will take place in Berlin on the 19th and 20th of February, 2009.

"It is highly unrealistic to expect that the energy needed to overcome rigid and fixed ways… will be generated within bureaucratic structures…. That is why such initiatives as one fostered by Ion Ratiu Family Foundation are so vitally important in this world."

UPDATE:
Dr. Saad El Din Ibrahim

In August 2008, Dr. Saad El Din Ibrahim, recipient of the 2006 Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture Award, professor of sociology, and the director of Ibn Khaldun Center for Developmental Studies in Cairo was sentenced in absentia by the Egyptian "Al Khalifa Misdemeanor Court." The court sentenced Ibrahim to two years of imprisonment with labor. He was convicted of harming Egypt's national interests and tarnishing the country's international reputation. The decision was based on evidence from an Egyptian Foreign Ministry report, citing several of Ibrahim's articles on Egyptian internal affairs which appeared in the U.S. press. The articles called attention to the lack of progress in implementing US AID sponsored democratization programs.

Ibrahim was granted bail of 10,000 Egyptian pounds (US$1,890) and his lawyer expressed his intent to appeal the verdict. Dr. Ibrahim was attending a conference in Turkey while the verdict was read, and is currently in exile in the United States.

Presently, Dr. Ibrahim is a visiting professor of political sociology at Indiana University in Bloomington, IN, according to a news feature in DePauw University's Newspaper Profiles published in September 2008. According to the article, in the Spring of 2009, Dr. Ibrahim will move to Boston, MA where he will occupy a similar position at Harvard University.

On the eve of the U.S. presidential election, Dr. Ibrahim gave a lecture at Indiana University entitled *A Middle East Agenda for the New American President*.

"There will always be a historical moment in which the forces that had been gathering under the surface will emerge to produce the coup de grace against tyrants. No society is eternally immune from change and development."

From Saad Eddin Ibrahim's 2006 Ion Ratiu Democracy Lecture, Washington, D.C., 30 November 2006

A Short Note on Ratiu Family History

By Indrei Ratiu, M.A., M.B.A.
Trustee, Ratiu Family Foundation
Director, Ratiu Democracy Center

"Ratiu" (or "Racz" as the name was typically spelled under Hungarian rule, or "Ratz" under Austrian rule) is one of the earliest documented Romanian family names in Transylvania. It first appeared in 1332 when Voivode Thomas Szeczenyi certified that Andrei (aka Indrei) is "Nobilis" (i.e. nobleman) of Nagylak and rightful owner of the lands around the village of Nagylak on the Mures river near present-day Alba Iulia. In mediaeval Transylvania, noble status such as Andrei's entitled a man to many privileges, and especially to land.

In 1396, Thomas de Nagylak (Andrei's grandson) and his men enlisted as crusaders in the army of the Hungarian King Sigismund of Luxembourg who had allied his forces with those of Romanian voievode Mircea the Old of Wallachia and other crusader armies from the West. This turned out to be the Western powers' last stand against the Ottoman Turks' invasion of the Balkans that ended with the Europeans' disastrous defeat at Nicopolis and the permanent loss of all lands south of the Danube to Islam.

Nevertheless, Thomas de Nagylak distinguished himself in the campaign. As a reward for his services, King Sigismund ennobled him. In Transylvania, Thomas' neighbours nicknamed him "Ratiu" or "Racz"—ie "The Croat" ("Hrvac") because he had fought in the land of the Croats—and the name stuck: the family name became Racz de Nagylak.

From the 14th century onwards the family obtained several further titles of nobility. Emperor Rudolf II Habsburg appointed Petrus Ratz von Nagylak, (as the name was now spelled in German), "imperial translator for Romanian relations." Petrus and his family settled in Rudolf's chosen capital, Prague, and fought in a number of his campaigns. Eventually Petrus was appointed the emperor's ambassador to the Court of Russia, in St Petersburg. These promotions are reflected in changes in the family coats of arms at this time; the family leopard not only gained a second head and a Mercury messenger stick reflecting the bearer's ambassadorial status, but Petrus and his descendants also received a new, additional coat of arms in recognition of their Crusader heritage; it depicts a decapitated janissary head (which the family rarely shows).

Since the rights and privileges of nobility in this part of Europe were frequently contested, in 1625 Prince Gabriel Bethlen of Transylvania formally renewed Stefan Racz's Nagylak title (note the Hungarian spelling again). Twenty-five years later in the next electoral contest for the princely title to Transylvania, Stefan duly supported his Bethlen benefactors, but Bethlen lost, and in 1653 the victorious contender, Prince George Rakoczi II, confiscated all Stefan Racz's Nagylak lands.

Stefan Racz's two eldest sons now headed west down the river Mures and settled in the present-day town of Teius. There they entered the service of the victorious Prince Rakoczi. In due course they were rewarded with lands and a title of their own: Ratz von Tövis (note the German spelling). Stefan and his other children, including his youngest son Coman, headed north across the river Mures and settled in Turda, a "closed" city where only people of noble descent resided.

Somehow, the Nagylak Ratiu's—nephews of Stefan and sons of Coman—were accepted in Turda and survived there. All the Turda Ratiu's are descendants of these 18th century fugitives from Nagylak.

Eventually, in 1680, the Turda Ratius' Nagylak title was reconfirmed by Prince Rakoczi's successor, Prince Mihai Apafi I. This 1680 document mentions Ratiu descendants Vasile with his sons Ioan and Vasile.

18th century Ratiu family members also became closely identified with the Uniate Church (i.e. Greek-Catholic) part of the former Orthodox diocese of Transylvania that had united with Rome in exchange for civil rights under Austrian rule. But the promised civil rights were all too slow in materializing.

In 1829 Fr. Basiliu Ratiu (1783–1870) a leading figure in the Romanian Uniate Church, countered

yet another attempt to evict the family from Turda. This was a landmark settlement that complemented Fr. Basiliu's successful resolution of the family's general legal battle against the heirs of the family's Nagylak lands—by this time the family's former neighbors and friends in Nagylak, the Bethlens. Fr. Basiliu was not able to recover the land itself but he obtained substantial compensation instead. To these funds other family members in turn made donations of their own so that in 1839 a new stone Uniate church and a school—both catering primarily to Romanians—could be built right in the center of otherwise Hungarian Turda. Both structures have survived. The charitable foundation or "Eforie" established by Fr. Basiliu in 1867 with the balance of the Bethlen settlement later financed the construction of Turda's central market place (which also survives) and granted scholarships to numerous young Romanians until as recently as 1948 when all assets of the Romanian Uniate church were finally confiscated by the communist regime, and remain unreturned to this day.

The same "Eforie" founded by Fr. Basiliu Ratiu also supported the establishment in 1902 of Turda's first "College of Arts and Trades" which survives today as Turda's "Ratiu College" with buildings erected on Ratiu family land. During the 1930's his descendent Augustin Ratiu played a leading role in equipping the school with adequate buildings and a spirit of enterprise. Although for 40 years of communism the school was known as "Chemistry 2," it has recently revived the family connection and (since 2004) Indrei Ratiu serves as president of the school board.

Fr. Basiliu Ratiu and his illustrious nephew, the lawyer Dr. Ioan Ratiu, took part in and survived the bloody 1848 revolution in Transylvania. Dr Ioan Ratiu, whose statue can still be seen opposite Turda's city hall, went on to champion civil rights for Romanians within Austro-Hungary's officially multicultural empire, leading a 300 strong delegation of Transylvanians to petition emperor Franz-Joseph with a historic "Memorandum" of the civil rights they sought. Although Dr. Ioan Ratiu and his colleagues were jailed for their efforts, his memorable words at their trial were taken up by the press throughout Europe, serving as powerful encouragement to subject peoples everywhere: "Gentlemen" declared Dr. Ioan Ratiu before his judges, "it is not we who are on trial here today, but yourselves. The existence of a people is not for discussion, but rather for affirmation..."

Dr. Ioan Ratiu died in 1902, but his widow Emilia and his daughter Felicia continued his struggle for Romanian civil rights and, once Transylvania had united with Romania in 1918, implementing the principle of national self-determination, mother and daughter focused more specifically on the cause of women's rights in Romania—in which they were pioneers—until their own deaths in 1929 and 1938 respectively.

Also in 1918, following Transylvania's union with Romania, Dr Ioan Ratiu's great-nephew, the young lawyer Augustin Ratiu was rewarded with the prestigious post of first Romanian prefect of Turda County. In addition to a successful law office and his active involvement in the town's College of Arts and Trades, he was also to hold office repeatedly as mayor and councillor at both the county and municipal levels. In Turda, Augustin Ratiu's civil administrations ushered in a period of prosperity (Turda's great glassworks opened soon after WWI), The post WWI Turda of Augustin Ratiu's day quickly became a cultural melting-pot (Romanian, Hungarian, German, Jewish and Roma).

Also present throughout the historic process of Transylvania's 1918 union with Romania were Dr. Ioan Ratiu's private secretary, protege and distant relative Iuliu Maniu, who was to serve many times as Romanian prime-minister during the inter-war period, and his young grandson, Viorel Tilea. Tilea later went on to set up Romania's first national tourist office, the "ONT", and to serve as Romanian ambassador to Great Britain. Here in 1939, he was joined by another young lawyer, Augustin Ratiu's

Ion now committed his life to the cause of unmasking the true nature of communism worldwide through numerous publications, broadcasts, demonstrations and the exhibition of political cartoons.

own eldest son, Ioan (later changed to "Ion" which he considered more pleasing to British ears!).

On his recall to Marshall Antonescu's nazi-allied Romania in 1941, Tilea and his entire embassy sought and received asylum in Britain. Ion immediately received a scholarship to Cambridge University where, already a qualified lawyer, he now committed himself to the study of comparative political systems and economics. Tilea was to die in London in 1974 while Ion's exile from his native Romania was to last almost 50 years. It was not until 1990, after the fall of Ceausescu's communist dictatorship, that he was able to continue his lifelong campaign for Romanian democracy on home territory.

In London, Ion met and married Elisabeth, from the glass-manufacturing Pilkington family, who even boasted a crusader ancestor buried somewhere in Romania's Olt valley on his way to Palestine. After the war, the young couple planned to return to Romania, but in 1946, soon after the birth of their first son Indrei, they were advised instead by Ion's mentor Iuliu Maniu, to "continue the fight for Romanian democracy and freedom from abroad." In 1948 Maniu and Romania's entire democratic leadership as well as all loyal priests of the Romanian Uniate church were jailed by the newly installed communist regime. Most of those jailed, including Maniu and supporters such as Ratiu family member Liviu Cigareanu, died in prison, their bodies dumped in unmarked graves—in fields and on hillsides which can be visited to this day.

Maniu's advice and a long fight with tuberculosis spared Ion and his own immediate family from a similar fate. Ion now committed his life to the cause of unmasking the true nature of communism worldwide through numerous publications, broadcasts, demonstrations and the exhibition of political cartoons. He also engaged in activities specifically addressing the issue of a democratic future for Romania, such as the Cambridge University Romanian Students Association, the Free Romanian Press, (founded in 1957); ACARDA, the Anglo Romanian Cultural Association, and the World Union of Free Romanians, launched at the Geneva Congress of Free Romanians in 1984.

Like his ancestor Fr. Basiliu Ratiu, Ion was also to demonstrate considerable business acumen, first in shipping, later in real estate and media. The family business, managed today by his son Nicolae was to be the platform for yet another development in the family tradition: a new family foundation.

In 1979, Ion and Elisabeth established a British successor foundation to Fr. Basiliu Ratiu's original 1867 Family Foundation, or "Eforie." This was the Ratiu Family Foundation, a British charitable trust, designed for the "promotion of Romanian language, culture and civilisation, and the relief of poor Romanians." In 1987, 120 years after his ancestor Fr. Basiliu had gathered members of his own generation in Turda to establish the first Ratiu Family Foundation—the "Eforie," Ion presented his vision for the new Family Foundation to a London gathering of over 25 family members, inviting all to participate in the new foundation's work, as volunteers.

Today the Ratiu Family Foundation is managed by his son Nicolae and partners with various institutions and organizations around the world in pursuit of its mission. The Foundation maintains offices in London, Turda, and Bucharest that are jointly staffed by professionals and volunteers. Communications technology makes it possible for family members in present-day Turda, London and Bucharest to share in the organization of Foundation-sponsored programs and events as far afield as Phoenix (where the Foundation offers Romanian travel scholarships through Arizona State University) and Washington, D.C. (where the Foundation has endowed the Ion Ratiu Chair of Romanian Studies at Georgetown University, the only one of its kind on the American continent).

Most recently, the Family Foundation has worked with the Center for Democracy, the Third Sector of Georgetown University, and with the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., to develop and organize an innovative annual lecture entitled the Ion Ratiu

Democracy Lecture that seeks to recognize and reward men and women of principle struggling each in their own part of the world to promote democracy and freedom.

More recently in Romania, The Family Foundation funds organizations that include the Ratiu Center for Democracy with offices in Cluj as well as Turda, offering a historic library of 20th century political papers collected by Viorel Tilea and Ion Ratiu—soon to be transferred from London to Cluj; an annual series of open Democracy Lectures in the university city of Cluj; competitions that foster innovative democracy-related social science research; the annual Turda Democracy Gatherings, and a multitude of civil society applications of democratic principles, such as Turda Fest—an annual agricultural fair; debating for young people; various campaigns, such as anti-human trafficking—and a lively local volunteer program.

Fundatia Ratiu Romania is a Romanian humanitarian foundation established by Ion's widow Elisabeth to provide vital assistance to categories of Romanians that other agencies fail to reach, such as children with leukemia in the 1990s, or fostering chronically ill or handicapped homeless children today.

When he died in 2000 Ion Ratiu left neither personal wealth nor major bequests….only family responsibilities: the responsibilities of managing and applying those resources that, like those of his 19th century ancestor, he had left in trust so that the family's work might continue.

Ion Augustin Nicolae Ratiu

Ion Augustin Nicolae Ratiu, born in Turda, Transylvania, on 6 June 1917, was the son of Augustin Ratiu, a successful lawyer, mayor, county prefect and great-grandnephew of Dr. Ioan Ratiu, the leader of the Romanian National Party. A promising law student, Ion Ratiu seemed destined for an academic career, but in 1938 he was commissioned as top cadet at the Artillery Military Academy in Craiova, and in April 1940 he joined Romania's Foreign Service. He was sent to London as a chancellor at the Romanian Legation. The decision to align Romania with the Axis powers later in 1940 appalled Ion Ratiu, who resigned his post and obtained political asylum in Britain. He won a scholarship to study economics at St. John's College, Cambridge, and in 1945 Ion Ratiu married Elisabeth Pilkington in London.

In exile in London after the communist takeover of Romania in 1946, Ion Ratiu threw himself into the struggle against communism, becoming a regular contributor to the Romanian Service of the BBC, Radio Free Europe and Voice of America. In 1957 his book *Policy for the West* was published, radically challenging contemporary Western views of the nature of communism. He then went into shipping and later into real estate, where he accumulated considerable wealth. In 1975, the year he published another work, *Contemporary Romania,* Ion Ratiu decided to devote all his energy to the pursuit of a free Romania. Mr. Ratiu led the British-Romanian Association from 1965 to 1985 and played a key role in the setting up of the World Union of Free Romanians, of which he was elected president in 1984. After the fall of Ceausescu, he continued for some years to subsidize the publication outside Romania of the monthly Free Romanian, which he had launched in 1985.

Ion Ratiu returned to Romania in 1990 to run for the presidency. Although he became member of the Romanian Parliament, and served as both Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies as well as Romania's roving ambassador to NATO, his failure to win the presidency was a grave disappointment to many. Sympathizers continue to refer to him as "the best president Romania never had."

Ion Ratiu died in London surrounded by his family after a short illness, and in accordance with his wishes, was buried in January 2000 in his home town of Turda. His funeral was attended by over 10,000 people. *[Adapted from the obituary published in the* London Times, *19 January 2000.]*

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1625
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