ALEXANDRU DUIȚU (Bucharest, Romania)

IDEAS AND ATTITUDES:
The Southeast European Revolutions of the Nineteenth Century

The Southeast European Enlightenment has been thoroughly studied in recent decades by historians who discovered in this era of deep transformations an illuminating network of intellectual trends. The dramatic conflict between old and new trends sheds light on movements begun centuries ago as well as on activities that rejected convention and tried new ways of thinking and behaving. The Enlightenment that covers, as most historians would agree, the last three decades of the eighteenth century and the first three decades of the nineteenth century is also a period of social and political uprisings. For example, peasants led by Horea in 1784 attacked the castles and fortresses of nobles in Transylvania who had assumed that peasants did not form a "nation" and therefore could not enjoy political rights; moreover, the Serbs revolted against the Ottoman Turks in 1804, as did the Greeks in 1821 when the Philiki Etaireia fought for an independent Greek state. Also in 1821, Tudor Vladimirescu marched against the Phanariots who were ruling in Wallachia, as well as in Moldavia, and tried to restore that principality's independence.

During the six decades of the Enlightenment that form a watershed in political, social, and cultural life, schools began to appear in towns and even in villages. The printed word reached the peasants thanks mainly to schools that had been rapidly

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founded in regions dominated by the Austrians, who stressed "die Notwendigkeit der Bildungsförderung" [the urgency of the educational challenge] so as to draw citizens into social and political activities and to intensify and better organize their work in fields, workshops, and commerce. The printed word reached illiterate groups in which communication was exclusively oral via proclamations and administrative regulations read aloud at marketplaces and in churches. There were also popular publications such as almanachs and calendars for people able to read even if they could not write. Slowly, the printed word made its mark on human minds. Recent historical research of literate culture thereby enables us to understand the pragmatic and combative character of the Enlightenment in Southeastern Europe.

Art historians, literary historians, and specialists interested in political and social life have noticed that new forms replaced older ones during this period. In art, a clear movement toward new models is evident in painting and architecture. Statuary art and buildings began to imitate Greek and Roman models, while painting abandoned the type of discourse prevalent in previous centuries when frescoes had talked about truth and exemplary deeds. Here as elsewhere "the emphasis shifted from the message of mystery to the message of beauty" although "the rationalized version carried the seeds of its own destruction," as we may well observe today.

Literary historians have been fascinated by the many translations appearing during this period. Even though printing was still not widespread, manuscripts included new works that were now read in wider circle. Voltaire, for example, was soon perused by Greeks, Romanians, and Serbs, while works by Fénelon, Gessner, Metastasio, Florian, Campe, and Benjamin Franklin were anonymously translated, for translators still believed that names were less important than ideas. The circulation of these translations has frequently been described as a sudden "Westernization" of Southeast European culture; but a close