
ION IONESCU FROM BRAD – PRECURSOR OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY, STATISTICS AND ACCOUNTING

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Introduction

Ion Ionescu from Brad (June 1818, Romania - December 1891, Brad, Bacău County), son of a priest from Moldova, was educated in Iasi at an early age, where he studied under the guidance of Eftimie Murgu. His studies continued in France, where he specialized in agricultural economics. At just 24 years he became a professor of agronomics at Mihaileana Academy of Iasi, being a major supporter of the agrarian reform in the Romanian Principalities.

He participates in the Revolution of 1848, defending the rights of peasants, fighting to stop the abuse of landlords, what draws the hatred of rulers of the time. As a consequence of his actions directed to people, he is arrested by the Turkish army and sent into exile in the Ottoman Empire, from where he returned eight years later, with an impressive bag of knowledge in agriculture. He was also involved in politics after the unification of the Principalities as a deputy; all his work being focused on peasant rights, trying to represent voters of his college as conscientious as possible. He becomes a reference name in which it meant back then the modernization of Romanian agriculture, as an important practitioner and theoretician; his works are the scientific proof left to those who wanted to pursue his ideas. His concerns were complex, covering multiple aspects from other areas as well such as political economy, statistics and accounting.

Key words: Ion Ionescu de la Brad, statistics, agricultural economy, accounting.

1. The life and personality of Ion Ionescu from Brad

Ion Ionescu from Brad was born with the name Ion Isăcescu on June 24, 1818, Roman, Neamt county, in a Romanian family of modest condition, his parents being Ion and Elisaveta Isăcescu. Dignity, tenacity and love for the rural world were qualities inherited from his father, a famous Roman furrier, which became a priest and later an archpriest. (Rusu, 1991)

At the age of seven, along with his brother, Nicolae Ionescu, he started school in the Roman Diocese, where he was educated in Greek. Later he studied at the White Church and royal school in Roman, where he was named “Ionescu” and where he learned in Romanian. He already knew to play the piano, play theater, spoke several languages, but he could not stay away from the exact sciences. Whenever he got the chance he went to his grandfather in Brad, where he knew best the world’s village.

He studied in secondary school (1832-1835) at Three Hierarchs in Iasi, where he learned history and rhetoric with George Săulescu, Latin and mathematics with Vasile Fabian and philosophy with Eftimie Murgu. Because he was an exceptional student, the principle Gheorghe Asachi, registered him at Mihaileana Academy of Science of Iasi, where, starting from 1837 he becomes substitute teacher of Romanian language and world history in the second stage and secretary of the chancellery of Academy. Most saw him following a career in philology and literature (upon Academy graduation he was known for his translations from French, Greek and Latin), but with the change of economic and social context after the Peace of Adrianople and achievement of freedom of trade, the priorities of intellectual youth changed, including those of student Ionescu. In that period he studied French with the Academy Rector, Professor Maisonnabe, who later supported him to continue studies in France. (Taru, 2008)

He attended a specialization in agriculture in France, with a royal fellowship, helped even by Prince Mihail Sturdza at the renowned school of statistician Moreau from Johanes and agronomist Mathieu Dombasle. Thus, Ion Ionescu discovers, as he himself confessed later, an inborn pleasure. In the spring of 1838 he was led by Professor Maisonnabe at the model farm of agriculture from Roville near Nancy, owned by Mathieu Dombasle. The latter one dedicated his scientific activity mainly to agricultural development in many countries in Europe, including Romania. Here, Ion Ionescu from Brad spent a year and a half, attending entirely theoretical and practical courses on agriculture conservation, chemistry, botany, technology, physics, mathematics, accounting, political economy. The agriculture model studied was the same as the one he tried to apply later in Romania. Although the period spent there by Ionescu may be considered quite short, he managed to gather an impressive amount of knowledge through both theoretical documentation and practical observations in rural areas of France, Belgium and Switzerland. Similar research expeditions were undertaken by him in the years that followed in England, Italy, Greece, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland.

After classes at Roville, Ion Ionescu from Brad went to Auxerres (Champagne) where he studied viticulture and winemaking for six months.

Thus, he combined information acquired and innate abilities in order to obtain, once back in the country, the first Romanian champagne made of grapes at Socola, for his benefactor, the King of Moldova, following the recipes of the monastery monk Dom Perignon from Haut Villiers (Champagne). His studies continued at Bois-de-Senant, near Paris, where he dealt with sericulture. Arriving in Paris, he rented a room at Maisonnabe teacher and enrolled at Sorbonne where he took courses in chemistry, natural history and botany. At the same time, he studied political economy at the National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts. Ion Ionescu becomes aware of the fact that history of agriculture is closely linked to the history of society and that its periods of development or decline coincided with times of poverty or prosperity of mankind.

At Paris he tied close friendships with young Romanians who were studying there, being united by the desire of spiritual and material advancement of the Romanian people. He also established relationships with progressive personalities of French society, living the events that preceded and prepared the 1848 Romanian Revolution. (Rusu, 1970)

In the fall of 1840, ending the journey of studies in France, he returned home with a useful background of information, eager to implement them. Once in the country, he presented to Mihail Sturdza the certificates attesting the successful completion of all the courses, the latter being very satisfied with the results of the young Ionescu. However, to the great disappointment of Ionescu, the first agricultural mission of his career was limited to a position within the cattlemen from the reign field of Cioara (today Fântânele). Remembering that time, Ion Ionescu later wrote: "After four years of residence in France to education, returning back to Prince Mihail Sturdza who spent with me, he sent me to the country where he had cattle and made me cowboy! [...] I went back with saddlebags full of gold money to the prince. He was so pleased with me that stopped me near him, making me a director in the administration of his estates." So, he was appointed administrator of the farm, being also the accountant of the fields of Sturdza. It remained noted that, also in 1840, Ion Ionescu from Brad has provided technical support for the operation of agricultural machinery in the manufactory from Iasi, known as the "factory of Sachetti".

Concerned about the economic emancipation of the peasants, he began to publish articles in various professional journals known at home and abroad, materials in which were presented modern agricultural methods. In parallel, he resumed work at the Academy Mihaileana as the first professor of agricultural sciences in the country (1842-1848). In 1842 he was admitted as a member of the Society of Physicians and Naturalists in Moldova (founded in 1833), where he was colleague with Mihail Kogălniceanu. In 1843 he became

a member of the Central Committee of agronomy and rural economy based in Iasi, which had the mission to improve farming practices in Moldova. Thus, at the age of 24, Ion Ionescu from Brad is the founder of Romanian agronomic education.

In May 1845, at Manjina (now common Costache Negri, Galati county) he met outstanding personalities of that time as Nicholas Bălcescu, Mihail Kogalniceanu, Costache Negri, CA Rosetti, Ion Ghica, Vasile Alecsandri all united by a remarkable patriotism for Romanian country, in a secret society called the "Society of Romanian students," a subsidiary of the group "Brotherhood". Having the same thoughts and feelings with other participants Ionescu contributed to drafting the national and social liberation program which was an important step in preparing the 1848 events. A year later, he went to Grignon where, under the pretext of majors in the School of agriculture, participated in secret meetings of the forty-eighters. (Văcărel, 2004)

On 9 June 1848 revolution began in the Romanian country through the meeting from Islaz, where it was read the Revolution program entitled "Proclamation of Islaz". The essential points for which the authors were militating, including Ion Ionescu from Brad, were considering the removal of censorship, freedom of press and gatherings, emancipation of statute labor, choosing a responsible ruler for a period of four years from all social categories (thus it was intended to establish republic as a form of government). Among other key names of Romanian culture and politics present at the reading of Proclamation were Ion Heliade Radulescu, Stefan Golescu, Christian Tel, Nicolae Pleșoianu and Radu Sapca. Two days later, Bucharest was seized by the fire of revolution (and revolutionary fervor), so Prince Gheorghe Bibescu accepts the Proclamation that immediately becomes the country's constitution. On 13 June he abdicated and it was formed a revolutionary government headed by I. Odobescu and bishop Neofit, being established two specialized committees. The first was the Commission of propaganda, led by Nicolae Bălcescu, which should ensure the presentation and explanation of the program. Second, the Commission of property (incorporated on July 21, 1848), led by Ion Ionescu from Brad as Vice President and composed of deputies, landowners and peasants which aimed to solve the agrarian problem. As Vice president of the property Commission, the activity of Ionescu was tireless, dedicated completely to conducting the proceedings of the Commission (open on 9/21 August 1848), dealing with owners who manifested a reactionary attitude and supporting farmers. Unfortunately, the Commission was abolished on 31 August without the problems to be solved. A controversial proposal of Ionescu, which had raised serious problems for landlords, was that the peasants should be freed

from landowners and granted land redeemed also by them. Along with the intensification of national movement, Ion Ionescu joined Moldovan fighters, with the desire of political emancipation of peasants which attracted the hatred of the boyars.

Ottoman army, called to quell the revolution, arrested Ion Ionescu from Brad in Bucharest. After a few weeks he managed to escape along with other leaders of the revolution, moving to Transylvania, where he stayed until February 1849. There he visited camps of Romanian revolutionaries, their prefects Solomon, Dobra, Buteanu and Iancu, issues related even by him in a letter to Nicolae Balcescu¹. (Csengheri et. Al. 1991)

The revolution was suppressed in 1849, Ion Ionescu being exiled to Constantinople, where he spent eight years and four months. His complex personality and scientific concerns manifested with skill and dedication earned him the respect and sympathy of the Turkish authorities, being appointed member of the Board of Agriculture, director of the School of Agriculture at San Stefano, fulfilling also the functions of expert and imperial advisor. In 1851 was appointed manager of the Grand Vizier Reshid Pasha fields of Thessaly, which he manages to enhance them, and, on those estates, he establish a vocational school for agriculture and three small farms for Greek peasants.

2. Contributions to the development of the agrarian economy

Ion Ionescu from Brad returns from exile in 1857, resuming the fight for the interests of peasants in two ways: as a revolutionist and as a social pedagogue. After the Union of Principalities he moved to Bucharest where he founded several publications in which promoted and defended the rights of peasants and supported land reform. His activities directed towards the protection and empowerment of farmers (including scientific ones) impressed authorities. The boyars are fighting against and put him on trial on charges of causing agitation, so that in 1860 is sentenced to three months in prison at Neamt Monastery.

In 1862 he goes to the Universal Exhibition in London where is interested in the latest agricultural techniques. After the return in the Principalities he founds an agency for the purchase and sale of agricultural machinery. He also was a pioneer in the field of statistics, and in 1865 inaugurated in Bucharest together with PS Aurelian the first exhibition of Romanian agricultural and industrial products. (Niculicioiu, 1971)

Given the notoriety of its concerns, Ion Ionescu from Brad is called, in 1864, by

1. Ion Ionescu de la Brad, *Advices for Moldova census ...*, Iasi, 1859, pp. 2-3

the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza to contribute to future land reform. Following the adoption of rural law in the fall of that year, he was appointed general inspector of agriculture in the country, having the main task to oversight the accomplishment of reform. Thus, for five years he was in office, organized agriculture exhibitions and competitions, has established several agriculture nurseries, led for a period the Institute of Agriculture from Pantelimon and was a professor of agriculture at the Normal School in Bucharest. In this period he has perfected knowledge of the socio-economic realities in the country, information translated into important works published on government expense.

“[...] The improvement of Romanian agriculture so that it is enriching not only for this time, but also for the future [...] without impoverishing the land and oppress his workers.” Ion Ionescu was proud of his origin and that, because of the knowledge acquired, he could help at modernization and development of agriculture in his country. In this respect, he elaborated the first project for organization and operation of agricultural land in Romania that provided instructions for irrigation and grassland. Moreover, proving a visionary side, he proposed valorization through irrigation of sands from southern Oltenia. This idea appeared in 1868, but did not materialized, being resumed much later, in 1950. (Vacarel, 2004)

Despite these and many more activities recorded in the documents of the time, in 1869 the position occupied by inspector Ion Ionescu from Brad is terminated because he did not refrain from criticizing the injustices committed against peasants. After the sudden end of his inspector career, along with his brother, historian and politician Nicolae Ionescu, he buys the estate from Brad (from where he remained with the name by which it is known today), a modest village of Bacau near the Roman. There he installs definitely as an entrepreneur starting a new action by creating a “model farm” of small dimensions made available for peasants without financial possibilities. The farm was designed for large agricultural operations, but also for social purposes, growth and education of orphans, which is why it was called “Brad Agricultural Orphanage”. According to Ion Ionescu from Brad, children should not be raised in ‘closed’ institutions, which offered an artificial environment of training, but in families living on farms in order to fit smoothly into the existing social environment. Thus, Ion Ionescu from Brad was the one who practiced for the first time an action of “foster care”. Later, the farm becomes a real school of agriculture, where also had access other children who wanted to learn, not just orphans.

On September 7 1871 he was elected corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, and in 1876 was elected deputy in Roman (until 1883).

He managed to pass the appropriation law for young couples and the law by which the state sold estates divided into lots to peasants. He was particularly attentive to the mandate he had received and kept detailed reports to the voters.

A good part of his life, for 22 years, Ion Ionescu led the farm-school from Brad, where he practiced model agriculture, applying advanced methods for the respective times. With a recognized authority, he represented the country at international congresses, exhibitions abroad etc. Innovations in agriculture at national level have given during his life a strong impulse to such important area. At his farm from Brad Ion Ionescu introduced scientific crop rotation, he applied the first mineral fertilizers, experienced and certified sugar beet growing in our country and made the first land protection curtains tree. From the farm, the most effective results were spread across the country.

In 1889, Ion Ionescu from Brad began to write his memoirs, based on an impressive amount of information and ideas, the result of remarkable experiences in scientific, political and social plan, which earned him a well-deserved place in Romanian elite.

On 16 December 1891, at the age of 73, Ion Ionescu from Brad is ending his life work definitely, leaving as legacy of the Romanian people, which was dedicated selfless, valuable works in agriculture, economics, statistics and history. He had no direct descendant and never married. Memorial House "Ion Ionescu from Brad" is somewhere on the borderline between Black and Brad towns.

3. Contributions to the development of statistics

Sensing the role of statistics in researching movements that occur in the world of collective phenomena, with all implications on growth, decreasing, diversification and structural changes of these phenomena, Ion Ionescu from Brad has made meritorious contributions to the theory and practice of statistics. Knowing Romanian and foreign statistical literature, he has made important contributions to organizational, methodological and theoretical statistics. (Niculicioiu, 1971)

Although he worked a short time as Director of Statistics of Moldova, being appointed to this position by Prince Al. I. Cuza on July 1, 1859, he held an intense organizational activity, particularly in the preparation and organization of the census of 1859 to 1860. Thus, his theoretical and methodological contributions are the first Romanian scientific statistical milestones.

Later, as president of the Central Commission for Statistics of Romania (which operated between 1865-1866), in his s counties monograph

or as a representative of our country to the International Statistical Congress in The Hague (September 4 to 11, 1869) Ion Ionescu from Brad brought new theoretical and methodological contributions to heritage statistics. The paper “Advices for Moldova census, preceded by some elements of statistics and published by the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Ministry of Interior of Moldova” (Science, 1850) presents an important contribution to the field of statistics, especially in its introductory part entitled “Elements of Statistical “. This can be considered a true statistical manual, the first of its kind published in Romanian.

Noting conception of Ion Ionescu from Brad on the subject of statistics, which he considered independent social scientists who studies those social facts that can be presented in numerical form, stands out however the assessments he conducted on the report between statistics and political economy. Considering statistics as having auxiliary functions to the political economy, he stated “its role is to illustrate the laws of political economy or to substantiate the factual material.” (Csengheri et. Al., 1991)

He also showed particular interest for methodological problems. The methodology projected by Ion Ionescu from Brad on censuses provides grounds for him to be considered the founder of scientific methodology in Romania in this field. It’s also noted the contribution to the formation of Romanian scientific terminology in statistics. Both in the “Advices ..” and the “Instructions of delegate department” developed by Ion Ionescu in July 1859 and sent to delegations of census commissions are formulated and explained many scientific terms regarding categorical system, techniques and procedures of statistics. In this respect, it distinguishes scientific terminology used to express the concepts of statistical observation, statistical unit, statistical series, statistical table, average industry statistics, various categories of land (arable, natural grassland, natural meadows etc.). He also expressed in a general form the idea of selection seen as process in partial research methods applied in social and economic statistics. Moreover, in the census of 1859-1860, he predicted an investigation about how craftsmen organized into guilds earned their living.

In light of real contributions made by Ion Ionescu from Brad to the development of Romanian theory and practice of statistics in the nineteenth century, it is estimated that he is among the most representative personalities with certain qualities of theoretical, methodological and innovative guide to Romanian statistics.

4. Contributions to the development of accounting

Considering the contribution of Ion Ionescu from Brad Romanian at shaping economic thought, the literature has considered him the founder of agricultural economics and precursor of Romanian rural sociology. The wide horizontal coverage of economic issues presented in practical and theoretical works published places Ion Ionescu among the first to have contributed essentially to the development of Romanian accounting science. In this sense, his concerns covering over nearly 50 years are confirmed by publications and correspondence with other scholars of the time. Monographs about important districts of the country are beyond agricultural research, combining, competently, economic and sociological analysis.

During the studies undertaken in France he made contact with accounting issues at the farm-school of Mathieu Dombasle and other institutions, where he learned important things applied after returning to the country by developing the theory and practice of Romanian accounting.

Even since 1844, in his “Calendar for a good manager”, section “About calculations” Ion Ionescu handled accounting issues. He noticed the use of both single-entry bookkeeping and double entry of the defining it thus: “[...] books of account, showing all changes of money employed in household field, crafts and trade ...”. He also refers to the role of inventory: “[...] in accounting, inventory shows clearly all things engaging capital that are done in a household ...”. Being aware of existing accounting techniques at European level in the time, even since 1845, Ion Ionescu insisted on the essential elements of bookkeeping: the log, the ledger, of the balance sheet in the air (a name which meant back then the balance to verify synthetic evidence based on the registry called the big book / the ledger).

During his exile on June 9, 1854, he published his “Report on the administration areas of his Highness, the Grand Vizier Risid Pasha of March 1, 1853 until March 1, 1854”¹ considered the first study on accounting and economic analyses in which were addressed both theoretical and practical issues. The exposure is based on data from the log and lodger, but especially on account of profit and loss and balance by keeping a double-entry accounting. (Ionescu, 1866)

The work is characterized by notes on the role of books and especially through his conception of accounting. Thus the log is used to record all the changes known on the movement of values, while the big book groups

1. (Ionescu, I. (1866). *Compte-Rendu de l'administration des domaines de son Altesse le Grand Vézir Réchid Pacha, depuis le 1er Mars 1853 jusqu'au 1er Maj 1854*, C.A. Rosetti Publishing House, Bucuresti)

methodical accounting operations in accounts. The work is the truest evidence of economic knowledge of Ion Ionescu, who considered accounting not only an instrument of supervision inputs and outcomes, but also a forecasting method used for a better orientation of activities.

Also during his exile, Ion Ionescu fulfilled the role of agricultural science and accounting professor in the School of Agriculture and accounting from Pyrgos-Thessaly, which, moreover, he founded with financial support from the Grand Vizier.

After returning from exile, he was appointed by royal decree no. 220 of 19 September 1859 signed by the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza, professor of accounting, economics and financial policy, developing the first accounting course in Romania. The curriculum consisting of 15 lessons was published in the Official Gazette of Moldova. But only after a few days of the opening of the course, some of his statements have caused displeasure to management and was dismissed. In the same year, in response to actions taken against him he published in the first issue of the newspaper "Romanian Tribune" articles of great documentary interest on accounting, credit and currency. Within these, Ion Ionescu noted some principles that are valid at the present time. Thus, he thought that "any accounting starts with inventory that includes a thorough description of all capital involved" is consistent with current thinking that inventory is the document in which are registered existing means by quantity, quality and value, and the resources means, at any given time. The log is considered "a pool of accounting" because totals and reflects all movements and changes of enterprise values. (Rusu, 1991)

Ion Ionescu recorded also the function of accounts which recorded entries on the left side called debit and outputs on the right, called credit. Moreover, from his considerations on the accounting books, the efficiency and timeliness in the knowledge of object recorded movements taking place in the economic entities is remarkable.

In recognition of its competence in accounting, in 1862 Ion Ionescu was appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works on a committee which aimed accounting organization at the School of Arts from Mavrogen and the School of Agriculture from Pantelimon. In the same year, he published, in the journal "Romanian peasant" the article "Accounting" in which raises the question of training specialists in accounting. From his point of view, a simple introduction to accounting and business institutions is not sufficient, but are required well-trained people who know well the area techniques and especially to interpret the data obtained through the calculation sheet in order to be able to draw conclusions that lead to improved future work. Based on this idea, he argued the need to introduce accounting as a

discipline in normal and primary schools. (Taru, 2008)

In 1870, Ion Ionescu in Bucharest published “A small accounting tractate” in the course “Basic Lesson on agriculture”. Analyzing the socio-economic realities of the Romanian time, he considered accounting calculation system the only mean of analyzing the efficiency of production, especially in agriculture. The accounting was “the art of writing to registers all operations methods of commerce, factories and all agricultural and industrial enterprises.” He reaffirms the usefulness of accounting calculation in all branches of the national economy, sensing the possibility of permanent balance. In his accounting tractate he suggests, moreover, a simplified method of keeping accounts accessible to small and medium farmers, very necessary in the context of the increasing number of small and medium farms after land reform in 1864. According to him, the grower shall keep a one log to systematize the calculation sheet into a whole to reflect correctly changes in household economic activities. At the end of the movements of the main items of evidence should be recorded in eight accounts, the final outcome of all economic transactions and being registered in the ninth, “The account of damages and profits”.

Through his entire theoretical and practical activities carried Ion Ionescu from Brad has noticed among the pioneers of using accounting calculation in economic activity, the first Romanian author concerned about accounting application in agriculture. His contributions have brought a significant value in the development of this essential science of life and human activity.

Conclusions

Ion Ionescu from Brad was a leading figure of the nineteenth century, during which cultural, social and political trends of the world reached the Romanian country with great difficulty. He worked as an agronomist, economist and statistician. His ideas were enrolled in the currents of those times, with names like Ion Heliade Radulescu, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, Vaile Alecsandri and from his international contemporaries we can remember Albrecht Thaer or Mathieu Dombasle, founders of agronomic education in Germany, respectively France.

His entire economic thought, and views on the calculation of accounting, finance and credit, statistics, bears the mark of originality, personal contributions, which reflect the socio-economic realities and needs specific to that period. Through his actions and work, Ion Ionescu from Brad was an initiator for many other researchers, young intellectuals, priests, teachers, doctors etc., which, through their profession, got in touch with the peasantry and had to confront the realities of the time.

For the entire activity, the name of Ion Ionescu from Brad deserves to be included in the receipts of history, maintained as a landmark of scientific and patriotic perfection, as the present and future of our nation to be built on outstanding examples of the past.

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