



## NICOLAE D. XENOPOL – THE FOUNDER OF THE ACADEMY OF HIGH COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL STUDIES OF BUCHAREST

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The fast approach of the centenary of the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest in 2013 awakens again the interest for this institution's beginnings. The founder of the Academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies, as it was originally called, is considered Nicolae D. Xenopol, that initially enjoyed this recognition, only to be forgotten later, and discovered again lately. He was to foresee this when he wrote "The author of this Law [the law by which the institution was founded] will be forgotten, but one thing is to last: the Academy of Commercial and Industrial Studies, an institution that will bring its contribution to the economic prosperity of the country." As a biographer, Ion Vorovenci

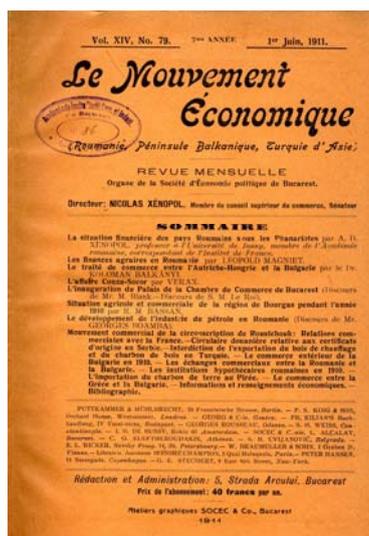
has used as a main reference the book *Doi oameni și o operă, Nicolae Xenopol – Stanislas Cihoski și Academia de Înalte Studii Comerciale și Industriale din București*, published in 1929. (Nicolae Lupu)

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Nicolae Xenopol was born on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1858 in Iasi, Romania. He had two brothers, Filip, an architect, Alexandru, the great historian, and three sisters. His father owned a school where V.A. Urechia, the future Minister of Instruction, graduated, as well as the future Minister of War, during the Independence War, in 1877.

After the high school graduation in 1877, due to his exceptional results in school, the Junimea Society grants Nicolae Xenopol with a scholarship in order to complete his studies in Berlin. After one year of studies in philosophy, he gives up the scholarship and goes to Paris in order to study Law. During the three years spent in the French capital, because of the money shortage, he has to work and study in the same time.

Although in 1881 he returns in Romania for the military service, the military authority postpones his army joining with one year because he was below the minimum required body weight standards. Because of the money shortage, he does not return to Paris to continue his studies, spending the time in his cousin house, Emil Constantinescu, an ex-Minister of Finance, where he writes the novel *Brazi și putregai (Fir Trees and Rottenness)*.



*Le Mouvement Economique*, 1911 (Romania, The Balkan Peninsula, The Asian Turkey), magazine of the Society of Political Economy, Bucharest; director Nicolae Xenopol, member of the Superior Council of Commerce, senator.

In 1887, he marries the daughter of colonel Baicoiano, the Prefect of Mehedinti. Soon he leaves for Paris again, in order to complete his studies. Like other young men of his generation, he involves in the political life. After his PhD in Law, he draws the attention of I.C. Bratianu and becomes his private secretary. He managed to be elected in the Romanian Parliament in all the legislatures of his life. After I. C. Bratianu's death, he quits the National Liberal Party together with Barbu Stefanescu Delavrancea and joins the Democrat Liberal Party led by the famous political figure of Take Ionescu.

Relying on his solid knowledge in law and economics, he founds and directs the magazine "Le Mouvement Economique". He is more and more appreciated as an eminent economist and jurist, becoming an important member in several commissions for the economic treaties of Romania with Turkey, Austria and France. He is highly appreciated by the Prime Minister, Take Ionescu and by the beneficiaries of his legislative initiatives.

As a Minister of Industry and Commerce, Nicolae Xenopol initiates the Law for the organization of professions, credits and worker's insurance, The Stock Law, the Law of Private Enterprises. He also elaborated or supported an important number of other laws on commerce, finance, industry, labour etc. as well as the foundation of a number of associations and unions. He also initiated the finance of the Chamber of Civil Servants.

His most important achievement is the foundation of the Academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies. During the discussion on the law for the foundation of this institution, Nicolae D. Xenopol declared in the Romanian Senate: *"In the great of the Balkan Peninsula, Romania has the destiny of exercising an important role by the superiority of its riches, of its labour organisation, though we must focus our energies if we want to conquer the Eastern markets. In order to achieve this goal, we need now, more than ever, exceptionally well-trained merchants and industrialists. Do you not think it is the high time for the country's commerce and industry to put the foundation of a modern teaching at the highest level? The necessity of such a foundation is a must..."*

The issue of the Law for the foundation of the Academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies generated passionate debates in the Parliament of Romania. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1923, in his speech to support the issue of the law, Nicolae Xenopol points out that this institution will be *"an institution of high culture, independent from the university organisation"*. At the beginning, the name was to be similar with other Western European commercial academies. Due to senator Sabba Stefanescu's intervention, the first article of the law was modified, the words "... and Industrial" being added. In this way, the final name was shaped. The new founded educational institution did not escape the attacks and criticism of a part of the mass media of those times.



*The building located in the Palace Square, next to the present parking place of the restaurant Cina, where the Commercial Academy used to function during 1913 – 1926; on the frontispiece of the building it was written the name of the institution, ‘The academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies’.*

Regarding this academy, the debates were focused on subjects such as the law for its foundation was constitutional or not, or whether the institution had a real utility, or, a very real fact, whether there were qualified professors available to teach in it. We shall focus on this last subject a little more. Were those professors employed on a random basis? Could anyone demonstrate today that they were not competent enough for the standards required? Can anyone demonstrate the lack of scientific and academic professionalism of the founders of the former Commercial academy? At the beginning, the Academy of Commercial and Industrial Studies functioned without having its own building and with only five professors and three lecturers: Anton Davidoglu, Rector and professor; Eugen Ludwig, professor; Stanislas Cihoski, professor; Gheorghe Tasca, professor; Spiridon Iacobescu, professor; Gh. Arghirescu, D.R. Ioanîtescu, Vasile Stoicovici, lecturers. The first members of the Administrative Council were PhD Constantin I. Istrati, university professor and an ex-minister, Gh. Fernic, an important industrialist, and president of the Chamber of commerce and Industry of Galati, Walter Dichin, the director of the Romanian Credit Bank, Gh. Serban, industrialist and ex-president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Iasi, C. Bratanu, engineer and industrialist, Hagi-Theodoraki, D.D. Bragadiru and, as a delegate of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Alexandru N. Stefanescu, ex-director of the National Bank, director of the Romanian Bank. The period when the Academy started to function was not a favourable one. During the year 1913, a lot of companies and firms went bankrupt. Because of the Great War, the years that followed were not better. In spite of the hard conditions, the institution continued to function.

The Academy was founded during the coalition government of Titu Maiorescu and Take Ionescu, two of the most important men of the Romanian political elite. Although he was ungratefully forgotten, Nicolae D. Xenopol belonged to that elite too. A man of an exceptional character, once he is assigned to employ the personnel of the Academy, he selects personalities of the economics domain, well known by their professional reputation. He has a strong belief that the foundation of the academy is a very special moment: *“It is such a happy moment as the courses start in the year when Romania has increased its*

*national assets and the prestige in the Near East. All this is due to the intellectual qualities of the Romanian people and to the wise rule of His Majesty. Due to the great work employed by us, we have been able to settle on such a solid foundation. One thing that bothers me is some people's belief that a part of our people is lazy. Were this people lazy, we wouldn't have had an agricultural production of over one billion, an industry with a 700 million capital and a production of half a billion. This new establishment is nothing but the result of the hard work of this people with moral, intellectual qualities and with a great willingness to work. Though, we must insure this people favourable conditions for its development".* In order to silence those that still doubted the good functioning of the Academy, he applies a very simple and effective measure. Anyone interested in the way the courses were taking place and in the teaching quality was allowed to attend the courses. Though he could have done this, the founder of the Academy refused to involve directly in the teaching process. With a remarkable ability, he succeeded to convince all his political opponents and to silence their criticism, eventually making them admit the evidence, the utility and good functioning of the new institution and the merits Nicolae D. Xenopol had.

One year after Romania joined the Great War aiming to accomplish its national unity, though he was very weakened Xenopol accepted a diplomatic mission in Japan. He had to cross Russia and Siberia, in hard war conditions. During the Great War the diplomatic relation between Romania and Japan had been established. This action was also helped by the fact that Japan had become an important member of the Antanta Alliance. In August 1917, the Romanian Council of Ministries decides the foundation of a Romanian legation in Tokyo and on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1917 Nicolae D. Xenopol is assigned as a Plenipotentiary Minister in Japan by a royal decree.

Being aware of the gigantic material and financial effort Romania had to make for the war, Xenopol decided to leave for his diplomatic mission taking with him only a secretary, determined to do all the rest of the duties by himself. He required no money at all from the Romanian Government, which in the autumn of 1917 was experiencing one of the hardest periods of its history. In Japan, he found a colony of Romanians from Transylvania, run away from the Hungarian authorities, completely deprived of money, shelter and food. Their situation was dramatic. Without a basic shelter to live in, they were working exclusively for food. He not only supported them but also helped them to leave to America, by his intervention to the American ambassador, in order to facilitate them the free travel on a ship and their entrance in the United States. In that time in Japan no foreigner could work for money while for going to America they had to prove they were able to insure the daily leaving.

Nicolae Xenopol dies few months after his arrival in Japan, in December 1917.



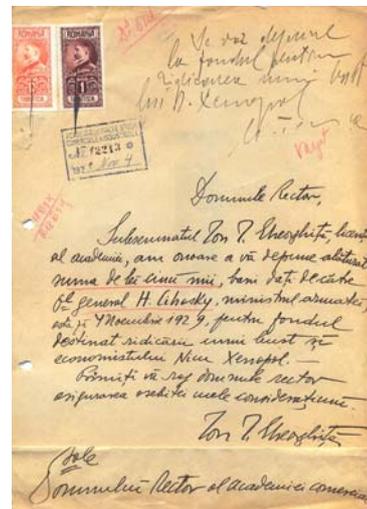
The cover of the book *Doi oameni și o operă*, printed in 1929 after the 15<sup>th</sup> celebration of the foundation of the Commercial Academy.

At the 15<sup>th</sup> celebration of the foundation of the Academy, the professor Gheorghe Tasca paid a tribute to N.D. Xenopol’s memory: “In 1913, N. Xenopol, one of the most respected economists of the country, the director of a most appreciated magazine on economics, is assigned to lead the Ministry of Industry. Very familiar with our economic realities, he was the author of the already classic book on the reaches of our country, realized that the emancipation of the Romanian commerce and industry was not possible without the solid training of a young generation of economists in our schools. An enlighten jurist consult, ex Minister of Industry and Commerce in the Conservative legislation, remarkable speaker and lawyer, he never split the knowledge and faith, a good soul, Nicolae Xenopol was on our political stage the representative character of the accomplished duty, with the price of the life sacrifice itself.”

One year later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1929, the same professor, Gheorghe Tasca, was to receive from a number of former students, graduates of the Academy, 2500 Lei. This amount of money had remained after the payment of all the expenses for the publication of the book *Doi oameni și o operă* (*Two Men and One Masterpiece*), dedicated to the memory of Nicolae D. Xenopol and Stanislas Cihoski, and it was aimed to finance the order for a statue, also in the memory of Nicolae Xenopol.

One month later, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, Ion I. Gheorghita, also a graduate of the academy, deposited the 5000 Lei donated by the general H. Cihosky, the Ministry of War, for the same purpose.

After almost one century since the Academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies was founded, the Senat of the the Academy of Economic Studies has decided the founder of this institution should not fall into oblivion and to order the casting of a statue of Nicolae D. Xenopol. It is the final act of reconciliation of several generations of economists with the past, which, many times, was hostile to them.



The document by which Ion I. Gheorghita, graduate of the commercial academy, deposits 5000 Lei on behalf of the general Cihoski, The Minister of War, in order to erect a statue in the memory of N. Xenopol. On the document, there is also the signature of the Rector of those times, Gh. Tasca.

**References**

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4. The Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fund no. 71, 1920- 1944, Japan, Relations with Romania

\* A successor of the prof. Emil Racila's research on the past of the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest, Ion Vorovenci belongs to the Department of History of the Economy and Geography. As a graduate of the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest and PhD in economics, he makes an inspired balance of the two domains of knowledge. Since almost two decades, he has been a freelancer editor at the History Department of the Romanian Television, author of over 100 broadcasts on history and history of the economy.

After the 90<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Academy of Economic Studies in 2004, in *Pagini de istorie. Academia de Studii Economice din București (Files of History. The academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest)*, Ion Vorovenci published a series of eight interviews with former professors of the Academy. "I have never thought it is so hard to persuade people to be part of the history", he confessed.

In 2010 he published *Istoria Academiei de Înalte Studii Comerciale și Industriale din București, 1913-1947 (The History of the Academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies of Bucharest, 1913-1947)*, the AES Publishing House, the first comprehensive study of the history of this institution. With this publication, Ion Vorovenci reminded the decisive contribution of Nicolae D. Xenopol for the foundation of the Academy and the Senat decided to proclaim Xenopol as the founder of this school and to order the casting of a statue in his memory. The volumes II and III are expected (1948-1989 and starting with 1990 up today) so that the written history of the Academy be completely updated.