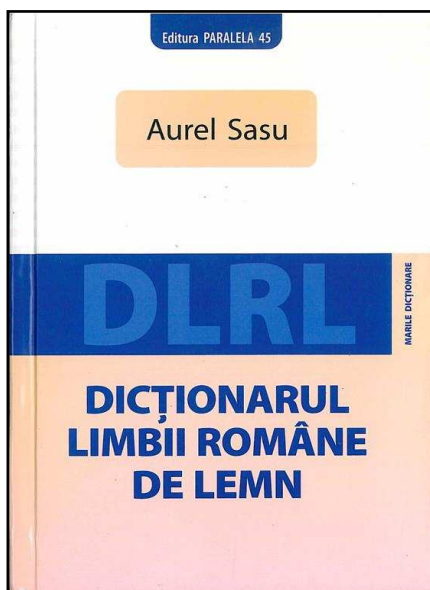


Aurel Sasu, *Dicționarul limbii de lemn*, Pitești, Editura Paralela 45, 2008, 407 p. (Cristina Radu-Golea)



*Dicționarul limbii de lemn* (*The Dictionary of Political Clichés*) written by professor Aurel Sasu is, as the author himself says, not only “a study in the domain of lexicography proper but also a synthesis of cultural history”.

Since political clichés (*limba de lemn*) represent a distorted version of political discourse, more precisely, it is used by totalitarian regimes (in our case, by the communist regime), the author makes use of a vast bibliography (political documents presented during congresses, conferences, plenary meetings or as part of homage-volumes and periodicals etc) to exemplify every dictionary entry properly.

The texts offered as examples by the author show the verbal aggressiveness used by communists to express their so-called valuable judgements. The texts written during the communist period are, generally speaking, a mixture of neologisms, long paraphrases, compounds and metaphors lacking any real analogy.

Through his work, Aurel Sasu proves that, in communism, language in general and political clichés in particular had become an instrument meant to alter man’s consciousness and way of thinking in order to create a *new man/omul nou* – “formarea conștiinței revoluționare a omului nou constituie o parte inseparabilă a dezvoltării economico-sociale, a făuririi noii orânduiri sociale, a ridicării patriei noastre pe noi culmi de progres și civilizație”/‘creating the revolutionary consciousness of the new man constitutes an inseparable component of economic-social development, of establishing a new social order, of raising our homeland at new levels of progress and civilisation’ – Nicolae Ceaușescu, in *Congresul educației politice/Political Education Congress III...* (p. 282).

Those who used the language of propaganda intended to manipulate and change the way people related to society. Therefore, the policies adopted, the actions undertaken by the Securitate and the laws which punished any alternative discourse made it possible for the political clichés to be used and imposed. On the one hand, such clichés are amplifiers of ideological power, since the speaker has authority: “Congresul nostru trebuie să constituie un punct de plecare pentru lichidarea hotărâtă a oricărei subaprecieri a muncii ideologice...”/“Our Congress must constitute a point of departure in the process of firmly annihilating any form of ideological activity underevaluation...” (p. 262). On the other hand, those who are able to use these political clichés can accede to power but only those who master them perfectly (and are faithful to the ideology) will indeed get that power.

Some words acquire a value which is opposed to the one they have in natural languages. For instance, the word *hatred/ura* acquires a heroic connotation since it is addressed to class enemies, i.e. the capitalists (bourgeois and landowners) and *love/dragostea* is a feeling that people experience not in relation to their fellows (as it would be natural) but in relation to the unique party or, even more abnormally, to some newspapers or periodicals: “Dragostea pe care oamenii muncii o nutresc *Scânteii*, organul Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român, și celorlalte publicații ale partidului constituie o puternică expresie a încrederii de nestrămutat cu care masele urmează partidul nostru”/“The love that working people feel for *Scânteia*, the official press organ of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party and also for the other publications of the party strongly express the confidence that masses have in following our party’s policy’ – Congresul III P.M.R... (p. 128).

Due to *Dicționarul limbii de lemn (The Dictionary of Political Clichés)*, written by professor Aurel Sasu, the young generations who did not live during the communist period will have access to ‘the irreality of the egalitarian paradise’ (*irealitatea paradisului egalitar*), and will be able to better understand the clichés, stereotypes and ambiguities of a language which had become an instrument of domination for the Romanian totalitarian regime.