

## **About the Evolution of Pre-Revolutionary State** (Abstract)

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Announced in the programme of the event called *The Old Regime and Democracy*, the lecture given by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie on 28 March 1996 in the “N. Iorga” amphitheatre of the Faculty of History of Bucharest represents an analysis about the becoming of the pre-revolutionary state. The author developed the same ideas in an English version on the occasion of the commemoration of Jefferson, at Monticello, subsequently published in French under the title: *About the History of the Modern State: from the Old Regime to Democracy. Reflections Inspired by Guglielmo Ferrero’s Ideas*, in the “Commentaire” magazine, N° 75, fall of 1996, and then resumed in the volume *L’historien, le chiffre et le texte*, Fayard, 1997, p. 467-486.

The essential interest of the analysis is represented by the reinterpretation of the French Old Regime from the perspective of the famous Italian political analyst and historian Guglielmo Ferrero, the author of a remarkable synthesis in six volumes about the *grandeur and decadence of Rome* (in Italian: *Grandezza e decadenza di Roma*, 5 volumes, Milan, 1901-1907; in French: *Grandeur et décadence de Rome*, 6 volumes, Paris, Plon, 1902-1908).

But the lecture of the French historian in Bucharest is somehow original compared to the reminded lines. It starts from several topical questions related to the principles of “submission” and “legitimacy”, as vectors of the way society functions today and in other periods; these are questions like – how one could explain the individual’s (either citizen or “subject”) relation of submission to the authority represented by the State, such as payment of taxes, fulfilment of the military service, etc.

For the author it was a good opportunity to develop an impressive amount of reflections and to present a panorama of the evolution of democratic values in the spirit of “long duration”, even if the father of this perspective, Fernand Braudel, demonstrated no special appetite for political history. This ride “at a gallop” in order to evoke the diversity of systems of legitimacy in history thus allowed the author to give the Romanian public several conclusions of (not only) historical interest. The first is the trust in the advantages provided by democracy in the evolution of peoples, an opportunity for the historian present in Romania to share his message of optimism with a country where the process of democracy construction had earned the deserved place.