

WOLFGANG VIERECK, A rejoinder to MARIO ALINEI, Forty years of ALE [Atlas Linguarum Europae]: memories and reflexions of the first general editor of its maps and commentaries, *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique (Romanian Review of Linguistics)* LIII, 1–2 (2008), 5–46.

As, apparently, nobody from the Atlas team felt the urgent need to put Alinei at the centre of the project, he figured he should do this himself. This, usually, is an unfortunate motivation. Alinei proceeds to proudly inform the reader that he was actually co-founder of the project, although, there are certainly divergent views relating to this claim, see, e. g., Jan Berns, “Professor Dr. Toon Weijnen – Pioneer in geolinguistics, founder and first president of the *Atlas Linguarum Europae*”, *Dialectologia et Geolinguistica* 10/2002, 97–98; see also Jan Berns in *Dialectologia et Geolinguistica* 16/2008, 111 (obituary on Weijnen).¹

Judging from the basic motivation of the whole article, it comes as no surprise that Alinei saw himself as playing the most decisive role in the (history of the) project. Compared with himself, Weijnen, the first president and a real gentleman, fares far less positively, to put it mildly. Alinei chose to publish his musings at a time when Weijnen had just died and could no longer react and present his own views. Such behaviour displays a distinct lack of class on Alinei’s part.

Other comments are also disturbing, such as “I remember my embarrassment, in Holland, when – following the Mediterranean custom – he [Boris Cazacu] would take me arm in arm, and I would fear that that kind of “intimacy” would be mistaken by my Dutch colleagues” (p. 41) or “Pavle Ivić was the only member of the Editorial Board with whom I developed a real close, brotherly friendship...” (loc. cit.). There are more such comments on other scholars once associated with the ALE. What impressions did they make on Alinei? Does anyone really care?

On his successor as ALE President Alinei has this to say: “In his [Prof. Viereck’s] numerous illustrations ... he has become the strongest supporter of the ‘cultural significance’ of the ALE, identified with my ‘three stage theory’ of European evolution ...” (p. 12f.). “And I find it even more flattering that Prof. Viereck usually presents my theory as a sort of ‘received doctrine’, without referring to me or to my publications, as if I were a sort of ‘sacred’, Chomsky-like authority ... to whom you don’t even need to refer in presenting his established theory to the outside world” (p. 13). Apart from the fact that I most certainly do not consider Alinei a sort of “sacred” authority, nor a “sacred” anything for that matter, it is a simple truth that the two pre-historical layers were recognised already, above all, by the cultural morphologists in the 1920s and 1930s, the debt to whom I acknowledge in my contributions. In view of the ALE results, the third, historical, layer just follows automatically. So much for “his” three-stage theory. What is more, Alinei lists three of my papers, but fails to note that in everyone of them his name and some of his publications are mentioned!

¹ The following evidence clearly points to Antonius A. Weijnen as founder of the *Atlas Linguarum Europae*. Pavle Ivić, Alinei’s intimate friend, noted that „Weijnen ist der Initiator und der Organisator der Arbeit am ALE“ (1980: 371) and A. Weijnen remarked: « C’est alors que, d’une part, Mario Alinei a cherché la possibilité de réaliser son projet d’un atlas linguistique de l’indo-européen, ... et que, d’autre part, le Centre Dialectologique et Onomastique de l’Université de Nimègue a décidé d’entreprendre un atlas interlingual» (1981 : 14).

Alinei continues: "...he [Prof. Viereck] is the first scholar ...who has clearly seen, and made explicit, the connection between the 'three-stage theory' of my early ALE publications, and the Palaeolithic Continuity Theory ..., which I presented in the two volumes on the origins of the European languages ...and in later works..." (p. 13). This is certainly much more than overstating the case. I simply mentioned Alinei's approach as strongly diverging from the mainstream. Indeed, mainstream historical linguists widely rejected Alinei's Palaeolithic Continuity Theory (RRL 2008: 251). It is, after all, an interesting alternative with a possible parallel in the Uralic area. Everything going back so far in time is largely speculation. But to account for the amazing motivational semantic parallelisms in those early periods across languages two possibilities existed: either peoples/languages travelled or, if they did not, then concepts must have done.

Alinei continues: "He [Prof. Viereck] is also the only ALE author who has explicitly applied the three-stage theory to new dialect material, as for example in his article on the names of diseases (Viereck and Viereck 1999) (in which, however my previous work on the same topic is not mentioned)" (p. 13). First, it is not my article alone, as I published it together with my wife. Second, why does Alinei not disclose where he treated names of diseases? Perhaps because they were so few in number and the emphasis was on something else? Of course, he had to refrain from mentioning my contribution to Pavle Ivić's memorial volumes (Viereck 2000) which he must have been familiar with, as Ivić, as we know, shared such a close, brotherly friendship with him and Alinei also contributed to these memorial volumes. My contribution there alone would have ruined Alinei's so-called arguments completely. In Viereck 2000 I deal with names for bread and in Viereck 2003 with childrens' rhymes, realia that Alinei apparently did not even touch.

In 1992 I was elected Vice-President of ALE acceding to the presidency a few years later. This, of course, is the normal procedure. When I became President, Nicolae Saramandu became Vice-President. When the time came for me to step down also from my chair at the University of Bamberg, I discussed with the then President of the Romanian Academy of Sciences the possibility to add this project to the many worthy projects in dialectology the Academy is justly proud of. After all, financial matters were also involved. I also made it plain that Nicolae Saramandu would be my worthy successor. At about the same time Alinei wrote to ALE members warning that should Nicolae Saramandu succeed me as President with the General Secretariat to move to Bucharest this would mean the death of the project! This was a very naughty act indeed. Nicolae Saramandu has been President for almost five years now and I, for one, am happy to say that the project is as alive now as it has ever been. It speaks volumes that the same person whom Alinei attacked some years ago, nonetheless, has permitted him to publish his "reflexions". Perhaps Alinei might learn something from Nicolae Saramandu's modesty and gentlemanly behaviour. One should never give up hope.

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