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ANTIFASCISM IN ROMANIA

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"The Subtle Weapon of Intelligence"

Entering the orbit of modern civilization, with some lags caused by foreign oppression which had lasted for many centuries; with a political régime of a bourgeois type, in search of its own identity and some institutionalized forms of sovereign government; going through the experience of two world wars, which laid waste its territory, exhausted its wealth and mowed down its male population, as well as through the one of two revolutions, in which it firmly pronounced its will for unity and independence — the Romanian people worked, learned, created and fought for its homeland, Romania, to be able to carry out its mission of a free and civilized state.

With a population which, in September 1939, had reached the figure of 20,000,000 inhabitants, with barely above 10,000,000 persons accounting for the nation's active human strength — a foundation for labour and defence — Romania was referred to as a *medium-size state*. It fell into the last group of the European states (divided into seven development stages), being defined, according to international standards, as a *semi-capitalist state*, with a *peasant-agrarian economic order*. The political counterpart of these cataloguings placed Romania within the ranks of the

small powers, with "limited" interests — and this is how she was treated in international policy and in the great powers' game of interests.

In spite of these conventional epithets, the Romanian people had reached a self-awareness, devoid of inferiority complexes towards the other nations, as well as devoid of the arrogance to claim, for its country, other territories or positions than those legitimated by its history, by its natural rights. It is true indeed that the Romanian nation was composed, to its numerical majority, of peasants, cherishing the forefathers' land as well as justice for those who tilled it and defended it; within its framework, there existed a bourgeoisie, of rather recent assertion, who had not yet carried through all the progressive reforms it had initially aspired to, mainly because of foreign capitalism which had infiltrated in a spoliatory way into the young modern state's economic life; a vigorously rising working class, organized politically on a national scale, who had taken upon itself, besides its specific desiderata — whose corollary envisaged Romania's transformation into a socialist state — the major progressive aspirations of the entire people; an intelligentsia deeply committed to the life and struggle of Romanian society and civilization. With a foreign policy, loyal to the treaties and to the peaceful spirit inaugurated, on the international scene, by the League of Nations, the Romanian nation did not covet after anything, to the prejudice of other states and nations, yet it was determined to prevent anyone from impairing its national unity and sovereignty, which it had earned with such great efforts.

The Romanian intelligentsia of the interbella generation lived up to the height of the epoch and of its calling, originating from or committing itself — on the whole, of course — into the category of interests of one of the three fundamental classes of society, being linked, in terms of its roots and spirit, to the values which had crystallized out, in the historical, cultural, scientific patrimony of Romanian civilization along the centuries. All those encompassed by the nation of bearers of "Romanian intelligence" from the village school master to the university professor, from the physician to the engineer, from the inventor to the scholar, from the artist to the philosopher or jurist, from the political doctrinaire to the diplomat or journalist — found themselves, integrated, in one way or another, into the work, struggle and aspirations of the entire people. With the deed of the creative act, with the strength of the uttered or written word, on the barricades of domestic social-political confrontations, or as a reflex and action against reactionary ideological trends, against the tendencies of imperialist supremacy, pressure and interference into domestic affairs, or in the latter's worst form, against the acts of aggression which envisaged the impairment of the unity and integrity of the national patrimony. The progressive Romanian intelligentsia was, *par excellence*, the spokesman of all the nation's social, economic political and diplomatic desiderata. It carried through this lofty mission, either by joining or not the existing (workers', agrarian, bour-

geois) political parties, frequently representing the electorate on the tribune of Parliament or in the governmental departments, activating in cultural or professional associations, adhering to organizations or political movements, of a national character or of international solidarity, keeping awake civic consciousness, through the intermedium of press and journalism, carrying out diplomatic missions, within the alliances, international bodies or congresses, educating the people's masses in the spirit of a lofty humanism and of the national historical traditions. In any of these hypostases, the Romanian intelligentsia testified to its patriotism and abnegation, efficiency, dignity and originality, firmness and spiritual suppleness, taking upon itself responsibilities and risks, drawing upon itself, admiration and friendship, but also adversities and exacerbated hatred.

One of the competent witnesses of the epoch, Nicolae Carandino, stated that the press was the only path open to efficient intellectual protest, at the time. This is what he wrote in his memoirs: "World War II, with its prelude, the wars in Spain and Abyssinia, with the *avant* and *après guerre* unrests, demonstrated the moral and historical-scientific value of press testimonies. Frequently, at the cost of their life, professional witnesses, obliged to communicate truth, were present at countless totalitarian misdeeds and made them publicly known. In the absence of their denunciation, of their lofty denunciation, fascist crimes would have been hard, at times, impossible to be discovered; in their absence, political manoeuvres would not have been intercepted; in their absence, *History* would have been forced to take into account official documents alone."* When the archives unlocked their secret drawers — countless, some of them closed to this day — the facts known, or surmized by the people of the time were by far surpassed in point of gravity. The battles, in those times, were waged with the help of the information, motivations and devices available then.

From all those battles, the hardest and most tragic one, in terms of consequences, was the confrontation with fascism, the Twentieth Century plague, in its different "national" variants, with its different forms of contamination, with its monstrous balance-sheet of victims. After World War II, in the course of the four decades which elapsed, many of the pieces of information, from the interbella epoch were ignored, invalidated, contradicted, rounded off, reinterpreted. To specialists they became a source of documentation, being treated with caution and scientific rigour. But in the days and years, when they were written, these pieces of information constituted the daily bread of civic consciousness, one of the main sources leading to the formation of the *frame of mind*, within the ranks of public opinion. "The fourth power in the state," as the press

* N. Carandino, *De la o zi la alta* (From One Day to Another), Cartea Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 220—221.

came to be referred to, undoubtedly played an uncommonly important political, moral, emotional and informational role.

Because, as it is known, up to the armed war, which was subsequently named the second world conflagration, through out the interbella period, but in particular, during the decade which preceded the outbreak of the scourge, there took place a terrible psychological war, of words, of speeches, of radio waves, of diplomatic side-scenes, of underground espionage actions, of economic pressures, of threats screened off by demagogic slogans, of concealed or manifest blackmailing, of pretexts and intimidations, with the role of a motivation for aggressive actions and territorial seizure.

Romania, too, was penetrated stealthily by these wars through the intermedium of stipendiaries, diversion and undermining, creating political tensions and psychoses, thus feeding the attempts of interference with domestic and foreign policy, at times poisoning vulnerable consciences, leading astray wavering conducts, engendering some "gorillas" fanaticised in the cult of terror, arming murderous hands for the perpetration of political assassinations, having for a goal to throw off balance the defence potential of national interests. This is how there gradually emerged and developed some organizations of the Extreme Right, with ideologies and doctrines of imitation, wearing the garb of would-be "autochthonous" slogans, headed by the "Legion of Archangels Michael and Gabriel" (alias the "Iron Guard", alias the party "Everything for the Homeland") actually an attested agency of Hitlerism — the Nazi sections of some German political organizations, irredentist sections of some Magyar reactionary political organizations a.o. In the first decade, after World War II, these groupings were weak, insignificant, with a small number of adherents with no share in the country's political life, consequently with no prospects to ascend to power. During the second decade — especially after Hitler's coming to power in Germany — these organizations were actively subsidized and manoeuvred by the revanchist-revisionist foreign powers, turning into some espionage and terrorism agencies, making up the treacherous and subversive Fifth Column in Romania.

It was but natural that there should rise against them, an ample resistance movement, of democratic, antifascist, anti-Hitler, anti-Horthy, anti-revisionist, anti-war struggle. The people's mass, the majority of the nation's social-political forces, vitally interested in safeguarding the great national commandments, joined this movement. This struggle was headed by the Romanian Communist Party, which has the merit of having carried on a comprehensive political activity, determining the integration of the actions and manifestations of all progressive forces into the wide front of antifascist, anti-war struggle waged by the people's masses. This rising to united struggle determined the fact, that in Romania the ascent to power of the dictatorial-fascistized forces could be barred for a long time, under the circumstances when the totalitarian régimes had come out victorious in many European countries. Thanks to this firm anti-revi-

sionist attitude, Romania withstood Hitler-Horthy pressures, in an exemplary national consensus. The coinhabiting nationalities did not provide either the ill-fated opportunity of interference into the Romanian state's domestic affairs. Even though ultimately forced to pay the heavy toll of some serious territorial amputations, she did so, as a consequence of some overt manifestations of the policy of force and dictate, at the moment when the international political situation had brought about her complete isolation, on an external plane (1940). Due to this profound anti-Hitler resistance, in August 1944, in complex domestic and external political conditions, the entire Romanian people was able to turn arms against the real internal and external enemy, overthrowing Antonescu's dictatorship, joining the anti-fascist coalition, making a remarkable contribution to the final defeat of the bellicose revisionist Axis.

The thoroughly patriotic stand of the working-class, headed by the Romanian Communist Party, determined a growingly firm adherence of the majority of the Romanian intelligentsia to the militant resistance put up against the serious dangers which hovered over the country. "To the credit and pride of our intelligentsia", President Nicolae Ceaușescu called forth those times — "the most prominent Romanian scientists, writers and artists including those belonging to the coinhabiting nationalities participated, with abnegation in the struggle in defence of the homeland's independence and integrity, some of them joining the Party, activating within its ranks, placing their entire creative power and even their life, in the service of the people."*

A profound connoisseur of the nation's history, a lover of nature and a friend of those toiling the land, Mihail Sadoveanu wrote on May 1, 1939, some thoughts testifying to the fact that he was equally a subtle portrayer of the Romanian proletariat's soul: "The fight waged by the series of people to improve their life as well as that of their successors is part of the same rhythmic impulse, which is to be found in the symbol of May Day. This cannot be required ever to stop. As long as the year will renew itself and the flowers will bloom, people will work and struggle, and in this work they will find joy as well as grief and reconciliation". Speaking to the Romanian nation about the approach of May Day — "an ancient festival of Dacia, signifying spring, blooming, the renewal of life", explaining the fact that the workers declared it "the festival of the proletariat, throughout the world, viewed as fight and social claims", he insisted to add: "The worker is, first and foremost, a human being like me, who has a mind and a soul, resulting from customs, traditions and influences of all kinds. His being is in communion with the slow influences accumulated by the earth and by time, in his kin. The animals, the plants, the temperature, the sky, the waters — these elements all taken together — have made out of him a being with a certain

* Nicolae CEAUȘESCU, *Exposé at the Congress of Political Education and Socialist Culture*, Publishing House for Political Literature, Bucharest, 1976, p. 20.

character. Prior to belonging to mankind, he is an element of the sum, he belongs, first and foremost, to his own kin*”. Truly indeed, on May 1, 1939, the working-class, headed by the communists, lived up not only to the height of its class mission but embraced the desiderata of the entire nation, knowing how to turn the great festival of international solidarity into a vigorous anti-fascist, anti-war protest, into a human wall of the homeland's defence.

The intelligentsia's commitment to the active antifascist movement took place gradually, in the course of the day by day political fights, at the school of the numerous democratic organizations, that had been created and which were either guided by or under the influence of the Romanian Communist Party. Alongside of communist and socialist intellectuals, well-known for their creed and political activity — such as Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Petre Constantinescu-Iași, Ilie Cristea, Valter Roman, Ion Popescu-Puțuri, Lothar Rădăceanu, Nicolae Deleanu, Ion Pas, Ștefan Voitec a.o. — the tumultuous fight for democracy, humanism and peace, was jointed by personalities from the most different groupings of the left, centre-left or even centre-right (belonging to the National Agrarian Party, the National Liberal Party, the Agrarian Party, The Radical Agrarian Party, The Ploughmen's Front, the Union of the Magyar Working People, a.o.) with the respective share of nuances and specificity, deriving from the philosophical-political creeds they shared. Personalities of prestige of Romanian science and arts — such as Nicolae Iorga, Gheorghe Marinescu, Traian Săvulescu, P. P. Negulescu, Mihail Sadoveanu, Liviu Rebreanu, George Călinescu, Cezar Petrescu, Alexandru Rosetti, Ion Jalea, George Enescu, Gala Galaction, C. I. Parhon, Iorgu Iordan, Dimitrie Gusti and many others — lent to the antifascist trends and actions additional authority, drawing growing numbers of adherents on the barricades for democracy and Romania's defence. Parliamentary campaigners of indisputable popularity and patriotic dignity from the tribune of the Deputies' Assembly or of the Senate — such as Nicolae Titulescu, Ion Gh. Duca, Nicolae Iorga, Petre Andrei, Victor Iamandi, Virgil Madgearu, Nicolae Lupu, Armand Călinescu, Mihail Ralea, a.o. — branded the destructive, terroristic and antinational activity carried on by the pro-fascist organizations inside the country, their stipendiary character, riveting civic public opinion, on the evil consequences and dangers, which derived from the imperialist policy promoted by the Berlin—Rome Axis as well as by its revisionist satellites. Writers, publicists and journalists of great talent — such as N. D. Cocea, Zaharia Stancu, Al. Sahia, Demostene Botez, George Ivașcu, Tudor Teodorescu-Braniște, Petre Pandrea, Gheorghe Dinu, Eugen Jebeleanu, Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Mircea Grigorescu, Scarlat Callimachi, Gáal Gábor, Geo Bogza, Tudor Arghezi, George Macovescu, Leon Kalustian and many, many others — in militant political feature-reports, in articles of everyday information,

* *Muncă și voie bună* (Work and Good Humour), first year, No. 3, April 29, 1939.

in significant pamphlets, in mobilizing calls addressed to national consciousness, exposed the various facets of the "brown plague", drew attention to the perils which hovered over the country, being responsive to the desiderata of the people's masses, making known abroad the message of progress, peace and humanism of a people, determined to defend its unity, independence, national integrity and sovereignty. Numerous reviews and dailies, diversified in point of political orientation, joined their voices to that of the press, guided or influenced by the Communist Party, so that it is not a gratuitous metaphor, figured out by journalists, when the statement is made that in the inter-bella period, the argument-word acquired strength, the ink-pot became a barricade, the pen — a feared weapon, the caricature — an exposing accusation, the speech — a lesson of patriotic consciousness and the newspaper which brought them out — a genuine fighting tribune, in the service of the people's rightful desiderata. *Reporter*, *Cuvîntul liber* (The Free Word), *Azi* (Today), *Clopotul* (The Bell), *Buletinul Mișcării Antifasciste* (The Bulletin of the Antifascist Movement), *Era nouă* (The New Era), *Șantier* (The Building Site), *Buha* (The Owl), *Facla* (The Torch), *Manifest* (Manifesto), *Stînga* (The Left), *Arena* (The Arena) and side by side with them *Dimineața* (The Morning), *Adevărul* (Truth), *Lumea românească* (The Romanian World), *Dacia nouă* (New Dacia), *Neamul românesc* (The Romanian Race), *Timpul* (Time), *Universul*, (The Universe), *România*, *Viața românească* (Romanian Life) *Korunk* (Our Epoch), *Ecoul* (The Echo), a.o. are newspapers and reviews which expressed the battle waged by the progressive patriotic Romanian intelligentsia. This battle joined the political activity carried on by the anti-fascist, progressive, democratic parties and organizations. This battle supported the day-by-day work and struggle of the toilers in factories and the fields. This battle strengthened the arms of the army, which guarded the country's frontiers. This battle inspired a good many of the decisions made by the Romanian politicians and diplomatists of the time. The army of the Romanian genius, the same as on a real battlefield, had its soldiers and commanders, its heroes as well as its deserters, it witnessed brilliant victories but also failures or defeats, with serious consequences.

In the course of time, in the domestic and international political developments, prior to the cannon roar and the combat in the war trenches, there took place some other "wars", as stated before. And in those wars, the Romanian intelligentsia also paid its heavy toll of blood, for its anti-fascist, anti-Hitler creeds. I. Gh. Duca, Nicolae Iorga, Virgil Madgearu, Victor Iamandi, Petre Andrei, Armand Călinescu and many other prominent intellectuals of this country paid with their life — cut short by abominable murder, perpetrated by the Iron Guardists, who were in the Hitlerites' pay — opening the long list of those who died during the Romanian people's antifascist struggle. Others faced the persecutions and victimizations inflicted by the Iron Guardists' and Antonescu's dictatorial régime being deprived of individual freedom or even

worse, of the freedom of speech. Others, using the subtle weapon of intelligence, continued the fight, prepared consciences for the great day of liberation.

1914—1944. Thirty years. The necessary life time for a human being to reach full maturity. In the duration of one generation, a brief stage for measuring its achievements. In the existence of a people, a moment — either poor or rich in significances. In the Romanian people's history, these thirty years were hallmarked by crucial events and the generation which accomplished them acquired the right to be considered a historical generation, inspiring reverence.

As a *the generation of the defence of national integrity and independence*, it bore on its shoulders the high responsibility to preserve intact the Romanian people's victories — in their entirety — threatened during the fourth decade by the bellicose, revenge-seeking, revisionist specters, under banners with names of aggressive dictators and ideologies: Hitler, Mussolini, Horthy. As a *glorious generation*, it accomplished the great turning-point in the Romanian people's history: the anti-imperialist and anti-fascist revolution of national and social liberation, of August 1944. This generation led to victory the two great revolutionary achievements from Romania's modern and contemporary history: the one of unity, in 1918, and the liberating revolution of 1944, which paved the way to the socialist era of Romania of today. These victories required the army of labour and the army defending the frontiers. However these would not have come out victorious fully, if they had not had by their side that what Nicolae Iorga styled as "the subtle weapon of intelligence."

LIVIA DANDARA