

FORMS OF CONTROLLED CULTURE IN ROMANIA. WAYS OF RESISTANCE. 1945-1948¹

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1. The Invasion of Communist ideology

When we speak about totalitarian systems we implicitly refer to modalities of subordinating culture and the use of arts as mere instruments of some purely propagandistic aims. Totalitarianism became established in countries like Germany and Russia, territories where intellectuals were the least attended at the "court". The quasi-inexistence of the middle-class in Eastern Europe also contributed to this. Pre-eminently agrarian states Russia but also Romania, lacking a real urban civilisation, with a high rate of illiteracy were submitted to the most vicious aggression of totalitarian barbarousness: an Asiatic type of communism whose tentacles reached Central and Eastern Europe but which had to adopt the nuances necessary to remove the traditions of each country. The elimination of social classes and the supression of memory was meant to homogenise the population, to turn it into a mass supporting the regime. "Wherever it came to power, totalitarianism developed completely new public institutions and destroyed all social, juridical and political traditions of the country." (Hannah Arendt)²

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² Hannah Arendt, *Originile totalitarismului*, București, Ed. Humanitas, 1994, p.596

Even more than the bourgeoisie, two other classes could have halted totalitarianism: the peasantry (the agrarian owners and producers) and the elite. The incriminating connivance of the elite and the mob is well-known from Hannah Arendt's analysis. The author emphasised the "undeniable attraction these movements held for the elite and not only for the plebeians in the society".³

"The plebeians, demagogues and adventurers of the epoch of imperialism as well as the leaders of totalitarian movements have in common with their intellectual followers the fact that they were outside the national and class system of the "respectable" European society, immediately before the system collapsed." (Hannah Arendt)⁴ In other words, the setting up of the Soviet-type communism would have been hardly imaginable without the invasion of the ideology. A part of the marginalised intellectuals and many well-meaning people captivated by the *blindness of the epoch* were responsible for the sacralisation of this ideology. They could not differentiate between the two levels of Eastern totalitarianism; the level of "telling" and the level of "doing": "The level of *telling* had a certain ideological coherence, a neat humanist opening. The level of *doing* was, in turn, neither the natural consequence of what has been *told* nor the chance effect of a pure instantaneous pragmatism." (Mihai Şora)⁵ The modalities of sacralisation of the ideology were the constant preoccupation of Nikolay Berdiaev, Hannah Arendt and, in our days, of Vladimir Tismăneanu. The facts are well-known. We underline only the unprecedented proliferation of the *intelligentsia*, the activists, those useless people who contributed to the sacralisation of the communist ideology in Russia after 1917 and then in the satellite countries of the Soviet system after 1945. Nazism offered them the ideal argument which should have been invented, had it not already existed. Those who were against Nazism, and many serious people were against it, were considered adepts of the universalist ideology of communism, whereas the uninterested, those of a perfect

³ Ibidem, p.430

⁴ Ibidem, p.431

⁵ Interview in the periodical 22, 1994. nr.26, p.3

intellectual and human honesty became victims of the perverse speculations of communist propaganda until the consolidation of the system. From then on, things lined up under the united badge of *doing*, forgetting the level of *telling*.

The communist ideology was insinuated in Romania as in all countries of the Eastern bloc as *popular democracy*, which aimed at imposing socialist realism on a cultural level. More precisely, socialist realism in François Fejtő's term was not restrictive at all at the beginning: it tried to concretise generous ideas, revolutionary hopes to end up as a mirror which had to flatter the only party and to disfigure reality, submitting the artists to the aims of ideology. This procedure required first of all the elimination of memory, enemy number one of communism (V.Tismăneanu) and the eradication of conscience and traditional culture by means of three principles enumerated by Czeslaw Milosz in his famous work *La pensée captive* (Gallimard, 1953): 1. to eliminate psychological resistance by displaying a liberal spirit and avoiding fear. People should commit themselves voluntarily. 2. to join those repulsed by the draconic methods of the government, to be indignant together with them because of censure and the political police. 3. to make use of all those who could be useful, irrespective of their political past, except the declared fascists and the former collaborators of the Germans. As the printing presses and publishing houses were in the hands of the government, the authors of unpublished manuscripts, ostracised by fascist dictatorships had to be encouraged. They only asked to be published and once their works were printed, they had no more reasons for being hostile towards the government.

The brutality of establishing communism in Romania hastened the connivance of the elite with the forces of oppression. Traumatized by an unpopular war and by the loss of certain important territories, Romania was vulnerable by the ambiguity of its social structures and a new but complete rejection of influences. The "social blockade" was frequent because the rural majority could not communicate with the urban minority. The abruptness with which socialist realism spread within the Romanian cultural space was

justified by the division itself of the elite of the country: democrats of a “pașoptist” extraction (intellectuals who furthered the ideals of the 1848 Revolution) fought for a European opening of the Romanian culture (they had a French, English, German and sometimes Italian formation), they opposed ideological extremisms. However, they had no supporters among the population. Therefore the nationalist intellectuals whose “messianic” messages warmed up the spirits in the fourth decade were highly popular. Some were guilty of “cosmopolitanism”, others of their enthusiasm towards supporting the extreme right. Finally all of them manifested a suicidal detachment from reality. In these circumstances the adoption of the Soviet model was easy; it was encouraged of course by police terror and the persecution of writers and artists of the “old regime”.

2. The Press

It was only to be expected that the press would be the initial target of the anti-cultural attack and the field where the slogans of class-struggle were displayed. Several publications appeared and disappeared in the 1944-1949 period, daily newspapers as well as cultural periodicals. *Scînteia*, *România liberă* and *Orizont* set the tone for the pro-Soviet orientation; shortly after 23 August they spoke about the writers’ mission (they were called the “engineers of the human soul”), a *new culture* and a *new art* (*Teze pentru o artă nouă*, by Sabin Straerul). In addition, *Orizont* published in its first issue on 1 November 1944 a long list of the writers who “died on 23 August” - this was a symbolic death at that moment, but the intention was to identify the undesirable persons. The list continued in nr.3. on 15 December, but ended there, from tactical reasons (cf. M.Nițescu). The “defunct” were: Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, Al.Tzigara-Samurçaș, Al.O.Teodoreanu, Virgil Carianopol, I.Gr.Periteanu, Mircea Pavelescu, Radu Gyr, Ion Vinea, Radu Tudoran, N.I.Herescu, C.Rădulescu Motru, I.Alex Brătescu Voinești, Mircea Vulcănescu, Aron Cotruș, Nichifor Crainic, Pamfil Șeicaru, Ionel Teodoreanu, Teodor Scarlat, etc. (M.Nițescu, p.34-35). It is easy to imagine that

this list was a foreshadowing of future arrests. In December 1944 appeared an eulogium addressed to Stalin on his 65th birthday; the arrest and trial of Al. Brătescu-Voinești, Radu Gyr, A.C. Cuza, Vaida-Voievod, Ilie Rădulescu is triumphantly announced on 15 April 1945. "At the same time the periodical expresses its hope that other writers will also be accused, a hope which will not be disappointed." (M. Nițescu)

It is appropriate to clear up three types of orientations which overlapped in Romanian culture and led to violent polemics between 1946-1947, then gradually disappeared and were replaced by the sole authority. The first type of orientation favoured modern, pro-Western culture. Its spokesmen were grouped around the *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* and the *Viața Românească* periodicals - they proved their reserve as well as their opposition towards the ideology of the extreme right; they were anti-Nazi "leftists" or "centre-rightists", anyway, lucid spirits who did not align to dogmas, who considered natural that the Romanian public became familiar with Western values and the great literary and artistic creation of Russia and the Soviet Union. Many of them changed their opinion, more or less compelled by the circumstances, others, like Lucian Blaga, Mircea Vulcănescu, Dimitrie Gusti, Alexandru Ciorănescu, Felix Aderca, Dimitrie Stelaru, Vladimir Streinu, Adrian Marino, Marcel Gafton, Sorana Gurian, Tudor Vianu, Șerban Cioculescu, Iordan Chimet, Alice Voinescu, Pompiliu Constantinescu, etc. emigrated or were ignored. Most of them became victims of the abusive system.

The second category, sympathisers or even spokesmen of the extreme right or only fanatic nationalists were the first to be ostracised, put on the list of the "defunct" - they were the first men of culture who were arrested.

Finally, there was the Praetorian group of the power: value was not important for them at all. They were recruited "men of culture", activists or obscure journalists joined later by intimidated men, careerists or naive Marxists, some of them persons who suffered in the previous regime - they could not return once they took this road.

We have already mentioned that too many men of culture from the first category were guilty of absenteeism: they considered the ideological fight insignificant, degrading or useless. This was a fatal error: the supporters of power profited from this until the military consolidation of the regime. Beneficial was the intervention of some lucid spirits who drew the attention of the public to the encroachment of the totalitarian power on culture by means of falsely humanist, discriminatory and, in fact, criminal imperatives of class-struggle in literature, art and thinking.

Literary and cultural periodicals proper had to support the anti-aesthetic propaganda. There were polemics between the new “priests” on nuances: the radicals accused the “slowlier” ones; it was a *sarabande* of fanatic suspicions, the “executioners” of art for art’s sake turned overnight into victims of the most zealous ones. (Note the *Contemporanul*, 1948-1949). The replica to the imperatives of new art can be read until December 1947, in the two great daily papers of the National-Peasant Party and the Liberal Party: *Dreptatea* and *Liberalul*. In *Dreptatea* appear the firm, perfectly argued, impeccably written interventions of Vladimir Streinu (*Monopoluri/Monopolies*, 21 March 1947, *Omul mecanic/The Mechanic Man*, 20 March 1947, *Sofismele puterii/The Sophisms of Power*, 14 March 1947, *Rațiune și fanatism/Reason and Fanatism*, 1 April 1947, *Panem et circenses*, 5 March 1947, *Valoarea ideilor/The Value of Ideas*, 6 February 1947), Constantin Tonegaru (*Scriitorul Român/The Romanian Writer*, 15 March 1947, *Libertatea artistului/The Freedom of the Artist*, 7 March 1947, *Poezie și politică/Poetry and Politics*, 18 May 1947, *Literatura angajată/Committed Literature*, 12 March 1947), Gheorghe Paltin (*Aleluia culturii noastre/Halleluia to Our Culture*, 11 February 1947), Matei Odobescu (*Acțiune și reacțiune/Action and Reaction*, 1 January 1947), Paul Lăzărescu (*Carențele învățămîntului/The Defaults of Education*, 29 January 1947) along with many writings of Șerban Cioculescu and N. Carandino, who signalled the danger of grinding down culture to an ideology hostile to art as well as the national structure. *Liberalul* publishes in that last “year of transition” (1947)

similar articles written by Barbu Brezianu, Dan. A. Lăzărescu, Ion Pillat, Romulus Anastesescu and Sorana Gurian. More and more authors used pseudonyms, initials or wrote anonymously. This was a wise but useless precaution: none of them had escaped the scourge of those times. Their writings are proofs of the first forms of cultural resistance, significant on account of their neat detachment from any kind of fanaticism, seriousness and intellectual competence.

We come back now to the cultural press whose appearance and disappearance reflects the oscillations between the tactics of attracting unaligned men of culture and the urgency of eliminating tradition. The following periodicals ceased: *Gândirea* (on 6 June 1944), *Familia*, *Convorbiri literare*, *Saeculum* (edited by Lucian Blaga) also in 1944, *Universul literar* (3 June 1945). *Viața românească* reappeared in November 1944, edited by M. Ralea and D.I. Suchianu, it ceased in 1946 and reappeared in June 1948, transformed, as all the other periodicals in 1948, into a “tribune of proletcultism”(M. Nițescu). The “periodical of the literary circle” was also eliminated (Sibiu, 1945). *Agora*, *Lumea* (edited by G. Călinescu, September 1945-June 1945), *Libertatea literară, artistică și socială* (1946) and *Tineretea* (“A weekly newspaper of progressive attitude and culture”) still appeared irregularly. *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* is the only periodical which was not affected by the fluctuations of the 1944-1947 period; it ceased afterwards.

We must also mention the periodicals dedicated mostly to music, spectacles and fine arts: *Rampa*, *Flacăra* and *Contemporanul* which was founded on 20 September 1946 (the editorial board is indicated only in 1957; editor in chief: G. Ivașcu). “*Contemporanul* filled a wide gap in Romanian journalism, it was an important factor of our ideological front, propagating Marxist-Leninist theory (...) A great number of articles propagating Marxist-Leninist theory were published in it (...) the articles of Zina Brâncu, for example (...) and of Mihail Roller (...) Very many articles dealt with unmasking the confusions and manifestations of the decadent bourgeois ideology.”⁶

⁶ Ana Sălăjan, *Reeducare și prigoană*, Ed. Thausib, Sibiu, 1993, p.229

Although the tone of articles published in *Contemporanul* became more and more radical in 1948 (August-September), the editing of a new periodical became imperious: this was entitled *Lupta de clasă* (*Class struggle*), “theoretical and political organ of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party”; it was meant to complete the “weaknesses” of *Contemporanul*. The basic articles of *Contemporanul* were written by Ion Vitner, who did not hesitate to criticise vehemently O.S. Crohmălniceanu, the literary critic of the periodical who also became guilty of aestheticism:

“Everybody can see that O.S. Crohmălniceanu did not use the methods of appreciation of the working class in analysing our short-story writing, but he used a yataghan meant to destroy what the working class tried to defend and develop.”

“We wish that our literature would deal more and more with socialist contests in our industry, the struggle of the poor peasantry against the kulaks, the work and struggle for establishing the first collective agricultural units in our country.” (*Contemporanul*, nr. 148-149)

Radu Bogdan wrote the column of fine arts criticism and Simion Alterescu the chronicle of performances. They did not write about the artistic events themselves, but commented widely on the policy of the centre, adopting a servile manner. The same obsequiousness characterised the *Rampa* periodical. It was suspended on 18 July 1948, because a panegyric was published in it about N. Moraru - the personality cult was reserved in exclusivity for Stalin at that time.

The system had already created a “hierarchy” of suspicions. The more notorious a person had been, the more vigilant became the power - amateur “social-political” careerists realised this always too late. N. Moraru for example, “who was the opinion leader in so many instances of demolishing our cultural values (Blaga, Barbu, Jora, Arghezi, Maiorescu, Lovinescu, Călinescu, Cioculescu, Streinu, Maxy, etc.) whom we have met in the avantgarde of the violation of the most specific, prominent and lasting part of Romanian culture, spreading terror in radio, press, on discussions, conferences or at the

tribunes of the “higher” directing forums (SSR, USASZ) - the “Secretary General” became the victim of a criticism as harsh as those provoked and promoted by him.”⁷

M. Maxy, the painter had the same fate. He was the “ringleader” of fine arts, secretary of the fine arts branch of the USASZ (Union of the Syndicates of Artists, Writers and Journalists), organiser of exhibitions. Although the thematic of his works was in line with the proletcultist trend, he was punished because he painted Ana Pauker’s portrait in a too sombre manner and the workers in his paintings had too sad faces.

The *Scînteia* published harsh commands and directives concerning art; it was the mouthpiece of the “impersonal”, almost occult authority: “We believe”, “We consider”, “We will be merciless in adopting the most drastical means”, etc. (cf. Ana Sălăjan). The same directives organised the columns of a publication and its thematic. Note the following titles: *The Problems of Formalism Discussed by Members of the Artistic Group of the Army* (*Contemporanul*, 30 May 1948), *Socialist Internationalism and Bourgeois Cosmopolitanism* (*idem*), *Brigade-Member Artists on National Building Sites* (*Contemporanul*, 9 May 1948), *Aesthetics in the Service of Reaction* (*Contemporanul*, 18 April 1948).

The *Rampa* (N. Argintescu-Amza - chronicle of fine arts, Anatol Vieru - music chronicle, Valentin Silvestru - chronicle of performances) often publishes N. Moraru’s speeches, *Sensul principiului: Spirit de partid în literatură / Sense of Principle: Party-Spirit in Literature* (July 1948). *Viața românească* reproduces the discourses of Jdanov, his much quoted discourse at the First Unional Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, for example, where he launched the formula “engineer of human souls”.

Rampa published on 6 June 1948 the *List of Actors Who Have the Right to Profess*. This was the result of the second checking examination of the Syndicate of Artists in București:

⁷ Ibidem, p.226

“The Syndicate of Artists and of all employees of the performance industry informs his members of the following:

The Control Commission of professional qualifications, founded by the dispositions of the law nr. 265/1947 of the Ministry of Arts, declares valid the following workers as the result of the examinations held on 19-22 April 1948 in the Alhambra Theatre...” There were two pages with the names of the personnel with a right to work in Drama, Comedy, Lyrical Theatre, Concert, Periodicals, Dance, Circus and Variety Programmes.

The rigorous control of the repertory of theatres as well as the Jdanovist “explosion” in literature and art goes without saying in this context: “The slogan of drama today: new theatre for the new public” (*Rampa*, 8 February 1948). Many publications accused modern music, the works of French composers especially (Olivier Messien, André Jolivet, Yves Bandry, etc.) or Anglo-American films and literature. Henry Miller was the most repudiated author (a repulsion that could be analysed psychoanalytically...), called “the God of contemporary decadence”.

The “heavy artillery” of propaganda was supported by endless congresses, debates, reports published in whole. The processes of unmasking the class enemy, the “disobedient” men of culture (Mihail Jora, Mihai Andricu) and hesitating writers and ignoring great artists like Gheorghe Anghel, the sculptor and Pallady, the painter also added to this. After 1948 periodicals were blackened by the portraits of Stalin, the immense titles of homage quoted from Jdanov and translations of the works of the unions of creation from the USSR. This was the time for nationalising publishing houses and imposing censure. *Cartea Românească* (*Romanian Book*) was eliminated after 30 December 1947, *Cartea Rusă* (*Russian Book*) took its place. Bookshops bearing this name appeared all over the country, filled up with the works of Stalin and Lenin (which had a very large circulation) The same holds good for libraries. In 1952 these works were published in 7.500.000 copies. Theatres were showing Soviet plays, most of them worse than mediocre. Famous actors like Marioara Voiculescu, Lili Carandino, Mihai Popescu, Marioara Anca

gradually retired, while the historical building of the National Theatre in București was bombed in 1944 and, instead of restoration, destroyed by bulldozers in the autumn of 1947. The last play, *Despot Vodă* by Alecsandri was shown at the proposal of Tudor Vianu, director of the theatre (cf. Ionuț Niculescu)⁸.

At the same time cultural life degraded rapidly. The lack of paper was a special tactics. "Paper crisis, censure, incriminations, processes, lack of perspective, etc. are all causes and symptoms of a disease which aggravates irresistibly and becomes a chronic phenomenon: this is the crisis of culture."(M. Nițescu)⁹ In 1945 Camil Petrescu spoke about the "crisis of theatre".¹⁰ In 1946 the atmosphere worsened - without a precise identification of causes.

3. The crisis

Virgil Ierunca is the first who signalled the crisis of culture in *România liberă*, on 29-30 September 1946: "We tell it (...) for those who want to understand, hear and replace inertia, false actions and false engagements with the right of conscience: Romanian culture is in crisis! (...) it lives on the phantoms of the present, the fossils of the past and future virtualities which are slow in becoming real."

Ion Caraion wrote two remarkable articles in *Jurnalul de dimineața* (October and December 1946). He diagnosed the sources of the crisis:

"We would like to enumerate all the newspapers which have independent directors, but we cannot, for there are none.

We would like to rejoice for the repertoire of the National Theatre, but we cannot, because its decline is shameful.

We would like to forget that we live in the epoch of personal diaries and secret truths, but we cannot, because we experience it (...)

⁸ Ionuț Niculescu, in the periodical *Teatrul azi (Theatre Today)*, nr. 5-6, 1991

⁹ M. Nițescu, *Sub zodia proletcultismului*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1995, p.35

¹⁰ Ibidem, p.36

We would like to speak about Romanian fine arts, but we remember that the young had to withdraw and make their own exhibition (...)

A population cannot be reduced to a single dimension and cannot be educated only politically, for it does not live only politically (...)

There was not always this coalition of relief and this daring lack of relief which work in order to deny in the name of creation, oppress in the name of liberty, lie in the name of truth, hate in the name of love.

There was not always such a desperate attempt to confound contradictory notions, to fight for eliminating values and intelligence.”¹¹

Discussions and disputes on the crisis continued until 1947, when they were taken up by other publications as well: Arghezi publishes the tablet entitled *În criză de cultură* (*Cultural crisis*) in *Adevărul* (15 December 1946): “Cutting the head is the only criterion of culture if we must adopt the word for the whole final complex.” *Contemporanul* and *Scînteia* reply with harshness. M. Paraschivescu, for example, publishes the pamphlet *Plînsul maimuțelor - sau unde e criza* (*The Cry of Monkeys, or Where is the Crisis?*)(*Contemporanul*, nr.15, 31 December 1946).

He who studies the press of “transition”, that is, the period before the final establishment of Jdanovism, concludes that there were some lucid consciences in Romanian culture, persons who did not adopt fanaticism of any kind; they expressed their opinion clearly, without false illusions. On the other hand, their lucidity and honesty was annulled by the servile zeal of their fellows as well as by the lack of a civil society or a civilising religion at least, which could have reduced the effects of the destruction.

¹¹ Ibidem, p.35

4. Books

We must add the very much reduced number of books published between 1945-1947. Their list did not exceed two pages. As M. Nițescu observed, “All writers - with the exception of some mentioned here (M. Sadoveanu, G. Călinescu, T. Vianu, Camil Petrescu, Demostene Botez, M. Beniuc, Eusebiu Camilar) had a period of total eclipse after 1947, some of them until 1964, 1965, others until now. Many of them had to emigrate, others were sentenced for many years.” (p.43-44).

5. Language

We must not forget the disproportionate importance attributed to the Russian language. The ortography of the Romanian language was changed in 1952 with the open intention to “annull its Latin influences and bring it nearer the Slavic languages.” (cf. M. Nițescu).

“La langue de socialisme est le russe, comme l’anglaise est la langue du capitalisme et du colonialisme” déclarait le 21 octobre, 1951, la Pravda de Bratislava. La langue russe, pour les propagandistes du stalinisme, n’est pas une langue comme les autres; elle devient chose sacrée, langue d’action et de prière, langue de commandement civil et langue d’Empire.” (François Fejtő)

Consequently, the “Cartea rusă“ bookshops were full of “ideological works” in original and in translation. Andrei Codrescu, poet from Sibiu exiled in the USA says: “However, this language as well as these books represented officially the “source of light”, as Stalin was called at school. This paradox of an interior emptied by an official abundance was the typical problem of adolescence. It was the model of other poverties guised as abundances, of other “lights” which brought only darkness. (...) Unlike the mausoleum of sterile propagandistic works and the angels blackened by smoke in churches, the house of my older friend, where you could find all the forbidden books, was warm, live and full of light. He lent me his books one by

one, perfectly conscious that he would go to prison if somebody had discovered him.”¹²

Andrei Codrescu did not tell the name of his friend (perhaps he did not even know it). He was one of the many “anonymous” whom we owe the salvation of (a part of) the memories. There were also persons educated in the spirit of Kantian ethics and cultural values, who did not follow momentary ambitions but were mentors of future generations; they refused to abdicate from their human and professional dignity and natural behaviour, the axiology of sympathy and confidence in their fellows. Some of them could have emigrated, some of them emigrated, but many remained to endure the vicissitude of those times; men without illusions but with faith.

6. Counterstrokes, Resistance Fighters

Alice Voinescu, Professor of Aesthetics and the History of Theatre at the Conservatory of Music and Drama in București (1922-1948) was one of the remarkable personalities of this period. Her case is symptomatic for suspending the careers of men of culture. She was writer, essayist, translator and the only cultural authority from Romania invited in 1925-1939 to the famous *Pontigny decades* in France, where personalities from the whole Europe met every August: Malraux, André Gide, Roger Martin du Gard, Paul Langevin, François Mauriac, Martin Buber, Aldous Huxley, Charles de Bos, Schlumberger, Leon Brunswick, Paul Valéry, etc. Alice Voinescu and her work is almost unknown today for the public. Her splendid works about Montaigne, Aischylos or the contemporary theatre as well as her contributions to *Istoria filosofiei moderne* (*The History of Modern Philosophy*) and to *Dialoguri cu eroi tragici* (*Dialogues with Tragic Heroes*) are seldom read by specialists. An active proletcultist, veteran of theatre criticism said that Alice Voinescu belonged to another world: she did not take part vehemently in polemics of the age; she did not scorn, detest

¹² Andrei Codrescu, *Dispariția lui AFARA - un manifest al evadării*, București, Ed. Univers, translated from English by Ruxandra Vasilescu, preface by I. P. Culianu, p. 30

or flatter anybody. “She had a very European education.” (cf. M.G. *Tribuna*, 14 July 1994). “Alice Voinescu (writes Steriadi) had her MA in Philosophy with Titu Maiorescu, then studied philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, logics and ethics at Leipzig, München, Paris, Marburg. She was one of the first women in Romania who had her doctorate degree abroad: *Interpretarea doctrinei lui Kant de către Școala de la Marburg (Kant’s Doctrine Interpreted by the Marburg School)*, 1913. Alice Voinescu was a perfectly balanced moral and intellectual personality, a great talent guided by the rigours of classical harmony and Renaissance humanism, thinking in terms of Dantean-Ficinian ‘sacred love’, an adept of purifying ethics, a person with a dignity rarely found in our Levantine space, from Bălcescu to Mircea Vulcănescu.” (Dan C. Mihăilescu)¹³

After a rich career (she was university professor, writer and journalist - she wrote the drama chronicle in *Revista Fundației Regale*), Alice Voinescu who manifested herself as an elite scholar in all circumstances, was prematurely obliged to retire in 1948 because of her disapproval of the forced abdication of the king. She continued to organise courses and seminars for those who were eager to learn. She was arrested in 1951 and imprisoned for a year and seven months. After that she was sent to a village in North Moldavia. A statement was written in order to set her free: it contained references by Tudor Vianu, D. Panaitescu-Perpessicius, Mihail Jora, Camila Petrescu, Victor Eftimiu, Florica Muzicescu, Milița Petrașcu, Marioara Voiculescu.

“It was natural that the scourge of the ‘new times’ removed her. The informers put her on their blacklist in 1946, at the 25th anniversary of her professorship, when she pled for democracy in the sense of spirituality. She was not attacked in the press, but her courses began to be supervised and members of the Romanian Union of Working Youth boycotted her activity. In the professors’ room appeared “healthy” persons, covetous for academic titles. During 1947 she was harassed by the new colleagues who “discovered” the primacy of economic motives in Shakespeare’s plays (...)

The unmasking meetings followed. The indignation of the Marxist collectivity became paroxysmal (...) Although she was put aside with

¹³ *Cotidianul*, 19 August 1991, LAI Supplement

demagogic violence (“she destroys the students!”) Alice Voinescu was anxious because she could not speak about Goethe, the passion of her life. She invited the students to her home to finish the course. The Security Service did not arrest her then for “organising subversive groups”, but in 1951, when she received letters from her friend, the writer André Gide.” (Ionuț Niculescu)¹⁴. She was then 66... After her detention she still published translations. She died of a serious heart-attack in 1961.

Another eloquent example of the power’s behaviour towards value is George Enescu’s case. Of course, we cannot consider it one of the “suspended careers” It belongs to the great chapter of exile, however, it is worth mentioning because of its singularity. The press and the audience of the concerts at the Atheneum continued to extol him. But he... was embarrassed because he was a genius, he was universally recognised and had a modest elegance - consequently he could not be attacked directly. On the other hand, as is well known, Princess Maria Cantacuzino was his wife. Therefore, what could not be solved by disparaging campaigns was done behind the scenes. The properties of Mrs Enescu were nationalised first, with brutality, whereas the famous musician was subdued to the perfidious humiliations of the administration. Barbu Brezianu wrote the article *În fine, un ambasador (An Ambassador, In Fact)* in *Jurnalul de dimineața* (11 April 1946) about him:

“...our representative and venerable fellow-countryman has had many troubles in his country. One morning Master Enescu had to stop his work and cool his heels in anterooms along with the more or less businesslike solicitants. He was seen to wait for ten minutes, quarter of an hour, half an hour, three quarters of an hour - he who did not ask anything for himself, and, moreover, had a fixed, settled, well-defined audience. After so much wasted time the “chief of the cabinet”, who had been told that he was waiting there, opened the upholstered door and said solemnly: ‘His excellency has left!’ Another meeting arranged by Mrs Maria Enescu with the same Punctual had the same fate.”

¹⁴ Ionuț Niculescu, *Alice Voinescu - vina de a fi cărturar*, in: *Indiscret*, nr.7, 1990

In other words, Enescu left the country just in time, in the autumn of 1946... Who knows what vicious forms of pressure would have affected his creation not to mention his life... The authorities tried to call him back insistently from Paris. He left a letter to them, written in a well-balanced tone but full of bitterness. (The Archive of the *George Enescu* Museum in București).

Lucian Blaga himself was abusively associated with Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic¹⁵: “I must tell you that the concepts that we communists criticised most firmly and consequently at that time, were those of Nae Ionescu, Nichifor Crainic and Lucian Blaga.” We must mention here the opposition between rationalism and irrationalism which reached the level of sophism in the epoch. Blaga is considered a spokesman of irrationalism (Z. Ornea) even today. However, everything that did not belong to the “Marxist-Leninist doctrine” or the “dialectic materialism” at least, was considered to be irrationalist (a part of Cartesianism too).¹⁶

As concerns Blaga, he was “claimed by the democratic movement for his attitude during the war”. D.D.Roșca says: “During the iron-guardist Antonescu regime the Patriotic Front of the University was organised illegally in Sibiu. The Siguranța (the political police of the regime) arrested a number of its members. Lucian Blaga made the greatest efforts to save those involved in the process in Sibiu, using all his prestige and influence.” (A. Mișu)¹⁷

The attacks against the theoretical work of Blaga began in 1945 and continued until July 1947. Professor Achim Mișu thinks that the moral author of the marginalisation of the thinker was Pavel Apostol, a former student of Blaga. Indeed, “by the decision nr. 301520/1948 of the Ministry of Education Pavel Apostol is named Lecturer in dialectic and historical

¹⁵ Miron Constantinescu, *Dezbaterea Academiei Sociale și Politice*, 1970

¹⁶ *Mic Dicționar Filosofic*, Ed. Politică, București, 1973, p.75

¹⁷ Achim Mișu, *Lucian Blaga, Miorița cultă a spiritualității românești*, Ed. Viitorul Românesc, București, 1995, p.166

materialism, directly from the function of Assistant, three years after graduating.”¹⁸

The year 1949 meant for Blaga the lack of his presence in the public history of Cluj for five years. He was expelled from education and the Academy. “The years spent at the Cluj branch of the Academy of History and Philosophy were probably the most dramatic in Blaga’s life. They tried to depreciate his professional dignity of researcher and philosopher.” (Achim Miha)¹⁹

“The attitude towards the philosophical creation of Lucian Blaga after 1948 and until 1961, the year of his disappearance, was that of sharp criticism; his work was considered ideologically dangerous.”²⁰

Moreover, at Blaga’s funeral D.D. Roșca mentioned only the poetic creation of his former colleague. “We suspect that Professor D.D. Roșca was under pressure, he could not tell honestly what he wanted to and what he should have told then.”²¹

The biography of the forementioned personalities as well as of others (whom I am going to mention) seems to me worth considering on account of their really democratic attitude, their opposition of the iron-guardist Antonescu regime. Their life was tragic because they refused to accept the two types of totalitarianism, both of them illegal, usurper. On the other hand, those who were obedient had a substantial reward: they were called the “artists of the people”, “honoured artists”. These writers, musicians and sculptors were allowed to use the holiday homes and centres for creation, they were venerated as “masters”. The power detested them, probably, but fondled and used them. Studying past and present documents one might ask: who was restless, worrying, who had insomnia? Because Sadoveanu, Călinescu, Camil Petrescu, Geo Bogza and Arghezi, the “converted” had often spoken in favour of their harassed colleagues. Timothy Garton Ash claims that “the history of resistance in Eastern Europe as well as the whole history of repression in this region is the history of

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.172

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.180

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p.202

²¹ *Ibidem*, p.205

interpersonal relations, the history of biographies. We cannot understand what happens in Eastern Europe if we do not study these biographies.”²²

Romanian culture in the proletcultist period is full of examples when “individual biography” is part of the “meanders of truth”, where Good and Evil coexist, not in a dialectic way but chaotically, only partly intentionally. We might ask how Romanian culture would have developed without the “historical accidents” following the third decade? For the time being we confine ourselves to ascertain the vicissitude of some destinies in the case of which Good and Evil were not abstract categories or signs of narrow-mindedness, but natural reference points of being. This is the case of Vladimir Streinu too.

“In a century full of careerists Streinu was a detached person, a romantic, a poet from head to foot. His artist character was not only manifested in his writings but in his life too, in a love that I had always admired, a love which remained exemplary; its echoes in his poems are exciting as they evoke a youth which remained complete.”²³

As concerns the aesthetic creed of the critic, Emil Vasilescu²⁴ says that he had a “classical ideal as Maiorescu did: the ‘healthy work’ as Goethe said, which identified the *classic* idea with the *healthy*, an icon of goodwill and the equilibrium of form and content (...) The classic ideal implies a *method* at the confluence of erudition and the delicacy of taste, an innate faculty but also a good acquired one by culture.”

This admirer and exponent of the “Apollinic spirit” was first fired from the *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* in 1941, “as the editorial board of the periodical changed and became rightist”. Similarly, V. Streinu is undesirable for the communists. Moreover, he had the “bad luck” to be deputy in 1932, “the youngest deputy in the country”. He was hospitalised with tuberculosis and was in a state of depression. When his identity came to light, he was dismissed (in 1950).

²² *Vladimir Streinu interpretat de... Antologie*, Introduction, Chronology and Bibliography by Emil Vasilescu, Ed. Eminescu, București, 1984

²³ *Ibidem*, p.26

²⁴ Ionuț Niculescu in *Indiscret*, nr.5, 1990

“After hallucinatory stays in sanatoriums resembling Max Blecher’s prose he had no source of income. He lost his left lung. This was in 1950-1952.

I must enumerate certain brilliant names - Mihail Sadoveanu, Tudor Vianu, George Călinescu, Camil Petrescu, Zaharia Stancu. Theirs was a brotherly solidarity in helping the needy.

I would like to clear up something. The campaign of destroying Romanian values on a national scale did not mean only imprisonment. Those still free were refused employment even in the most humble jobs. Therefore Sadoveanu’s intervention was necessary in order that *Vladimir Streinu, doctor in philosophy could be seasonal watchman in the ‘I.V. Stalin’ (Herăstrău) Park of Culture and Recreation between 1953-1955.* (Ionuț Niculescu)²⁵

He was arrested in 1959, along with C. Noica, Barbu Slătineanu, Dinu Pillat, Valeriu Anania, Marietta Sadova, etc. The reason? He was deputy in 1932.

His younger friends, Pavel Chihaiia, Iordan Chimet, Constant Tonegaru, Radu Cioculescu had to endure that they were forbidden to publish. They had to withdraw from literature, remain anonymous, they had to emigrate (Chihaiia), to change their profession (Chihaiia), or even die (Tonegaru).

The same moral rectitude characterises Onisifor Ghibu, a restless opponent of the system, author of a lengthy memorial addressed to Petru Groza which contains the most merciless diagnosis of Romania in the years of proletcultism. We must add that Onisifor Ghibu too opposed in an active way the iron-guardist doctrine. This led to his exclusion from higher education in 1945 when Constantin Daicoviciu, former iron-guardist became the dean again.

“...You began to cheat the people by the demagogic formula of ‘democracy’, the rule of the people, only to establish the most dreadful dictatorship, not only political but cultural and economic as well. You replaced freedom with slavery and terror in their most cruel forms. You turned Romania into a huge prison for the absolute majority of its citizens,

²⁵ *Idem*

you turned it into hell. You transformed the Romanian state into the most sadistic exploiter of its own sons. You prostituted the heart of the people, mocked at them - former odious phanariots or foreign dominations which made us suffer for centuries did not afford themselves to do this..." (Onisifor Ghibu)²⁶

Such attempts to resist totalitarianism were hindered in various ways: detention, lack of material means, ignoring the name of the person in question, the disappearance of a great quantity of materials from personal archives. This did not stop Onisifor Ghibu addressing the Soviet leaders directly, asking for the de-Stalinisation of the country. However, every time when the measures taken against him became "radical" (he was under arrest for a year), Petru Groza interceded for his release.

Apart from P.Groza's intercedings (which cannot be avoided) we cannot help ascertaining that the most stubborn opponent of the new regime had less to suffer (quantitatively and viewed from outside, of course) than his more discreet or frightened compatriots.

These examples of the lives ruined by communism ask for a reflection on the ethical character of culture:

"The ethical progress is therefore the essential and clear element of culture whereas the material one is less essential and equivocal (...) The modern spirit is more inclined to consider culture a natural phenomenon (...) However, important is that which is true not that which is spiritual. In our case, the easier thing is truth... the inconvenient truth we have to live with." (Albert Schweitzer)

²⁶ *Memoriu către Petru Groza, March 1949*, in: *Chemarea la judecata istoriei*, Ed. Albatros, București, 1992, vol. I, p.113