

THE COMMUNISTS AND THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE IN BUCHAREST, 1938-1944. POLITICAL MINI-BIOGRAPHIES

Vlad Mitric-Ciupe*

Keywords: architecture, Communism, Faculty of Architecture, repression.

Abstract: An honest analysis of the Communist era of Romania cannot be made in radical terms. In order to avoid judging in black and white, it is needed to portray several personages that were involved in politics – in one way or another – in order to observe the nuances, the various situations, the actions and limited personal responsibility, matters that complete the oral history. In the following we research the personal involvement of various personages, their roles and the responsibilities that derive from these. From the complex portrait of the transformations of the Romanian higher education, we shall focus on the Faculty of Architecture in Bucharest – an elite school, unique in the country.

Rezumat: O analiză onestă a epocii comuniste în România nu poate fi făcută în termeni radicali. Pentru a evita să judecăm în alb și negru, este necesar să descriem câteva personaje care au fost implicate în politică – într-un fel sau altul – pentru a observa nuanțele, situațiile de un fel sau altul, acțiunile lor și răspunderea personală limitată, aspecte ce completează istoria orală. În cele ce urmează vom cerceta implicarea personală a diverselor personaje, rolurile și răspunderea lor. Din portretul complex al transformărilor prin care a trecut învățământul superior în România, am ales să ne concentrăm pe Facultatea de Arhitectură din București – o școală de elită, unică în țară.

After the instauration of Communism in Romania, especially in the first two decades a genuine oppression was launched upon the highest representatives of a world that had to disappear. The politics and practices of the Soviet-inspired regime were diligently applied, no aspect of the socio-economical life remaining neglected. Special attention was paid to the breaking of connections between the “bourgeois-landowner” society and the one to be built, with a particular focus on the youth in general and on the students in particular. The purges following August 23 1944, the education reform in 1948, the continuous and (quasi-) complete politicization from later on are only a few of the stages that were navigated, often en force and leaving behind a cortege of victims. In addition to the analysis of the complex of measures assumed by the political management, it is almost required – for the complete understanding of the phenomena – to research the personal involvement of various personages, their

roles and the responsibilities that thus derive. From the complex portrait of transformations of the Romanian higher education, we shall focus on the Faculty of Architecture in Bucharest – an elite school, unique in the country. Further narrowing the area of research, we focus here on a particular direction, part of the whole, one of the most simple and direct mechanisms that the communists had at their disposal – the obloquy and exposure of the former Legionnaires, of their sympathizers or even of people that had no connection whatsoever with the previous right wing movement, but who had to disappear. Therefore, in the context of the conflict between the two sides, it is natural to take a look at the events before August 23 1944, for a better comprehension of the situation.

While most of the teachers did not show much interest in politics at the end of the ‘30s and beginning of the ‘40s, only occasionally getting in contact with it during their private design activity, there have been professors that followed one of the two antagonistic forms of political expression of those years, namely the Legionary Movement and the Communist Party. Therefore, we shall focus here on the left wing sympathisers, who are relatively easy to identify by following their post-war careers, since all of them quickly became university professors while also having various high-ranking positions in the political structures of the ‘50s-‘60s. These are, firstly, Pompiliu Macovei – graduated 1935, tutor from 1939; Gheorghe Petrașcu – graduated 1939, tutor from 1942; Mircea Alifanti – graduated 1938, tutor from 1944; Nicolae Bădescu – graduated 1939, assistant from 1946, followed closely by Ascanio Damian – graduated 1942, assistant from 1945. Thus we are dealing with a communist activity that predates the August 23 moment, involving students or those that were already tutors and assistants.

Since no written confessions have been left behind by any of the five, we shall refer to the memories of an intimate fellow communist: “[...] *In the School of Architecture – nowadays the Institute of Architecture – there has been founded a party cell. This was an echo of the democratic movement of the student youth. They were all young student boys. I have the fondest memories of these boys for the serious manner in which they were working, studying, comprehending the party politics and the applied methods. In the two years of my keeping contact with the cell – the anti-Soviet war began and some of the young men were mobilized and sent to the battlefield – others were removed from school and constrained to forced labour for racial reasons. Nothing made them leave the party, or their Marxist-Leninist beliefs.*

The members of the cell: Iosif (of German origin), with the conspiratorial name Fiso – was the secretary. The other

* Spiru Haret University, Faculty of Architecture,
e-mail: vlad.mitric@adproiect.ro