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Communist Ideological Dystopia

The Newspaper *Scânteia* (1944-1950) – a “collective linguistic delirium”

ABSTRACT

Scânteia, the official gazette of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, launched in 1944, the year of its first legal publication, led a genuine aggressive campaign against the so-called “enemies of the people” (who were members of the historical parties, wealthy peasants, career officers, journalists, academics, engineers, industrialists and all the other categories that had not adhered to enforced communist beliefs). The machinery worked first at a linguistic level, violently, because the newspaper under discussion and its ideology (together with the guardian Party) intended to acquire a demonstrative corporeality, precisely in order to validate, including viscerally, its attacks.

KEYWORDS

Romania; Communist Regime; Newspaper *Scânteia*; Linguistic Violence; Collective Delusion.

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Preamble

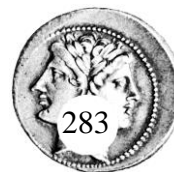
Jean-Jacques Wunenburger approaches, in all reason, in *L'utopie ou la crise de l'imaginaire*, a pathology of utopia that, under far left regimes, attains (because of severe failure) the stage of “social Vulgate” (*L'Utopie...*, p. 112), for totalitarianism splits off from the utopian precursor and coagulates as a fatal and shrewd “Leviathan” (*L'Utopie...*, p. 201). The spectator and the living in the totalitarian regime are proposed forcibly the “new gospel of an atheist citadel” (*L'Utopie...*, p. 213) in which terror becomes “the meta-historic taming instrument” (*L'Utopie...*, p. 213), since a totalitarian world is an inconsiderate departure from and a deficient (failed) copy of the utopian model – it exhibits an infringement of all limits allowed, more precisely an acute and monstrous (morbid) form of *hybris*. Terror is no longer preventive or defensive, but absurd, because it is not anymore a way to obtain power; instead, it is a purpose in itself (*L'Utopie...*, p. 217). One of the mechanisms of this totalitarian terror is “the collective linguistic delirium” (*L'Utopie...*, p. 222), officially manifest. Such *delirium* is materialized in the newspaper *Scânteia* in the first phase of the Romanian communist regime.



The Ideological Rape. A Frankensteinian Body. The Single Party's "Priapism" Proletarian Sex-appeal and the Woman Commissar

The newspaper *Scânteia*, organ of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, launched in 1944 – the year of its first legal publication – an authentic aggressive campaign against the so-called “enemies of the people” (who were members of the historical parties, wealthy peasants, career officers, journalists, academics, engineers, industrialists and all the other categories that had not adhered to an enforced communism). The machinery worked first at a linguistic level, violently, because the newspaper under discussion and its ideology (together with the guardian Party) intended to acquire a demonstrative corporeality, precisely in order to validate, including viscerally, its attacks. Thus, the emphasis on the name of “organ of the Central Committee” evokes a forced and insidious *machismo* that targets the aggressive corporealization of *Scânteia*, operating like a “phallus” of the Party. A “phallus” that inserts the new ideology and, thus, attempts to impregnate the Romanian motherland and people, albeit by rape. Certainly, the details relating to how a newspaper can be an *organ* of a political body do not pertain to a communist innovation (but to the undying tradition of subtling a gazette for propaganda purposes), but, with *Scânteia*, the theist virilization of the gazette acquired the meaning of a demonstration of force. The tendency of corporealization does not stop here; on the contrary, it goes further: the proletariat is obsessively called “the backbone of all the democratic forces” or the “iron fist of unit and strength”, the “brain” of this Frankensteinian creature being represented by a

quintet of the communist power (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, Teohari Georgescu, Vasile Luca, Petru Groza, the last being rather a puppet; praises are not yet expressed to Gheorghiu-Dej in the years which constitute the focus of my analysis) or by a triumvirate (a slogan in vogue was “Ana, Luca and Dej give the bourgeois the shivers”). Other details in the *Scânteia* titles and leitmotifs also draw near to the idea of the raping phallic machinery: as P.C.R. “steels and hardens” when it proceeds to seizing “the enemies of the people”, even when they are its own members. We may say, at the same level of sexual symbolism, that the Romanian Proletarian or Communist Party suffers from a sort of “priapism” resulted from the demolition of its external and internal foes, that its vigilance and most importantly the “work of enlightening the proletariat” maintain its virility. The Minister of Justice in the first years of the Romanian communism, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu (who will be liquidated later by the very totalitarian mechanism he had credited), will assert, at a certain time, that the Tribunal of the people had become a “real being” under the Law in the pursuit of punishment of those accountable for the country’s collapse and war crimes. Thus, this ideological creature is built and made, it has body (sexual organs, backbone, fists, brain), a borrowed skin (communism), but it doesn’t have a heart, nor does it have a soul: it is a rapist wrestler, able to destroy at random, mechanically, the “enemies of the people”. The stylized graphics published by *Scânteia* displays athletic workers, who look like bodybuilders or strippers, which means that even graphically a Herculean “sex-appeal” is targeted for the representatives of the class most favored, theoretically, by communism. A 1950 *Scânteia* issue publishes on the first page, in a hyperbolic portrait, a brawny worker, who holds a huge hammer drill; his face is radiant, seemingly satisfied with the



collective “rape” against the “enemies of the people”. Then, we need to note that the most published photo of a communist leader in *Scânteia* (for the 1944-1950 period) is Stalin’s photo (then Gheorghiu-Dej’s and Ana Pauker’s), since he is the archetype of the aggressor joined by the Romanian communist leaders with the admiration of eager apprentices.

**Cons Hand and Glove with Lackeys.
Death to the Traitors! Satraps and
Monsters. Grave Diggers and Ghosts**

Further on, I am going to list the violent language applied by communists via the newspaper *Scânteia* (during 1944-1950), ranged on categories of moral terms. Thus, a first category of terms includes the so-called “enemies of the people” in the sphere of criminal immorality. These are “gangsters”, “brigands”, “bandits”, “villains”, “assassins”, “thugs”, “prowlers”, “degenerates”, “rogues”, “toads”, “parasites”, “hooligans”, “bastards”, “sneaks”, “scoundrels”, “bleeders”, “dishonest elements”, “criminal hand”, “drones”, “shady dealers”, “fakes” – through this varied terminology the communists intend to pin down their opponents in all the possible criminal (argotic included) categories, which would have justified their incarceration. The alleged “enemies of the people” are then grouped together in a “gang”, “tribe”, “clan”, “hook-up”, “band”, “pack”, (reactionary) “clique”, “herd”, “networks”, “brigades of hatred and chauvinistic persecution”, “agents”, the various collective forms of classification envisaging an at least theoretical justification of why the Party and the Tribunal of the People will act “unmercifully”, “harshly”, visualizing a massive repression against the alleged criminals. Another category of terms includes the “enemies of the people” in the sub-species of the “lackeys” (of fascism etc.), “mercenaries”,

“servants” (of reaction) and “henchmen” (an exaggeration typical to the period), (zealous) “plough boys” (of the landlords), “tools”, in order to emphasize their ignoble, humanly inferior, collaborationist structure. This condition of “offscourings” catalyzes toward the next direction of which the “enemies of the people” will be charged: it’s easy that they should be or become “traitors” (of the proletariat and of the Romanian people), “spies” (for the Anglo-Americans), “yesterday’s profiteers, tomorrow’s saboteurs”, “diversionists”, “reactionaries”, “racketeers”, “careerists”, “conspirators”, “sold”, “Judas”, “Pharisees” (of democracy), “historical windbags”, “exchangers”, “hirelings”, “stateless middlemen”. This is why “Death to the traitors!” is chanted. By this, a demagogic and gregarious patriotism is promoted, with an emphasis on a financial incrimination to which the public was sensitive given the massive losses Romania had incurred during the Second World War and its reconstruction after the forcible installation of communism, when the country was in a misery that not even its ideological patrons attempted to dissimulate. The moral “epithets” the incriminators assign profusely also intend to accomplish the human abasement of those targeted, who are labeled “reprobate”, “smug”, “deceiving”, “unworthy”, “dishonest”, “rapacious”, “shrewd”, “coward”, “filthy”, “infamous”, “odious”, “hideous”, “horrible”, “criminal”, “atrocious”, “base”. This is why “Get out of our way, dirtbags!” is chanted.

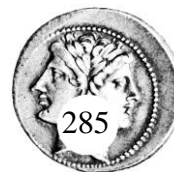
The linguistic pollution and humiliation of the “enemies of the people” advances progressively, from the inferior condition of “lackeys” to a promotion of the accused who become “monsters”, “blood-thirsty brutes”, “satraps”, (people traitor) “beasts”, (fascist) “fiends”, (humanity’s) “executioners”, “gargoyles”, “animals” (“that grin” because they are run down), “the



clawed cross beast” (therefore, they chant “Death to them!”). The leader of the National Peasants’ Party, Iuliu Maniu, is charged with being a “Sphinx”. The “enemies of the people” are neurotically catalogued “those that drink the people’s blood and power”, the communist linguistic imaginary targeting, thus, at the level of the collective mentality, the condition of vampires of those incriminated; the description is almost always that of “bloodthirsty”, because blood is the vampire’s preferred nourishment; thus, he must be killed. For example, marshal Ion Antonescu is most frequently referred to as a “bloodthirsty marshal”. The dishonor of those accused has an unambiguous purpose: since the “enemies of the people” represent a multi-headed monster (as in fairy tales and myths), the communists want to be the redeemers and saviors who slay the dragon; the communists want to pose as founding heroes, precisely because their action is violent and wears the ardor of the initiating malefaction. However, since the malefaction (irrespective of its intended initiating nature) is not abusive, but law breaking, the communists actually fulfill the role of a monster that usurps the rightful place of the anointed and elected king.

Plague, Cesspool, Ringworm. Decay and Puss. Decrepitude and Disembodiment

In 1948, in *Scântea*, Sorin Toma’s article on Tudor Arghezi’s poetry is published in four episodes under the title “Poezia putrefacției sau putrefacția poeziei” (“The Poetry of Putrefaction or the Putrefaction of Poetry”); here, among other things, by denouncing Tudor Arghezi’s poetic as pestilential, the author sanctions a “bad smelling vocabulary”. The first idea speculated is that of “plague”, “pestilence”, “ringworm”, “filthy cesspool”, because the “enemies of the people” usually bear “fascist venom”, therefore the country is “infected” and infested by venomous elements (the agents of the “contagion” being the legionary journalists, and others, “poisoning souls”, as well as the “hooligan” academic, who poison the students) and by “poisonous weeds”. Over and over, the saviors from such a pestilence could be only those communists whose oedipal desires are perverted. But let’s see how “the poison” spattered by the blameful journalist is apparent. The following fragments are from the article “Procesul a trei ziaristi fascisti” (“The Process of Three Fascist Journalists”) – (journalists who, in fact, made themselves known, in part, by means of an extremely violent language in the inter-war period), signed, with revolutionary sentiment, by Horia Liman in *Scântea* (Year XVI, no. 246, 1 June 1946): “They are the knights of an apocalypse awakened cynically, methodically, following a wicked scheme, for a mess of pottage or a sack of gold. But, at first sight, the knights of the poisoned quill show nothing interesting. They all enter – herd – slightly daunted by the new perspective provided to them, the criminals... /.../ Three hooligans, three lovers of bloody shows. All three incited to murder, applauded the damages caused by the faithful followers of their writing,



wanted to see the ruins, the havoc generated by their own explosion of hatred and dementia. They are the moral authors of the disasters they coordinated with Nero's voluptuousness, day after day, diabolically tenacious. /.../ Around them only flames fluttered toward the dark sky, only murders, only traces of blood that didn't have time to coagulate /.../ The names of the trinity in the dock reek like blood. They contaminate the air and horripilate".

A putrid condition of the "enemies of the people" is denounced: they are "rotten", "disintegrated elements", "remains" (i.e. cadavers, human ruins) in putrefaction, revealed by the "fascist decay" (or by the "bourgeoisie's moral decay") and by the "legionary pus", and, therefore, the people and the Party feel, apart from the "immeasurable revolt", "sickness and disgust". The corrosive language relating to the putrid is accomplished, in this aggressive rhetoric, by an injurious funerary dimension, the "enemies of the people" being deemed "the grave diggers of the peasants' property", "decrepit" and "ghosts" or "comics" (hollow people, carcasses). In the leading article "Chipurile lor..." ("Their Faces...") in *Scânteia* (Year XVI, no. 519, 9 May 1946), the description of the accused in the "lawsuit of the great treason" brought against Ion Antonescu and his collaborators peaks with the verbal derision and the emphasis of the culprits' decrepitude. The suggestion is that, since they are morally "dead", they can be killed physically, and no one should feel guilty about it, precisely because their bodies wear the signs of imminent death, of putrefaction alive. Several illustrative excerpts from this article: "their faces, fleshless, livid or sallow, crossed by wrinkles that aren't the traces of too much thinking, but the crumpled skin on the flesh of bodies from which everything that is human dignity and grandeur has vanished, the belief in an idea, their trembling, drooping faces, lips

blue, an intermittent grin, the grin of the neuropath or of the possessed, as well as the apparent tranquility of some of them, is the mirror of the same hopelessness". It is suggested that the culprits are hypostases of the failed human being; they are ghouls and "former men", who already began to rot. I offer the examples of several portraits deliberately sketched based on the idea of decrepitude: Constantin Pantazi (general) is a figure dominated (we find out this piece of information in the transcription of "Ion Antonescu Lawsuit" in the same *Scânteia* issue) by a "disgusting stutter"; another general, Picki Vasiliu, had his "face grey, equally fleshless, his white and thin hair split straight, his voice candied"; "his mouth twitches, spasmodically, involuntarily, as a carnal expression of the disintegration of living matter"; another defendant is "slack, disarticulate, grey, rough hairs spread through his baldness, like a worn brush, his nicked mouth from which inconsistent, jelly-like words are shot"; another one is "wrinkled and dark, a weasel's or hysteric's rapid gestures"; another defendant displays the "same physical inconsistency of the dropped cheeks"; another one has a "dark-blue face" (in the excerpts from the "Ion Antonescu Lawsuit" from the same issue of *Scânteia*, this defendant is described in the following manner: "Hideous, his cheeks swollen and decomposed by vices"); another one has the "frequent twitch of the tongue mechanically drawn out every three seconds, licking automatically the right corner of the mouth". Therefore, the accusers intend to demolish firstly the physical aspect of the victims degraded to the level of living cadavers. A special emphasis is placed on the mouth, on the face (sloppy eyes), the receding hairline and the cheeks, because the purpose is to maculate the four elements with a decrepit old age, dominated by clammy perspiration and swelling,

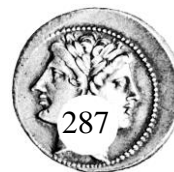


envisaged swinish by the accusers.

A virulent text against Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the National Peasants' Party, is signed in 1946 (*Scânteia*, Year XVI, no. 539, 3 June 1946) by Ion Călugăru, under the title "Mortul care le trebuie" ("The Dead Man that They Need"). The author depicts the leaders of the historical parties as if they were amateur pensioners and profiteers of burials, the central figure being, as already said, Iuliu Maniu who, before, during and after Ion Antonescu's court case, talked about the latter as he would have talked about a patriot. "In many small province towns/ writes Ion Călugăru, *our notation/* there is a tiny, twitching, fault-finding, quarreling pensioner, who yearns instead of living. The time passes by and frightens him as if it were a torrent. Quiet, scattered in haze are the townfolks' days, but the pensioner feels them hasty, wild, injurious for his sweet old age. However, when the undertakers drape a house and the black flags and hearse appear, driven by grave diggers who wear diplomats' outfits, the decrepit old man's humour changes. He becomes another man, another personality. /.../ We may say that the only joy left for his grey existence, his only concern is to take part in all the burials." In another text, published in the same year, Iuliu Maniu is again portrayed injuriously, his decrepitude being emphasized in the following manner: his words are an "embarrassing crack", the leader of the National Peasants' Party being "rotten" and "running to seed" (*Scânteia*, Year XVI, no. 582, 25 July 1946).

Fangs and Claws. Growls. "To Liquidate" and Versions to It

One last sample of aggressive vocabulary, through which the linguistic contamination of the "enemies of the people" is attempted by the communists at the newspaper *Scânteia*, is that of rendering them beastly, the gradations being suggestive in this direction. By rendering them beastly, the accused were implicitly lowered again in the sub-human, justifying the (fake) "Arianism" of the new man embodied by the communists. The communist linguistic imaginary intends to find abject and disgusting animal descriptions: the "enemies of the people" who had "fangs" and "claws" were declared "hyenas" (the speculators), "wolves" (in pack), "enraged dogs" (the marshal Ion Antonescu was called often a "red dog"; another defendant is described, in the lawsuit against him, as a "beaten dog" that trembles; then, the traitors who "gnarl" are mentioned, therefore, "Get your filthy claw down!" is chanted), "rats" (for example, the general Picki Vasiliu has "rat eyes"; on another occasion, other defendants have "fish eyes"); the use of the category of reptiles had a special impact: "chameleons", "serpents", "lizards", (reactionary) "adders"; other "enemies of the people" were tagged ("royal") "bed bugs"; kulaks were deemed "the ravens of the drought" or of the people; finally, one last category was that of the "worms", "roundworms" (the journalist Romulus Dianu is described as a "scared roundworm") and "leeches". Here are several samples from the article "Un vierme" ("A Worm"), by N. Corbu (in *Scânteia*, Year XVIII, no. 1263, 30 October 1948), on the president of the Social Democrat Party, Titel Petrescu: "Many have already forgotten him – if they ever knew him. You must dig deep among rotten things in order to find him, crawling deep



down. How many dreams in this little worm! To chubby up, to grow, to swell and swell again, to become big, to become a snake. The worm wore a speckled lanyard and fluffed in it, sweat when delivering speeches – bitterly, because no one listened to it – /.../ the worm crawled everywhere and in everything, moved restlessly up and down, hoping that it'll be lucky – and shook rancorously because no one cared for it. An ambitious worm. Titel Petrescu". The last descriptions are the most abject (because their reference is anal, excremental and putrid); they attempt (for the thousandth time) to justify the repression against the "enemies of the people" by their total maculation. The moral or, more precisely, the anti-moral is that you are entitled to do, and you can do anything to "worms".

Last but not least, the journalists at *Scânteia*, in the first stage of the Romanian communism, used a series of aggressive verbs by which they inflamed the population against the alleged "enemies of the people". However, the verbs *to kill* and *to exterminate* were used only rarely. In a first punitive phase were used the verbs *to brand*, *to unmask* (with the version *to tear the mask off* somebody's face, because the "enemies of the people" were suspected of theatricality, of hypocrisy, etc.), *to run down*, *to banish*, *to despise*, *to stigmatize*. *To cleanse* was used in situations of "disinfections" and prophylactic hygiene at human level, ironically speaking. Then, verbs that illustrated physical pain were used, such as *to hit*, *to knock* and *to tear* ("fangs" and "claws"), being completed, at an even more painful physical level, by *to batter* and *to crush*. Finally, the punishment of the "enemies of the people" was crowned by the verbs *to thrash*, *to shred*, so that the final stage of extinction should be rendered by *to suppress*, *to annihilate*, *to abolish* and, above all, *to liquidate*. This enumeration of verbs reveals explicitly that the end purpose

was the eradication of the human beings that were categorized as "enemies of the people". But down to the end of the tunnel, many other steps of agony and humiliation had to be made...

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