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RUMANIA

COMMUNIST PARTY
Sovietization

CULTURE
Propaganda
Theaters
Music

COMMUNIST-SPONSORED ORGANIZATIONS

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

The Communist Party and its Subsidiary Organizations
in the Opera

SOURCE TRIESTE: A 23-year-old baritone from CLUJ, who served in the artistic group of the border guard troops.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: November 1952.

EVALUATION COMMENT: This is a very detailed report on the Communist-sponsored and basic Party organizations within the CLUJ State Opera. Although the present contribution appears to be based on observations dating back to 1951-1952, it provides many useful details regarding distortion of contexts; organization of "spontaneous" demonstrations; salary deductions, and the Party's inner life as it is reflected by the regime's attempts to sovietize the people by means of a directed cultural program. The reported names are unknown here.

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As in all other centers of activity within the Rumanian Popular Republic, the activities of the CLUJ Opera theater are closely directed by the politics of Communist Party. For engaging a member to a particular group, the Communist Party set up a series of "political organizations or unions," which at the present moment control the activity and the private life of each citizen.

The members of the opera theater of CLUJ are compulsory or voluntary members of the following organizations:

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1. The opera theater's union organization belongs to the "Union of Employees of the Institute for Art and Culture, 'Flacara,'" of CLUJ, on Jokej street No.10 (formerly V. Iorga street.) Each member of the opera theater or other branches of the Institute for Art and Culture automatically becomes a compulsory member from the first day of his appointment. Two weeks later and without any previous notice, he receives his membership card on payment of 100 Lei (pre-reform money, at present, approximately five Lei.) The membership card contains personal data and a photograph of its bearer, plus about four pages of articles taken from the Labor Code and the receipts for the monthly dues to be paid. These dues are one per cent of the salary. The advantages which each member has are the following: 25 per cent reduction on entry tickets to the beaches, authorization to participate in all excursions organized by the union (our source does not recall that even one excursion was organized during his period of employment with the opera,) and, finally, the right to attend the union's club and to have use of the library, the newspapers, radio, chess games, etc.

Each of the union's branches -- from the OGM (Confederatia Generala a Muncii,) the unions (in our case, the "Flacara") to the union organizations within the enterprises, institutions, schools, etc., are directed by a committee of from 9 to 11 persons. The Union Committee of the Opera Theater of CLUJ is composed of the following members: President George ZNAMIROVSKI, BRADETEANU (fnu) (i.e., responsible for the organization - ORGANIZATORIC;) Ana NEGRANU, head of the cultural section; Livia COTESCU, head of the section in charge of agitation and propaganda; Nicolae SARBU, head of sports; other members are Leontin CHISU, Maria BRADATEANU etc.

The task of the Opera's Union Committee is to organize, once a month, plenary meetings of the union members, to organize courses in the Russian language (in collaboration with ARLUS,) courses in Marxism-Leninism (in collaboration with the Communist Party,) and courses for specialization according to the Stanislavski method, and, finally, the organization of "spontaneous" demonstrations (in collaboration with the "Flacara") on national holidays such as 1 May, 23 August, (Liberty Day,) 2 October (Armed Forces Day) 7 November (anniversary of the "Great Revolution) and 21 December (STALIN's birthday anniversary.)

The monthly union meetings take place according to the customary pattern, i.e. a summary of the past activities and the future activities to be carried out by the union. Then, never ending conferences with critics and

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auto-criticisms and a whole series of manifestations of Marxist type for the development of the program to be carried out in the next month, followed by advice and, sometimes threats, in case the said program is not entirely carried out. Having finished this series of speeches, the chapter "promises" begin, during which the members of the organization, one by one are expected to "voluntarily" and spontaneously undertake certain obligations for the following month.

In the following our source describes one of these manifestations: As soon as the President opens the "competition" of "promises," the assembly suddenly becomes very still, and, one after the other, everyone tries to sneak out as quietly as possible. They succeeded because the majority of the persons present came from the stage and were adept in such things. Also the members of the Party or its branches, with the exception of the heads of the said organizations, tried their level best to ignore the discussions. The president broke the silence and tried to persuade the assembly to enter into the discussion. These efforts finally, were successful and some of those present agreed in a few words that they were prepared to regularly participate in all manifestations which would be held, and to prepare an article for the wall-newspaper. During a meeting in the spring of 1952, G. SIMIONESCU, when asked directly to make his "promise" replied as follows:

"I consider it absurd to make promises, because if anything should happen meanwhile, to prevent me from keeping them, you would consider me a liar." President ZNAMIROVSKI replied the any such "obligations" were optional and that, naturally, cases of unforeseen circumstances could prevent anybody from maintaining them. However, SIMIONESCU preferred to keep silent.

All courses organized by the union organization are compulsory. Those who are attending the university are exempt, because the university holds similar courses. However, absence from these courses must be justified by a medical certificate or a certificate issued by the State authorities. Those who have no plausible excuse for their absence are subject to punishment by the respective base organizations.

2. The Rumanian Communist Party is represented by the "base organization" with, approximately, 20 members of the opera theater. This "base organization" depends on the regional "base organization" of CLUJ which is dependent on the Communist Party's Central Committee. The majority of

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its 20 members come from the ranks of the former Socialist-Democratic Party. Until 1952 it was very difficult to become a member of the Party and only in that year, memberships were possible. The opera's base organization is composed of five members: Vasile SILDAN, Secretary; George ENAMIROVSKI, agitprop; Ion CUREA, organizer; Iosif PASCANU and Ion PISU, members.

The members of the base organization have a membership card, and pay dues corresponding to one per cent of their salary. Our source is unable to describe the inside of the membership card, which is secret, but the outside was red until 1951. In that same year the red card was withdrawn. After a careful check of the members, they were given a "provisory" membership card which was white. The members of this organization do not have special privileges except that they are generally well-liked and trusted by the authorities and are not subjected to the daily annoyances which the average non-Communist has to endure. The Party's base organization calls a general meeting each month in conformity with its statute, and extra meetings whenever special occasions make it necessary. Sometimes the organization assembles all members in a public meeting, in which all members of the opera are permitted to participate. Generally, on such occasions, questions of general interest are discussed (our source, however, never attended any of these meetings and is, therefore, not in a position to supply further details.) On the whole the members of the Party are expected to behave in a exemplary way, as far as discipline, political activity, education and cultural level is concerned, a standard, which, so far, nobody has been able to live up.

The base organization not only controls the activities of the members of the Communist Party, but promotes all activities of the Opera theater. In fact, it directs and controls all other organizations; in addition, the base organization convokes monthly meetings in which the committees of the other "mass organizations" participate.

Until spring of 1952 the dues to be paid by the members of the organization were collected by Iosif PASCANU. But at that time, the regional base organization of CLUJ, when checking, discovered a shortage of 150 Lei (post-reform money.) PASCANU admitted taking that amount "as a temporary loan" until the next pay-day. He was expelled from the Communist Party, tried and sentenced to three years of imprisonment and substituted as cashier by Leontin CHISU.

3. U.T.M., the base organization which has 40 members is directed by: Leontin CHISU, secretary; ANGELICA (fnu)

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agitprop; and Ion PISU, member.

All members have a membership card with a photograph of its bearer, and two pages containing all personal data and articles extracted from the U.T.M.'s statute. Like the Communist Party the UTM also calls monthly and when necessary extra meetings. Membership have been opened since the beginning of 1952.

4. UFDR (Uniunea Femeilor Democrate Romane - The Union of Rumanian Women) each female member of the opera theater is obliged to join this organization: the UFDR is directed by a committee presided over by Ana NEGREANU. The monthly dues are 25 Lei.

5. ARLUS (Asociatia Romana pentru Strangerea Legaturilor cu Uniunea Sovietica.) Also this is an organization to which each member of the opera theater must belong. It is directed by a committee under the presidency of Ionel MICU. ARLUS' program aims at making the "marvels of Socialism's great fatherland, Russia known," and the methods of propaganda employed for that purpose are: the wall newspaper, faked photographs, conferences, and pictures hung in each corner of the theater. Rare meetings of the association are held for reviewing a Soviet opera, etc.

6. The Sport association "Flacara" is a branch of the union. The monthly dues are 25 Lei, and all members of the opera theater have to be members.

7. The "Ajutorul Reciproc" (Reciprocal Assistance,) which is a branch of the union, is the only organization having voluntary membership, but nevertheless is joined by everyone. It is under the direction of the Ioan CEASU, who acts as secretary, and all regularly inscribed members have the privilege of drawing loans amounting to twice the value of their monthly salary, repaying any such loans at the rate of 2,000 Lei (pre-reform money) per month. The monthly dues are 50 Lei.

Our source, knowing that he was due to leave the opera, and that the funds available belonged to the Communist Union Organization, borrowed 20,000 Lei (pre-reform money) a month before he was called up for military service. However, he never had to pay back this sum, and learned, later by a letter sent by CEASU in the fall of 1952, that the union had kept him on the payroll for an additional two months to cover up the amount represented by his loan; a procedure definitely against the Penal Code.

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8. The "wall newspaper," issued by a committee of agitprops or people in charge of cultural activities of the individual organizations (i.e. Union, PMR, UTM, ARLUS, UFDR,) is published once each month and posted in the artists entrance hall. The various columns are headed: "Professional Activity," "Political activity," "Criticism and self-criticism," "Sports," "Humor," "ARLUS." The chief editor is Ion PISU.

What happens whenever the monthly dues are paid, particularly when persons, having the good fortune to own a collection of membership cards are involved is described by our source in the following:

The opera theater pays the salaries every two weeks: i.e., 40 per cent of the monthly amount on the 15th of each month, the remainder on the 1st and last of each month. But the joy in receiving half the salary is short lived, because about half a meter from the counter, the union's representative is waiting, engagingly smiling, and cashing one per cent of the salary (he has habit of never having any petty-cash handy for giving the rest.) Then there are the various "responsible" people awaiting the "modest contribution" they are entitled to collect, from the artists belonging to the various Socialist organizations, UTM, UFDR, ARLUS, FLACARA, RECIPROCAL ASSISTANCE, with the exception of the Party which behaves more discreetly as far as taking in monthly dues is concerned. From the rest of the salary, other sums have to be paid for compulsory subscription to the "Scanteia Lupta Ardealului," "Scanteia Tineretului," the collectors of which are more or less "lying in wait" in the entrance hall. Thus, the unfortunate victims usually leave the theater in a hurry so as to avoid further "attacks" by the "head" of some new organization.

End.