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XI-1698RUMANIALEBANONESCAPES (0400)PROPAGANDA (2600)ADVENTURES OF THE RUMANIAN BALLET IN BEIRUT.

SOURCE ATHENS: Dispatch from the Association of Rumanian Refugees in BEIRUT to "Vocea Libertatii," ATHENS (not yet published.)

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Incidents attending the recent appearance of the Rumanian ballet in BEIRUT, Lebanon, resulted in one defection and a serious case of jitters for the team's political watchdogs, according to a report from the Association of Rumanian Refugees in BEIRUT.

Touring the Middle East as part of the Soviet orbit's renewed cultural propaganda drive, the Rumanian ballet company arrived in BEIRUT on November 7 on the Turkish ship "Iskenderun." Its arrival in the Lebanese capital was preceded by much local publicity; the Soviets were determined to avoid a repetition of the fiasco which marked the appearance of Russian and Bulgarian ballet companies there previously. So far the Rumanian group's Middle Eastern tour had been uneventful, with several indifferent performances in CAIRO and ALEXANDRIA.

Five evening performances, three matinees, and a gala night at the UNESCO Theater made up the company's 11-day (November 9-20) schedule in BEIRUT. For this stint each of the 60 dancers and 55 musicians was to get 200 Lebanese pounds.

In addition to the performers proper, the company included 20 persons of indeterminate functional status, probably political. Among them:

Nicolae MINEI, overall administrative director;

Vlaja Gross GROSAN, chief supervisor;

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Sergiu COMISIONA, conductor and "disciplinary director" of the orchestra;

G. GAVRILOFF, responsible for orchestra members' conduct.

BARBU (fnu), responsible for ballet members' conduct.

TOTH (fnu), security agent in charge of supervision of the entire company.

Some 20 of the orchestra members themselves were security agents charged with reporting in detail on the activities and conduct of their fellow-musicians while abroad.

The Rumanians were put up at two third-class hotels, the "Savoy" and the "Astoria" and ate their meals at the Sporting Club, a restaurant just outside town.

Recent unpleasant experiences in PARIS had caused Rumania's cultural propagandists to revise the political and administrative rules governing tours of artists abroad. Thus:

(1) The touring company must pay its own way without help from government funds, the view being that this provides greater stimulus for successful performances;

(2) Modified directives concerning political and disciplinary supervision while abroad aim at giving company members the illusion of greater freedom, which in turn will serve (a) to offset unfavorable propaganda consequences of the PARIS incidents and to promote the impression that Rumania is a country of free art; and (b) to boost the morale and self-respect of the performers themselves.

However, in the case of the BEIRUT tour, the Rumanian Ministry of the Interior and the Central Committee of the Communist Party seem to have underrated the enterprising spirit and good organization of the Rumanians in exile in that city. Although few in number, they comprise a well-knit body strengthened by a fervent hatred of the regime which keeps their country in servitude.

No sooner had the company arrived than the exiles had contacted most of its members, found them extremely eager to learn about international matters and Rumanian exile activities in the free world. The visitors were given copies of exile publications "Cronica Romaneasca," "Vocea Libertatii," "Romania Muncitoare," "B.I.R.E.," "Stindardul," "Nation Romaine." They were impressed with the accuracy of the information printed, showed keen interest in recent photographs of King Michael and the Royal Family published in "Vocea Libertatii" (ATHENS.) Having no previous knowledge of these publications, one and all who read them voiced surprised admiration at the widely numerous and manifold activities of Rumanians living in the free world.

The BEIRUT exiles also made it their business to come into contact with the company's escorting officials. These professional

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boosters of the regime unceasingly advocated repatriation, extolling the benefits of the amnesty and criticizing social and economic conditions in Lebanon. While this got them nowhere, it was interesting to note how the company members hastened to warn their exile friends in private against believing the propagandists' talk which was, they said, all lies.

The ballet's performances in BEIRUT were not a success. They never played to a full house. After five shows in the capital they spent four days in DAMASCUS where they performed in a restaurant to an audience of twenty.

Meanwhile, the BEIRUT Rumanians prepared to stage a demonstration during one of the performances, to protest against the Communist regime and its methods. Despite measures to keep it secret, the Soviet Legation learned of the exiles' intention through informers and notified MINEI and Vlaja GROSAN about it. Exiles got word from company members that Vlaja GROSAN had called a meeting of the entire group at the end of the performance in honor of King Hussein of Transjordan on Saturday November 19. Thirty trouble-making Rumanians had been imported from ISTANBUL, she told the assembled performers, and they were going to stage incidents during the performance. She warned that the company members' lives were in danger, urged them to go out only rarely and always in large groups.

Next morning Stelian GHINEA, a bass fiddle player, went to the Lebanese authorities and asked for political asylum. When his defection became known a few hours later, the company was assembled again and told that GHINEA had been arrested by the police for drunkenness, but would be released in time to sail back home with them.

That afternoon, during the performance, Rumanian exiles in the audience, aided by a large number of anti-Communist Lebanese, stood up and started shouting slogans; "Long Live King Michale; Long live free Rumania; Long live Freedom; Down with the Russians and their venal hirelings like Vlaja and MINEI; The day of accounting is drawing near; Awake, Rumanians (Desteapta te Romane,) Follow the example of Adalbert ROSZA; Think Rumanians are never lost" (Tot ce-i Romanesc nu pierde); and so on in a highly anti-Communist vein. Whenever the master of ceremonies announced a "distinguished artist of the Rumanian People's Republic" (artist emerit al R.P.Rului,) he was drowned out by the audience; the performers were forced to interrupt the Russian dances on the program and confine themselves to purely Rumanian numbers.

Police summoned by MINEI did nothing to curb the demonstrating audience.

Despite ensuing restrictions on the company members' freedom of movement, the exiles learned from them that they got a big kick out of the demonstration, that their escorting officials were livid with rage, and fearful of the consequences they will have to face when they get back to Rumania.

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On November 22, the company boarded the Rumanian ship "Libertatea" and remained on board until she sailed for CONSTANTA three days later.

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