

# MARTOR



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## Bread and journalism

### Filip Florian



In that world which was about to blow off (a world with newly formed political parties, with huge political passions, with the ferociously defended mysteries regarding Ceaușescu's execution, with second rank communists and with concealed security people skilfully and at the same time brutally gaining control over the power, with agonizing street manifestations, with democratic naiveties and with blunt manipulations exercised over a lost and scared nation) minding your literary business was impossible. Even preposterous.

The team from 'Cuvântul', to which I also pertained, wasn't randomly formed in a day, but according to a recipe which took its own time in order to generate the magic potion. As main alchemist, Radu G. Țeposu really knew how to select the people who were to be part of the team, by carefully dosing the magic substances, looking for traits which transcended skilful writing, self-denial, irony, the spirit of comradeship or loyalty or the fervent involvement in a world of new beginnings. All the young writers, when undertaking crazy journalism (similar to marijuana, in what concerns the sense of voluptuousness and addiction), lived unique experiences within 'Cuvântul': confraternity, the charm of endless discussions and of nights spent together, the obsession of the perfect text, the laughter, the sadness, the empty pockets, the vanity of the gold-

smiths.

A former colleague (and friend), a political talk show moderator, recently made a confession during a TV show, regarding the times of yore, saying that, while getting close to the editorial office of 'Cuvântul' every morning, he used to feel his heart beating faster and his hands shaking with joy. And that is how we all felt. And in the '90s, when news was present everywhere, when there were so many things revealed (like a coffin, locked for half a century), reports, commentaries, investigations, they all were the spice of the world. In the hundreds of pages that I wrote during the two and a half years spent there, I managed to comprise the long and filthy history of the dissidents isolated in psychiatric clinics, the film of the last twenty four hours of the life of the Ceaușescu family (with the episodic apparition of a fox, crossing the street while Ceaușescu was trying to run away), Ion Iliescu's life within the Technical Publishing House (with the Russian tea habit, the mania of fixing the broken bolt handles and blinds all by himself, his custom of playing revolutionary songs on the guitar and of giving cookies to his subordinates during festive days), the mystery covering the shooting of two security officers in Sibiu in December 1989 (precisely the chief of the archives and the chief of the classified correspondence), the religious fervour mini-novel, entitled the

New Jerusalem (with all its features resembling a South-American novel), etc.

In my mind, the miraculous time at ‘Cuvântul’ deserves the title (a bit soapy and worn) ‘the most beautiful years’. And since we were speaking about Radu Țeposu’s alchemist abilities (God rest his soul!) then you should find out that the magical substances that kept us together had been the following: Ioan Buduca, George Țira, Ioan Groșan, Radu Călin Cristea, Răzvan Petrescu, Marius Oprea, George Arun, Tudorel Urian, Petre Barbu, Carol Sebestyen, Mircea Țicudean, Dorina Băeșu, Lucian Ștefănescu, Dan Bănică, Mihai Cojocă and Constantin Rudnițchi. Afterwards, in the autumn of 1992 – when the seeds of market economy started to grow and market economy meant money and as the love for money is the root of all evil – the magic at ‘Cuvântul’ started to vanish and we all began to squander, reorienting especially towards the foreign radio stations which started subsidiaries in Bucharest and which were indeed fascinating.

The mirage exercised by ‘Europa Liberă’<sup>1</sup> was huge. The symbol, the myth of the redeeming Occident and the memory of that wince during childhood generated by the jammed voices, broadcast on short waves, really made the difference. Liviu Tofan’s admirable character and Neculai Constantin Munteanu’s charm made life better in an editorial office where we were learning other type of journalism on the fly and where- I can say it now, since it’s been so much time- people were rather edgy, a bit infatuated,

the wallets were loaded, the free gesture and the great friendship were kind of living their last days or turning into theatrical gestures. I myself, as editor of the office set up by ‘Europa Liberă’ in Bucharest, turned not only into a journalist but also into a very infatuated person. As époque, things were rather tragic-comical: Iliescu’s regime was functioning full-speed, and the dignitaries and the government officials were still looking at us through the smoky lenses of the cold war.

Therefore, while trying to get an interview from the controversial commander of the ‘Two and a quarter’ secret service (U.M. 0215), I was struck by the astonishing reply provided by a colonel, the head of the press department for the Internal Affairs. With a very slick smile, the fellow (I guess Vasilescu was his name), said: ‘get out of here, do you think we are that stupid!? As if we didn’t know that ‘Europa Liberă’ does espionage for the Americans, for the CIA, it is no pint in you pretending to be journalists...’

Later, in 1995, I ended up at Deutsche Welle. Loads of work, monotony, honour. The romantic days were already gone for me. I was like a football player passing from one club to another, only interested in the financial aspects of the contracts. I used to yearn for the years spent within my dear team, ‘Cuvântul’, where I would have gladly given up my life on the field without needing a dime.

*Translated by Raluca Vîjîiac*




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<sup>1</sup> ‘Free Europe’ radio station.