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Universității square

Vlad Manoliu



Daily or almost every day I used to take time to go to Universității Square. I saw it as a moral duty. On the other hand, I had the feeling that, if going to the Square, I would have been able to recharge my batteries. Let's not forget that we are talking about the spring of 1990, when all of us were susceptible to the political stimuli.

All of a sudden we had the chance to say NO, we had the right to overtly express our opposition. There I had the chance to live many moments which brought me to tears, but it is only one of them that I have clearly engraved in my mind.

It was Sunday, during the evening, when, getting to Universității Square, I saw a very unusual group ahead of me. Two very well dressed women were supporting a very, very old man who could barely walk. I accidentally followed them with my eyes, thinking that they had randomly got there. I was wrong. They arrived at the Faculty of Architecture, they got a fisherman campstool out of a bag, placing it in the shadow of a tree and then they carefully sat the old man on it. All of a sudden, I could see everything clearly. He was an old father, brought by the two daughters to the anticommunist marathon.

During working days, I used to meet with my wife, who was coming from the faculty, after fin-

ishing classes. In the same Square we bumped into loads of good friends we hadn't seen for ages. Caught in the every day life, we just knew about each other's existence, that we were OK. But we used to meet in the Square now. It had become the nodal point of many persons' daily existence, at least of ours and of that of our old time friends, together with whom we would listen to Vișoșki and to Russian anti-Stalinist ghetto songs.

We were unexpectedly turning young again, singing together 'Better ragamuffin than activist/ Better dead than communist'¹ At the fountain in front of the faculty of Architecture, I could see many different people staying together as one.

What did Universității Square mean to us? Maybe the smiling face of the distinguished old man sitting on the fisherman campstool and listening to the ragamuffins' song; maybe the peaceful revelation that no matter what Iliescu and his acolytes may want and do, there is no way back to communism; maybe the happiness to see that friends brought together by the difficult times before 1989 stick together; it may be simply our decision not to pull back an inch, no matter what. Since it cannot be any other way.

Translated by Raluca Vîjăiac

¹ The last two lines of the refrain of the "Ragamuffins" Hymn – the representative song for Universității Square.