

# An Emigrant from a Developing Country: Autobiographical Notes - II\*

NICHOLAS GEORGESCU-ROEGEN

With my arrival in Bucharest during early August, a twelve year period of intellectual hibernation began for me. As I once argued, the primitive computer – our brain – is superior to the artificial ones for at least one reason: it does not load its memory core with unimportant things. The circumstances were such that what I can remember more often than not was not of my own doing. During that period which seems to have been scooped out of my life, I was “a pitiful man under the times”, as Miron Costin, a 17th century Romanian chronicler, characterized history. There were important events, to be sure, to which I was one of the eyewitnesses, the only still living now. To some I happened to be a participant, but not of my own doing. Most of these events present some substantial historical interest that would remain unknown if I did not speak about them now. The whirlpools of those distressing events did teach me great many lessons about the behavior of people – whether as simple individuals or as detainers of power – under trying circumstances. And most important of all, it offered me the occasion to discover two important economic truths (to be mentioned later).

My time and energy, a lot of them, were spent between teaching and fulfilling a series of bureaucratic assignments most of which had no strict relation with my special knowledge. An eloquent example was my inclusion in a commission for the negotiation of a new commercial accord with Great Britain. (After the monetary waves spread over Europe from the New York Stock Exchange crash, all European countries, even the promoters of the pure free market –

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□ Nashville, Tenn. (U.S.A).

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Great Britain and Switzerland – had trade accords, renegotiated yearly, with the other countries.) But it was not for the reason one may surmise, it was because hardly anyone else knew English then. Someone was supposed to talk informally at parties with the Chairman of the British delegation, about their rejection of the Romanian stock proposal: a loan from Great Britain, most of which was to be used by Romania for purchasing military cloth from the British textile industry. As we may recall, that industry was in a slump, and Romania was, via the alliance with France, an unofficial ally of Great Britain. I froze listening to the Chairman, Sir Leith-Ross, saying in essence, “You better seek such an agreement with Germany, we do not want to intrude into Hitler’s sphere of influence”.

My first bureaucratic job was that of an assistant director of the Central Statistical Institute in charge of organizing the economic statistics. Probably because out of professional ambition I totally applied myself to that tedious task, I unfortunately got the stable reputation of being the right man for hard jobs. So I was next put in charge of organizing the statistics of foreign trade for the Finance Ministry and thereafter that of foreign exchange accounts for the Ministry of Foreign Trade. I had to install first the Powers and then the Hollerith statistical machines, a sort of businessman’s job which I could not evade.

Soon after my return, I became associated with a group of congenial men of my own generation. With one, Mitu Georgescu, I became bound by an unwavering staunch friendship for life the moment I met him at the Central Statistical Institute. A physician turned into a fine demographer and sociologist, he was the brain and the shoulder of that institution until Communists vying for his post threw him out.

Together with that congenial group I worked without any material compensation on a few important projects. The first was to support the newly established Institute of Business Cycle Research with various studies. Those studies, of which there were legions like them everywhere, aimed at clarifying Romania’s economic realities. Another project, of a wider scope, was *Enciclopedia României*, to whose editorial committee I belonged together with Mitu Georgescu and Mircea Vulcănescu. In that work, I contributed several studies, all historico-descriptive. At the time of the arrival of the Soviet Army, four volumes (4000 pages in quarto) had already been published. The type for the remaining two was ready for the press, but together with all archives of the *Enciclopedia* was destroyed in the name of the Revolution.

Meantime I was approached by a friend, Dr. A. Caratzali, who was in contact with Professor R. Turpin from the Paris Faculty of Medicine. They both were interested in the biological process that determines the sex of a newborn. From what I can remember, it was Turpin who first thought about the essentially different reactions of the male and the female gametes. The statistical tests of some observable consequences of those ideas were published in a couple of papers we co-authored. Together with some small mathematical articles those papers represented my only leaves of absence from the other routine preoccupations.

At the Institute of Business Cycle Research I met Virgil Madgearu, its chairman. A professor of economics (not of the Anglo-American school), Madgearu stood out among all by his zealous support of any meritorious intellectual. He was an ardent agrarian economist, the author of *Agrarianism, Capitalism, Imperialism* (1936), a profound study worthy of being translated into English even, nay, especially today. No one could have fitted better than him the role of Secretary General of the National-Peasantist Party. Needless to say, I could not establish any dialogue about points of pure economic theory with Madgearu. Nor was I able to do so with any other Romanian economist, except Max Sanielevici. Max was one of the five brothers of Professor Samuel Sanielevici (of whom I spoke in Part I of these “Recollections”) and a close friend of Madgearu. Because of his financial acumen, Max was Director of the Italian Insurance Company, *Generala*. With him I used to have long talks on economics, even about Keynes, toward whom he was less impatient than myself. But I helped Madgearu to complete a valuable informative volume, *The Evolution of the Romanian Economy after World War I* (1940, in Romanian). My close collaboration with him taught me to appreciate the Peasantist program, and thinking that everyone must be a political soldier, I joined that Party, illegal though it had been since 1938. Later, they judged me good enough to be co-opted into the National Council.

The storm of political and economic difficulties that had blown over Europe ever since World War I had heavier repercussions on Romania’s life than on many other lands. When conditions are desperate the masses believe that anything that flies is good to eat. On the traces of the 1929 crisis, many thought that Carol, the abdicated Crown Prince, could do away with the economic desolation. But his return as Carol II in June 1930, masterminded by Mihail Manoilescu, added fuel to the political strife of the Iron Guard, an anti-Semitic organization practicing political assassination.

Their agitating theme was not only that the King lived with a mistress in the Royal Palace, but that, moreover, she was Jewish (the famous Magda Lupescu). The Iron Guard had committed several political crimes and, above all, had done surprisingly well in the 1937 elections which were as correct as any other, of the United States too, of which I can think. To defend his paramour and also his political power, in February 1938 Carol abolished the Constitution, proclaimed himself the superior power in the state, and outlawed all political parties.

The first dictatorship under which I lived began at that time. What it could mean was soon shown by the fact that Corneliu Codreanu, the "captain" of the Guard, was arrested together with numerous other members. To end the Guard forever – he so believed – Carol, in November of the same year, ordered that Codreanu and thirteen of his closest associates be killed. They were strangled from behind as they were, supposedly, transferred to another prison.

Romania, as one writer put it once, was situated at the crossroads of empires, two of them still mighty and powerful. In addition, being the possessor of large oil reserves, Romania could not remain neutral then anymore than in 1916. As a first act of Germany's war preparation, Helmuth Wohlthat, a high economic counsellor, came to Bucharest in March 1939 to force Romania's hand to sign away the economic control over her most vital activities. In view of that attempt, Germany invited Hungary to mobilize on the Romanian frontier – certainly, a bluff. But Armand Călinescu, the recently appointed Prime Minister, counter-bluffed by having the word spread unofficially that the Hungarians have already attacked: the whole country was in agitation, with men running to their military units and blacked-out towns. Wohlthat seemed to have been impressed: Germany did not want any war at that time. A convention was signed, but only as a declaration of principles. However, with the eruption of the war on September 1, the horizon became heavier with ominous signs as refugees kept pouring out of Poland. They were helped by the Government and even hosted in people's homes, while we all began wondering where we could flee when our turn would come.

Late in September, Călinescu was assassinated by members of the Iron Guard in rather mysterious circumstances. He was in an automobile only with the driver; no one could understand why he was not escorted by any security men. Carol ordered the immediate "execution" of hundreds of Iron Guardists, picked up wholesale and

hanged from lamp-posts. What a dictatorship may do was there to see in plain daylight and at night as well. Any attempt by the people to overthrow Carol would have opposed their bare hands to his machine guns and tanks and, in addition, would have invited the military intervention of Romania's irredentist neighbors. As in all such cases, the strike had to come from outside.

To recall, in 1812, Napoleon I made a present of Romanian Bessarabia, which he did not own, to Tsar Alexander I. History repeated itself as on August 23, 1939, J. von Ribbentrop, through his pact with V. Molotov, offered on a platter the same province to Stalin. Moscow did not wait long to claim that gift. On June 27, 1940 it issued an ultimatum which Bucharest did not oppose. The writing on the wall was too clear. The West had not budged neither when Finland resisted a similar territorial request by Moscow in November 1939, nor when early in that June, Moscow grabbed the Baltic States. It did not budge for Romania either. So, Carol II renounced the ineffective military guarantees of Great Britain, the so-called Eden Declarations that protected *only* against an attack by Hitler's Germany, and appointed a pro-German Cabinet, with Mihail Manoilescu as Foreign Minister.

Even before the war, the idea of an exchange of population with the neighboring states so as to put an end to territorial claims and counterclaims had already acquired a hold on many minds. The exchange would have been easy with the many Romanians living beyond the Dniester in the USSR and a sufficient number of Bulgarians living in Dobrogea. Only the case of the Hungarians was complicated because most of them lived around the center of the country. Yet many political leaders were prepared to combine the population exchange with an adjustment of territory, but these plans and intentions unfortunately did not materialize in useful time.

By mid-July 1940, Hitler pressed Carol to do something about Hungary's and Bulgaria's territorial claims. A commission led by Mitu Georgescu worked day and night to examine all possible modifications of the frontier with Hungary. A Romanian delegation was ultimately summoned to Vienna for an arbitration by Ribbentrop and Ciano. Headed by Mihail Manoilescu, it included Mitu Georgescu's group of statisticians together with a couple of diplomats. Documents of all sorts from the 1930 Population census, filling several railway cars, had been prepared for the expected negotiation. In the middle of the night before they left, Mitu phoned to beg me to join them:

"After working on a score of alternatives our minds are twirling; we need a knowledgeable statistician that can see clearly". Mainly out of friendship for Mitu, I accepted. During the journey, Manoilescu had fits of anger, which was natural for a man in his shoes. For no reason I could imagine, he kept sending for me in his compartment to talk about his plans and complain about the kind of people he had to count on. The next day after our arrival, Ribbentrop and Ciano met with Manoilescu and simply showed him a map demarcating the northern part of Transylvania to be ceded to Hungary (30 August 1940). Manoilescu's fainting as he heard the *Diktat* was not feigned. In retrospect, the Hungarians should not have been happy with it either, since it has remained in history that even judges favorable to them had denied their right to the entire Transylvania.

Things then moved fast. As none of the democratic parties seemed willing to assume the responsibility of the helm, Carol still hoping, sent for General Ion Antonescu, an old enemy of his who was under house arrest, and installed him as Prime Minister. Since no government could then calm the agitated masses if it had not the support of the agitators, the Iron Guard, Antonescu appointed several Guardists to the Cabinet, with Horia Sima, the new head of the Guard, as Vice-Premier. There were also some Liberals and National-Peasantists in their personal capacity. Carol, forced to abdicate on September 6, left the country, to be sure, with his mistress. His son, Mihai, became again king. The first dictatorship of my life ended and the second began.

Like myself, my closest friends abhorred the ideology of the Iron Guard. One of them, Mircea Vulcănescu, when pressed by Guardists to join them answered with a pun: "I have a *cap* (head, in Romanian), I do not need a captain".

Some political leaders were greatly concerned about what the Antonescu government might do under the influence of the Guardists. Madgearu, in particular, continuously sent personal suggestions to Antonescu on how to protect the economy from being exploited by the German troops already in Romania as the new ally. It certainly was Madgearu's idea that I should be put in charge of the Import Bureau, which, with that of Export, constituted a neuralgic link with Germany.

During the Antonescu-Sima dictatorship, the head of the Ministry of National Economy, to which I belonged, was, first, Professor G.N. Leon (the son-in-law of Werner Sombart but not a pro-Nazi), and, next, Mircea Cancicov, who was one of the finest politicians,

capable and honest, I have ever known. My role was to supervise the application of the few commercial accords still at work, that with Germany being the most important and most thorny. I participated in only one negotiation with Germany which ended with the accord of December 4, 1940. It was a very important accord because it translated some of the principles of the Wohlthat convention into practical stipulations. The Romanian delegation was headed by V. Dimitriuc, a very bizarre creature who had at heart Germany's interests rather than Romania's, and who after the War vanished without any trace. From the meetings with the German Export Counselor (Dr. Rheinhardt, the only expert who did not wear the S.S. lapel insignia and in meeting me in Romania did not hail Hitler), I obtained some reasonable clauses which Dimitriuc, thinking them too favorable for Romania, did not include in the Convention signed after I had been instructed by Dimitriuc to return home as requested by Nicolae Leon, the Minister of National Economy. But Leon denied that he had issued such order.

The Undersecretary flanking Cancicov was "Commandant", the title immediately below that of the Captain of the Guard, Nicolae Petra. He was exclusively occupied with distributing "nationalized" Jewish enterprises to the numberless Guardists who approached him with a petition in hand. The Ministry of National Economy, like all other departments, teemed with green shirts, high boots, and ostensive revolvers. Being of Romanian descent, I am ashamed to admit that it was not even the uniform of a political conviction, but of opportunism which has always thriven with every new dictatorial regime.

One day, from the bed where he had to lie down because of a soft spine, Cancicov told me that Petra had asked him in earnest to replace me with a Guard Commandant. The Guard wanted to be in control of everything. As a manifestation of independence, late in November they stormed a prison full of Carol's supporters and shot them all. Next day, some students of the warmhearted Madgearu took him from his lunch under the pretext that his deposition at the police station was needed by another student. They shot him and threw his body in a ditch. That certainly was the price for his counseling Antonescu. The same day they killed another idol of the students, Nicolae Iorga, a historian of world renown.

On January 22, 1941 the Guard, thinking that the time was ripe, began a *putsch* aimed at getting rid of Antonescu altogether. Those

who were not engaged in the planned operations went on a spree massacring Jews and murdering suspected adversaries. But by January 24 their forces collapsed completely. Some historians, on the unverified information from Guardist sources, have stated that Antonescu's victory was due to German support. The truth is that, although German troops already were in Romania, they did not move even one finger. The Guard was defeated by the regular soldiers, mostly peasants, who abhorred its ideas and practices. A dictatorship stained by anti-Semitic propensities – the second in my life – ended, and the third – Antonescu's personal one – began.

I came out alive from this "cleaning" operation by the Guard, only because of an odd coincidence. On January 21, my father-in-law died and we immediately went to his home. Since the line of fire separated that home from mine, I could not return home until all was again quiet. When I did, I learned that during my absence, a group of armed Guardists forced their way into my house, searching for me in every corner. Not believing what my housekeeper told them, they blustered her to tell them where I was in hiding.

After his victory, Antonescu formed a new cabinet, almost entirely of generals. General Gheorghe Potopescu, who became the Minister of National Economy, called me back to the Import Office and asked me to write him an instructive report on Germano-Romanian trade. To my astonishment, after a few days he gave it back to me with Antonescu's handwritten resolution: "This means we have sold the country over to the Germans; countermeasures should be taken without delay". By chance I have been able to save the original, which, in my opinion, is an important historical document, not for me but for Antonescu. Symptomatically, on March 5 he and Potopescu met in Vienna with Hermann Göring and Minister W. Funk and told them that Romania would do the most to help Germany's war, but she must retain full control of her economy.

Early in June, at the express request of the Germans, Potopescu was replaced by Ion Marinescu, a lawyer who after World War I had served the oil firms of the Allies in Romania and now was ready to leave no wish of the Germans unsatisfied. The move was made in preparation for the planned war against Russia, which, surprising though it may seem now, was public knowledge well before it began (June 22). I was dispensed from military service because of a serious illness at the age of conscription. But my only brother, for whom I cared the most in my life, was drafted. He died after taking some

anti-malaria drug given to all going to the front. His death taught me the cruelty involved in cost-benefit analysis: without the drug many would have died of malaria, but perhaps not my brother.

At the office, all went smoothly until by mid-summer of 1942 Germany was behind in filling their promised quotas of agricultural machines and some industrial products. It would not have helped me to turn to foreign trade theory for advice. That theory is unavailing for just implementing established conventions, and more often than not even for negotiating them. What I did was ultra elementary. To prevent our balance in the German clearing from becoming too low for paying for those vital items, which would have allowed the Germans an excuse, I stopped the import from Germany of all trivia. As among these items were the Elbeo silk stockings for women, a sector of Bucharest society was in uproar and even forgotten acquaintances of my wife assaulted her to put some sense into me. And as the silk stockings were still hard to get, some upset users reached higher. One day Marinescu summoned me without saying that in his office there also were Carl Clodius, a high economic counselor of the German Foreign Office and the permanent head of the negotiating delegation, and Kraft, a Romanian resident serving the Germans as an oil expert. Without any preliminary Marinescu asked me why I had stopped the import of German silk stockings. After my brief explanation, he curtly told me: "You may now leave". Next day, Kraft told me Marinescu had asked Clodius whether he wanted my head, to which Clodius answered "No. Let us stay with the old ones". If this disclosure was true, all the more lamentable emerges Marinescu's dismissing me a few days later. This time it was not the pressure of the Guard, but some silk stockings that did it.

Even before Stalingrad the fact that the military operations against Russia seemed to have lost momentum caused many people, including many of Antonescu's entourage, to think about a possible withdrawal from the war. As the key posts had to be placed in the hands of confidants, in August 1942 Marinescu was replaced by I. N. Fintescu, a professor of law. He immediately called me back, this time as the head of the Export Office. There were only a few countries to which we were able to export. The exception was Germany, with the main item being oil. And since the deliveries of oil were approved by the Mines Office, my position was a virtual sinecure, but not without a panicky moment.

In one Egypt post of Field Marshall Montgomery, Rommel's men found several metal barrels of oil bearing the logo of a Romanian oil firm. The Germans realized that the barrels could have come only via Turkey, and they watched. One night their boats intercepted on the Danube two oil tankers authorized for Sweden changing course from up-stream to down. I naturally expected the worst when I was awakened at midnight, but they ultimately realized that I had no control over that operation.

After Stalingrad and the capitulation of Italy, the problem of a separate peace was on almost everyone's mind. There were several feelers. Antonescu himself charged the Romanian Plenipotentiary in Stockholm to negotiate with Alexandra Kollontai, the Soviet Ambassador. Another contact initiated by the leaders of all democratic parties and known to Antonescu took place in Cairo with the representatives of all Allied Powers. Since the Germans almost certainly knew the Romanian secret code, communication with Bucharest had to be made by loyal couriers through the Romanian Legation of Ankara. To justify their shuttle, Bucharest proposed to Ankara to negotiate a new commercial accord for which purpose a delegation was sent there as a cover. It is hard to explain why the Germans bought the pretext: the Soviet forces were on the point of crossing into Romania and the prospects of further trade with Turkey were null. As it happened, the role of heading the delegation fell upon me. Ankara was then a very small city consisting of two boulevards only, the Independence (*Istiklal*) and the *Ata-Türk*. From the beginning of March for forty-five full days I spent my time doing nothing in Ankara Palace, the only convenient hotel. To save the appearances I had to coax the Turkish officials to have brief meetings with us.

From April 4, 1944, the day of a memorable American air raid on Bucharest when the true alarm was not heeded because it sounded immediately after a drill, the capital and the Ploesti oil fields suffered an air raid almost everyday. Because the attacking planes came from the air base at Foggia in Italy, a pre-alert was issued in Romania late at night whenever the German reconnaissance planes detected preparations on the ground for the next day. The true alert was sounded only if the attacking planes veered towards Romania. It preceded the raid by about one hour, sufficient time for people to move in mass out of Bucharest by any automotive means; gas was superabundant and very cheap. This experience revealed that air raids could not do much harm to oil fields. Besides, the production rate, which as always was

determined by the past drilling, more than sufficed for both the internal consumption and the German diminished capacity of transport. Lakes had to be dugged out for storing the overabundant oil residues from cracking.

Following the understanding with the representatives of the Great Powers at Cairo, on August 23 King Mihai arrested Antonescu and his immediate collaborators and ordered the army to cease fire. The Germans reacted by continuously raiding Bucharest for three days with planes from a base only 20 miles away. In the absence of any defense, those planes could fly so low that one bomb got through the tower of the telephone company.

It was the end of the third dictatorship in my life, a quite unusual one. Whether it was so because of the personality of Antonescu or because of the fact that after so many deadening blows from outside people did not see another solution is a moot question. Be this as it may, Antonescu's government did not resort to assassination, the characteristic political tool of all dictatorships.

Official German documents prove that Antonescu said "no" to Hitler on many occasions. Yet he ultimately had to yield Hitler's to pressure to do something about the Jews. To save them from being taken over by the Germans and thrown into the holocaust, Antonescu established concentration camps in Transnistria, where the internees generally were inhabitants of Bessarabia and were under Romanian supervision and what should be overemphasized for restoring at least in part a disputed, battered picture is that none of my several Jewish friends lost their jobs. To name the most eloquent cases: A. Abason, the mathematics lecturer mentioned in Part I of these Recollections, Max and Sam Sanielevici together with their other two professional brothers, Professor Alexander Froda (the son-in-law of Max), Dr. Marcel Mayer (my friend and my own physician). Even known Communists or propounders of Communism, such as Professors P. Constantinescu-Lasi, C.I. Parhon, Iorgu Iordan, N. Bagdazar, C. Moisil, Mihail Ralea, and Gheorghe Mihoc, for example, who all were later placed in very high positions by the Communist regime, were not removed from their chairs. The militant Communists, about a dozen, lived with forced domicile in a village far from Bucharest. (The real bosses emerged later from Russia.)

The war against Russia was very popular. The tragedy of the Romanian people was that they were unhappy that the alliance had to be with Germany. One could listen to the BBC news without any

risk. At Capșa, a coffee house in the center of Bucharest, the meeting place of writers of all kinds, the *Marseillaise* was often sung loud and clear. Antonescu was an old friend of Franklin Gunther-Mott, the American Minister in Romania, with whom he maintained close relations until the declaration of war against the United States. Antonescu's sympathy for the Western Powers never subsided. As he was unwilling to take any inimical action against those powers, it was England who declared war on Romania (30 November 1941). Again, only under Germany's pressure, Antonescu declared war on the United States on 12 December.

A hardly known episode: before they left, the Americans entrusted Rică Georgescu, the former president of the American Oil Company in Romania, with a radio transmitter and a substantial amount of dollar bills. The cache having been discovered by the police, Georgescu had to be tried and, almost certain, sentenced to death. But when Antonescu was informed by Iuliu Maniu, the head of the National-Peasantist Party, that Georgescu was his associate, Antonescu closed his eyes as the investigation was allowed to proceed without an end in sight. And it happened that, after the Armistice, Georgescu's transmitter proved to be a miracle for providing the Allied air forces with invaluable instructions.

My own experience also evidences the strong pro-Allied atmosphere. Andrew Edson, a secretary of the American Legation, became a close friend of mine ever since he arrived in Romania in 1938. After Romania's declaration of war, I invited him together with several Romanian friends to a dinner to wish him *bon voyage* and a quick return. I knew that my gesture would not have been treated as a crime and was not.

After the German punitive air raid stopped, I waited in Bucharest for the Soviet forces which, in my naïveté, I expected to arrive with the great discipline, proper to a dictatorial regime. But after they entered Bucharest (August 29) my mind stopped working. There were rapes on the sidewalks in daylight; people also were relieved of their watches, jewelry, and wallets. Any resistance was solved by a gunshot. Someone said to me: "Don't you know? This is war". Perhaps he was right. My wife, on vacation as a teacher, together with my mother, had been evacuated as were all persons not needed in Bucharest. They were in a small Transylvanian city some 300 miles from Bucharest. The only thing I could think of then was to reach them as quickly as possible. I travelled by train until on approaching the frontier of the Vienna *Diktat* trains began to be

attacked by Hungarian military aircrafts (Hungary remained an ally of Germany for another five months). During the next three days I moved with very little rest by anything I could find – on foot, riding on peasant carts, or on an ambulance rail car. On arriving, my feet were so swollen that my shoes had to be cut to be taken off. At that time I could not expect to protect me and mine for long, much less to be soon called to deal with the consternating situation created by the act of armistice.

Immediately after switching allies, the King appointed General C. Sănătescu, the Head of the Royal House, as Prime Minister. That cabinet included one member of each traditional party and some Communists. Only Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, the foremost representative of the Communist Party, insisted on getting the Department of Justice, which left everybody wondering why he had not asked for the Department of Internal Affairs which had the police, or that of the National Defence which controlled the Army, hence, in that situation of Romania controlled the political conditions. But the Communists certainly knew the reason for Pătrășcanu's choice and in time everybody discovered it. The Romanian judiciary who by tradition were knowledgeable and incorruptible had to be changed into ones willing to obey the Party's orders. For the implementation of the Armistice Convention a commission was established as soon as the Sănătescu government was constituted. But Moscow, through the quickly swollen Communist Party and its several front organizations, was set on eliminating Sănătescu or any other non-Communist government by continuously pressing the accusation that they sabotaged the Armistice Convention. After one month of service the first President and Secretary General of that Commission were glad to resign. Early in October, the National-Peasantists tapped me for the killing job of Secretary General, a post in which I was instructed to remain until forced to leave. And indeed I resisted through two government changes, of Sănătescu and General Nicolae Rădescu, and even stayed on three months under the pro-Communist regime of Petru Groza. Groza was installed on March 5, 1945 as Prime Minister under the browbeating of the King by A.Y. Vișhînski, the prosecutor of the famous Stalinist purges of the 1930s. Moscow's move was a precipitate of the Yalta Conference of a couple of weeks earlier, at which the Soviets felt that they received the green light from their Allies. From then on the fiercest Communist bosses – Ana Pauker, Laszlo Luca, and Teohari Georgescu – became the overlords of the

country. To the Presidency of the Armistice Commission then came Mihail Ghelmegeanu, a notorious political opportunist ready to yield to the Russians on any matter. Yet he did not ask for my resignation until a new member of the Commission – a Communist, still on the list of the Romanian Academy, S. Oeriu – demanded that he do it (June 1, 1945).

To relate my experience at the Commission would require a small volume. Here I shall mention only a few relevant facts for which there are no other Romanian living witnesses. Almost every day we had a conference at the High Control Commission which was represented only by USSR. Frequently we were summoned there in the middle of the night. For our safety sake, we travelled in a few jeeps protected by heavily armed Romanian soldiers. During the first months, General Vinogradov, a rather soft man of about fifty, headed the Soviet Control Commission as a substitute for its President, Marshall R. Malinowski (the man who later became the USSR Minister of the Army). After one conference Vinogradov expressed the desire to play chess with any of us who knew the game. By courtesy, I offered myself but I reminded him that he should supply me with a military escort for returning home. He agreed but after a minute he reversed himself saying that it was too late, 3:00 a.m. He must have recalled what he certainly knew, namely, that even his men may not be safe escorts.

At the office, I had a full drawer of shelved private and official communications about the wild acts committed by the Soviet military. The first attempts on my part to inform the Allied Control Commission about them provoked only the accusation that I intended to insult the Red Army. When one of my sisters-in-law was killed in daylight, my family could not understand why I did not want to take up the case with the Russians.

The main and perhaps the most thorny roles of the Commission was to deal with the war reparations of 300 million U.S. dollars paid in goods at the 1938 prices. To establish the detailed schedule of deliveries we met almost daily with a Soviet commission presided over by Tank Colonel Mikhin, a rather pleasant fellow. The job was extremely tedious because the Russians wanted to specify in greatest detail the quantities, the qualities, the place and the time of each delivery. The 1938 prices also formed a nasty problem since the Russians by price meant only the pure cost of production. But our greatest obstacles were the repeated requests for deliveries that were patently impossible material recipes. Say, to deliver ordinary gasoline *and* aviation gasoline in a proportion that could not be obtained che-

mically from the mineral. I could not think of a reason for that comportment. Perhaps, they had been conditioned by the strong dictatorial regime of Stalinism to believe that order of any kind is all is needed for success. They might have thought that as victors they could obtain almost anything from the defeated. That strenuous negotiation was conducted on our part mainly by D. Jordan, of Greek descent, with M. Barash, a Jewish lawyer, helping on legal matters. I mention their names (both are now dead after spending years in prison) because I have never known people so dedicated to defend Romania's interests.

After more than one month of fretting negotiations of give and take – more give than take – we finally agreed on a complete schedule and decided that for the next meeting each side will bring the version of the schedule in its own language for comparison. At the next meeting, however, instead of Colonel Mikhin someone else came as chairman of the Russian delegation. After saluting us in the diplomatic style, the new chairman asked us how we intended to establish the delivery schedule for the reparations. When we passed him our text on which we had agreed with Colonel Mikhin, he shot back: "I do not know who Colonel Mikhin is. You must have negotiated with an impostor". The others, although members of the delegation presided over by Mikhin, did not even bat an eye. The purpose of that maneuver immediately became obvious: Mikhin's superiors must have judged the schedule he had agreed upon too favorable to us. Knowing already the points we had yielded they wanted to change only those that by negotiation Mikhin had consented in our favor. To see how much dripping with hypocrisy that stratagem was I should explain that absolutely all our meetings were held at the General Headquarters of the Soviet Control Commission where we were admitted only with identity cards issued by them and, although led by some escort, we had to go always through several checkpoints.

While I served as the Secretary General of the Armistice Commission, a few other events widened my experience. The night of the V-E Day, a mob of drunken Soviet soldiers forced their way into Hotel Ambassador where the high brass had their quarters, beat them up and threw them out into the street. Time and again, I was awakened in the middle of the night to get together with other Romanian officials to order our police forces to stop the riot. This, however, was a small symptom of a deeper phenomenon.

After the V-E Day, a great number of Soviet deserters disguised in peasant clothes hid themselves in cornfields and woods so that, as



they freely admitted, they could remain behind after the Russian Army returns home. To round them up was a difficult task even if the Red Army had not been in disorder. Again, the Romanian gendarmes had to assume the job. However, those facts did not take the USSR High Command by surprise. A few weeks earlier, they demanded that we build bathhouses at each border post on the river Prut (the new frontier with the USSR). The model consisted of a common shower between two dressing rooms. As we learned later, the men undressed in one room and, after taking the shower, were ordered into the other room, where they had to don clean clothing, not their former ones. A well-conceived trick of making sure that no returning military would take with him jewelry, foreign currency, messages, etc.

In spite of the immense oppression and suffering, people generally were optimistic that what had happened many times since Peter the Great would happen again: after some years, the Russian forces would all leave. Protests issued now and then by the United States and Great Britain, asserting a definite concern for the situation in all countries occupied by the Red Army, including Romania, were also responsible for the atmosphere of optimism. My own hopes were greatly enhanced by the visit of Mark Ethridge, the consummate editor of the *Louisville Courier*, as the special envoy of President Truman. Ethridge had first visited Sofia in mid-November 1945, from where he went to Moscow. The report of his findings in the Bulgarian capital turned him quickly into a *persona non grata* to the point that he met with difficulties in arranging his flight to Bucharest in early December. Emil Kekich, the American Commercial Attaché, convened a group of people knowledgeable of Romania's conditions at a lengthy luncheon meeting. Needless to say, the interest and keen perception shown by Ethridge elated me. As a result of his report (which has never been made public) Secretary James Byrnes and Commissar V. Molotov agreed that an Allied Commission consisting of Vishninski and the then American and British Ambassadors to the Kremlin (Averell Harriman and Sir Archibald Clark Kerr) should come to Bucharest on the last day of December for the purpose of reorganizing Groza's government into a representative one. They succeeded only in adding to the Groza cabinet one Liberal and one National-Peasantist as ministers without portfolio. They also obtained Groza's promise to hold elections in April or early May. However, the very presence in Bucharest of the American and British high officials with a definite political mission, about which word quickly spread, kindled everybody's hopes, mine too.

However, a cold shower fell on us as only two months later, both the United States and Great Britain, rather inconsistently, recognized the Groza government (February 4, 1946). Elections were held later than promised, in November 1946, when the anti-Communist vote was so strong that in some places even though the ballot supervisor was chosen by the Communists, no vote for them was in the box. Three days were necessary to modify the actual results and destroy all traces of the frauds. The United States gallantly issued a protest but by that time it had hardly any effect on people's feelings in Romania.

I could not vote. With numberless others, I had already been purged from all my old positions and, being jobless, I could not obtain a voting card. And since at the time of the general purge, we still had a grain of optimism left, every purged person filed a legal protest against the abuse so that some time in the future one could ask a court for reinstatement.

The year 1946 was a time of sorrowful trials and executions. Antonescu, immediately after his arrest in September 1944, was taken to the USSR, brought back, tried, and sentenced to death. Together with three other so-called "war criminals", he was executed on June 1, 1946. The second category, that of those responsible for "the disaster of the country", was far more numerous, comprising virtually every former minister or vice-minister of an economic department as well as the army high commanders. Their trials began in September. I served as a witness in two of the several groups. In one group I testified for my former minister, I.N. Fintescu, that as soon as he felt that getting out of the war did not occur as quickly as he had expected he stopped coming to the Ministry in protest. For another group, which included Mircea Cancicov, Mircea Vulcănescu (who, being a director in the Finance Ministry, after the putsch of the Iron Guard was called upon to serve as Undersecretary), and Stavri Ghiolu, the Undersecretary after the putsch, my testimony concerned a study made by Belu Zilber.

Zilber, an active member of the Communist Party and a personal friend of mine, sometime in the 1920s had participated in a terrorist coup that killed several political leaders. For that he was sentenced to a long prison term. After being pardoned by King Carol, Zilber was taken under the wing of Madgearu who also gave him the job of secretary of the Institute of Business Cycle Research. Immediately after Romania's Armistice, Zilber reopened the Institute as its self-

appointed Chairman and without delay began a thorough study of Romania's trade with Germany. He was sure to produce the statistical proof of Germany's economic exploitation of Romania. However, being a statistician with a bourgeois education – the kind whose absence among Communists constantly distressed Lenin – Zilber could not avoid the conclusion that Romania imported more substance from Germany than she exported even though at the same time her balance in value was in her favor. As anyone might now guess, the study was immediately destroyed but not before Zilber, to show off his expertise, distributed it to several persons. Notwithstanding the sedulous support he had received from Mircea Vulcănescu throughout the war, Zilber refused to testify that the copy of his study introduced as a piece of evidence by Vulcănescu's lawyers was authentic. It was incumbent upon me to testify affirming that authenticity.

That was not the end of the story. If I can relate it now for the first time it is because the main jurists involved are dead. While the trial was still on, Alexandru Ionescu, an alumnus of the Lycée on the Monastery Hill, then the President of the High Court judging the Vulcănescu group, came one night to see me and trembling told me that Soviet officers came into the Chamber and blustered the Court to sentence the accused to death. But after arguing and begging, the Russians consented to a sentence of life imprisonment. Ionescu and his two colleagues of the Court wanted now to have an expertly drafted sentence so as to be almost surely repealed by the Supreme Court. The idea was that by the time the case would come before that Court, the Russians would have left. The dominant optimism again. On this prompting, I contacted Emil Otulescu (as I remember), one of the greatest jurists, who drafted the repealable sentence that Ionescu's Court adopted. And indeed the Supreme Court of that time repealed it. But our sanguine hopes did not materialize; the second trial took place during February 1948, under an even stronger Communist tyranny one month after King Mihai was kicked out. Even though, I was then in hiding and preoccupied with preparing my escape (a week later), I deemed it my duty to testify this time, too.

By 1947, the Communists were well set in the saddle and could proceed with the liquidation of all resistance without restraint. In this they were greatly helped by some planted spies. Nicolae Penescu, who became the Secretary of the National-Peasantist Party after the assassination of Madgearu, had a secretary who practically lived in his home. It was that man who informed the Communists about the exact

time and place where Penescu and some other leaders were to board a plane for escaping. A couple of those Romanian polished youngsters working as translators at the American Mission were witnesses for the prosecution at the trial by which Iuliu Maniu, the President of the National-Peasantist Party, was sentenced to prison for life. The members of the United States Mission seemed totally unaware of the spy net around them. In my role as Secretary General of the Armistice Commission I met Emil Kekich, the Commercial Attaché and continued to have amicable relations with him. A very congenial person, Emil relied on me for economic documentation and even on helping him with his official reports. As the atmosphere became heavier, I was running a substantial risk in entering the American Mission, a risk that Emil greatly underestimated. One day when about one foot of snow had covered all streets, he unexpectedly sent the Mission's jeep for me. The American flag on the fender fluttering against the untouched pure white snow was a loud cry of its identity. All my neighbors were at their windows! Another time, I went to the Mission to give him a copy of a letter of Groza to the new head of the Soviet Control Commission, General I.Z. Susaikov. By that time, persons entering the Mission were often arrested for thorough inspection. I had typed the letter on both sides of a very thin paper, without spaces, so that I could have easily swallowed it. I could not see by what means Emil immediately summoned one of the translators to whom he was ready to hand the paper saying, "I need a translation promptly". I had just enough time to retrieve the paper from Emil's hand; "I wish to make a change", I said. As I explained later, since nothing could be done about my having been given away, I wanted at least to prevent others from knowing how deeply I could reach.

With the approaching Peace Conference, D. Iordan and I each made a report-study of Romania's problems that we considered the United States Delegation should know. Iordan worked in the name of the Liberal, I in that of the National-Peasantist Party. We gave copies to the American Mission thinking that they would be sent to the appropriate desk of the State Department. However, I was not the only one to feel that the Mission was not sufficiently diligent in informing Washington of the problems concerning Romania. Shortly before the time of the Peace Conference (set for February 1947), I learned that an admirable friend of mine, Anton Golopenția, who was a good friend of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu as well, was to accompany the Romanian Peace Delegation to Paris. To make sure that our reports

would be in the hands of the American Delegation, I proposed to Golopenția to take with him copies to be slipped with the greatest circumspection to them. He did so, but, unfortunately, not in useful time. I say unfortunately, because as Willard L. Thorp, the Assistant Secretary of State and the Chairman of the American Delegation, later told me, he had not received copies of our reports given to the Bucharest Mission. Unfortunately, Golopenția must have been smelled out, for soon after his return he was thrown in prison where he died.

Although two years had passed since its installation, the Pro-Communist regime still met with the latent resistance of the townees as well as of the villagers who followed the signs from the towns. The problem was to bring the towns to their knees. A more convenient method than going around shooting thousands of people was found, namely, to cause a runaway inflation. The logic was that at the time the towns relied only on the food brought in by the peasants. And since under the prevailing general scarcity of manufactured products the peasants could find hardly anything on which to spend their money, it was thought that they would ultimately realize that money serves them no purpose and would stop bringing food to town. The townees then had to surrender to the Communists' will. I thought the logic of the scheme perfectly correct and lectured the clandestine National-Peasantist Council on the quantity theory of money. But Ghiță Popp, a former village school teacher and an old veteran Peasantist, smugly shot at me: "You, Professor, do not know the peasants. For them money is the *summum bonum* and they will get after it in all circumstances". And indeed the peasants did not stop bringing their products to town, instead they kept piling up depreciated bills under their mattresses, hoping that after things would become normal they would buy more land. The interesting result was that the velocity of circulation did not increase faster than the amount of currency in circulation, as the conventional theory now claims. For then money travelled only one way, from towns to the countryside. Popp thus taught me one of the most invaluable economic lessons, rather new for me at the time: that institutional behavior is a powerful economic factor, more powerful than any principle of theory.

During that period, visiting one day with Max Sanielevici, with whose *Generală* I had a mortgage on my house, I placed my match box on his desk saying "Please pass it on to your cashier to write off my mortgage and tell him to keep the change". That this was possible

only because of inflation, made an indelible impression on my economic outlook: my house came to me free at the expense of some depositors of *Generală*. In my writings (especially in the study on Brazil, *Energy and Economic Myths*, Pergamon, 1976, chap. 7) I have continuously insisted on this perverse effect of inflation and dissected it analytically.

And as the events continued to prove Ghiță Popp right and me wrong, the Communist planners decided in favor of a monetary knockout unique, I believe, in all history. According to a plan of Eugen Varga, a Communist economist, on August 15, the old money under all forms was declared void. Everyone could get 75 *new lei* for 1,500,000 old lei, a working person 150 *new lei* for 3,000,000 old, and a peasant 250 for 5,000,000. Anyone who had foreign currency or gold coins was obliged under death penalty to exchange them at the National Bank at the rate of 150 *new lei* for a U.S. dollar. Streetcars and buses ran empty for days thereafter; 150 lei were hardly sufficed to buy food for a week or so. Highly interesting was the reactions of many peasants who had accumulated billions of old lei and who, seeing their wealth turned into dust, committed suicide just as many stock exchange nabobs did after the Black Tuesday. It is only in this practical respect that I know those two social classes to react in the same way.

During 1947 signs of the increasing tyranny of the Communist Party and its determination to liquidate all whom they suspected of being adverse became frequent and clear. In addition to the monetary coup of August, Maniu and Ion Mihalache, the Vice President of the Nationalist-Peasantist Party, as well as a score of other leaders were arrested and sentenced to heavy prison terms, which most did not survive. As the result of simple terror, some 60,000 people were shot or tortured to death during that year.

One late evening some unidentified voice phoned me: "Leave home, not in a few minutes, but now, now"! The warning had a purpose: people were frequently snatched from home without any legal order and thrown in jail where they were tortured and held indefinitely without any trial. The "lifting" was always done late in the night, around two or three o'clock. The regime did not want any family outsider to witness the kidnapping. Accordingly, even if the fellow instructed to kidnap you in the night bumped into you on the street, he would not touch you. After that warning call, I did leave home, but since nothing happened thereafter, I thought that it was

from a prankster, a Communist knowing the list of the people to be kidnapped that night would not have called. So, when another warning call came a few days later I paid no attention to it. But that night *Duba neagră* (the black prisoners' van) stopped at my gate and three men wanted to open it. My German shepherd, unaccustomed to such a sight, started to bark as if she had been fatally wounded, and continued to do so as soon as they touched the gate again. After three or four such menacing, deafening barks, all my neighbors turned on the lights and came to their windows. The secrecy of the kidnapping being thus broken, the men and their *duba* left. I became convinced that I had to go into hiding immediately and, also, find a way to escape.

Dr. Sabin Manuila, a renowned public health expert whose organisation of Romania's vital statistics was an international paragon, also reached the same conclusion. With Sabin I was in a close relation ever since my return from the United States. He arranged an excellent escape plan by air, according to which our group of eight was to board a plane flying from a provincial town to Bucharest. The most important accomplice, Max Manolescu, a friend from my childhood, was then the General Inspector of the Romanian Airlines and also the pilot for Ana Pauker. Through the American Mission, the Istanbul airport was forewarned about the possible arrival of an unscheduled aircraft from the direction of inimical Bulgaria, as the Turks regarded it then.

All seemed in perfect order. Yet what happened is a glaring illustration of how the best plans are thwarted. A few days before the set departure, the Communist Militia searched, as it usually did, the plane scheduled for Paris and found a purse full of gold coins. The pilot had to confess that it belonged to Max. Max had wanted to send it abroad ahead of him. As Inspector General of the Romanian Airlines, Max had to be present at all international flights; so he was arrested on the spot and taken to the Center of Economic Control where he was left alone in one of the rooms. Fortunately, for him and for us as well, relying on the fact that he was in uniform Max, at a moment when he was not guarded, ran away. He had just time to warn me before he went into long hiding.

But one part of that plan is immensely relevant for the history of that period: Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu was one of our group, a fact known only by Sabin and myself and disclosed for the first time now. (I am sure that greater details may come out from Sabin's voluminous files at the Houston Institute.)

Pătrășcanu was the only genuine intellectual among the Communist leaders. He had a doctorate and wrote several books, all scholarly save his superficial account of the first three dictatorships. He was the Chairman of the delegation that went to Moscow for the Armistice Convention and, according to reports, he had tears in his eyes while signing it (September 12, 1944). As a member of the Romanian Peace Delegation to the Paris Conference (where he took Golopenția as an expert), Pătrășcanu apparently did not avoid contacting the representatives of the Western Powers. And once, addressing a mass-meeting in a Transylvanian town, he pointed out the inappropriateness of flying mainly Hungarian and only very few Romanian flags. Pătrășcanu had a gentle nature that was repelled by the dry cruelty of Ana Pauker's clique. His closest friends were intellectuals, like Anton Golopenția, E. Calmanovici, and the erratic economist Belu Zilber, or artists, like the painter Lena Constante, the poet M. Breslașu, and the musician Harry Brauner. His idea of Communism was an ideal program and he could not stand any more what Communism meant in actuality. Even though they could not know anything about Pătrășcanu's desire to escape, the top Communist members had sufficient cues about this state of mind. Soon after I escaped, at the General Congress of February 1948, Teohari Georgescu (of Ana Pauker's clique) in a long harangue accused Pătrășcanu of deviationism. When it was over, the accused left the rostrum where he had been seating with all the other greats. He was immediately thrown into jail and kept without trial until 1954, when he was tried together with many of his friends. Only he and Remus Koffler, an associate Communist leader during the Antonescu period, were sentenced to death. A mystery, in my opinion, is that the Pauker clique had been purged in 1952 without trial, and that neither Ana Pauker nor her two close associates, Vasile Lucas, Teohari Georgescu, are listed in a recent Romanian *Mic Dictionar Encyclopedic* but Pătrășcanu is.

After the fiasco of Sabin's plan, I began looking for a new formula. None was easy. Some proved even to be fatal because many smugglers were bandits: hundreds of cadavers were later discovered in a wood at the Austro-Hungarian frontier. The guides knew that their clients must have valuable money or gold possessions with them. I put aside the plan of escaping to Austria through Hungary mainly because of the immense risk I would have run with my inability to speak Hungarian. I tried other courses. In gratitude for my aiding

their struggle during the war, the Jewish Community gave us identity cards – numbers 14,030 and 14,031 – with my wife's and my own photographs but with false names representing us as former internees from Transnistria. The idea was that such persons even found in some suspect circumstances were not bothered by the Communist militia. I also attended a Jewish meeting for the possible organization of departure by sea. But I was lucky to be able to leave before someone would have found out that I could speak neither Yiddish nor Russian, for the atmosphere was heavily coloured by hate of the *Goys*.

I then began concentrating on a formula through Constanța, the place with which I was thoroughly familiar. For even my optimism died off when the King, once honored by Stalin with the highest Soviet decoration, was forced to abdicate after Communist militia besieged his villa. I got in contact with an officer from the Turkish freighter *Kaplan* who for a heavy price promised to hide us in a safe place on that ship. In the middle of night, when the sentries guarding the ship were not looking, he guided us on board and left us in a room without saying a word. Smelling double-cross, immense though the risk was because of the strong illumination in the harbor, I decided to get out in a great hurry. The Communist government had established large rewards for informers and that bandit wanted to get one.

In fact, the *Kaplan* cargo, consisting of kits for wooden citrus cases, was still to be loaded. After a week or so, I got in touch with the radio-telegraphist of *Kaplan*. Together with an accomplice, he hid us among those kit boxes so well that we could be found out only if most of the cargo were unloaded. The freighter was supposed to sail the next day, but the first, deceitful officer had already informed the harbor's security that a couple was trying to escape by boat. The sailing of the *Kaplan* was delayed by one day for a thorough search by the security experts. We could hear them swearing at us as well as at the informer.

The space in which we remained for three nights and three days was smaller than that of a usual desk. When we thought to be in the Turkish territorial waters, we came out to present ourselves to the skipper. He was a very old man, once a naval officer in the Ottoman navy, who kept smoking the narghile. He also had the superstition that a woman on board is a bad omen. But what made him furious was that he had sworn to the security men that no stranger was hidden on his ship. He even threatened us to take us back to Constanța, which he actually would have to do if we could not get

political asylum at any port of call. Being already known to the Turkish Government, I did not count on that ending.

In the morning of February 14, 1948, as we approached Bosphorus and the minarets began to show at the horizon, I dropped the keys to my house (which I kept on me by habit) into the Black Sea, and looking up I exclaimed "Thank you God, for having given me this opportunity". Four dictatorships were behind me, and now I was going to live in a free world. But at the time I did not expect to be subject there, late in life to a vituperation in true Gestapo style from an academic administration. Although when it happened, it had no follow up, it left an indelible scar on my soul.

The Turks being by a long tradition very circumspect about all foreigners, we had to wait one day before they granted us political asylum. An old friend, Aurel Decei, an outstanding scholar of Turkism, took us into his home. What I was able to save from the *per diem* for my 1944 mission, I had left with Mircea Buescu, then the Romanian Commercial Attaché. But even with the amount I had on me in escaping it would not have taken us very far. A friend, who was a millionaire magnate, lent me a substantial amount without interest and without a fixed term. It eased my settling down during the first years in the United States.

Needless to say, all Intelligence Services, the Turkish, the American, and the British, were eager to get some news from me. One piece I thought highly important concerned Marshall Tito. During December 1947 he had come to Bucharest to sign a friendship convention with Romania. It was both striking and curious that he came with his own train preceded by a safety convoy and with his own cooks and food ingredients. I could not conceive any reason for such extreme, certainly offending, precaution. But soon after that visit, National-Peasantists camouflaged in Communist cells informed us that in their new indoctrination Tito was stigmatized as a traitor of the people. To me this was a clear signal that Tito's relations with Moscow were approaching a crisis. The head of the British Intelligence did not agree with my idea, so he invited me to tea together with their specialist on Yugoslavia. He, too, doubted my story. But as some days later, the news about the growing tension between Tito and Moscow spread through most intelligence channels, the British Intelligence man was eager to find out what else I knew.

Having notified Schumpeter and Leontief about my escape, I immediately received a cable from Wassily that I was hired and,

hence, I should apply for an immigrant visa. After getting it, I turned to arranging my trip. There was only one way to cross the Atlantic – by ship. Moreover, most places on the few ships that still functioned were earmarked for officials from all countries. The earliest reservation I could obtain was on the SS *Mauritania*, sailing on 24 June from Cherbourg. For this, we needed a French visa, which raised a great obstacle in my way. The French Consulate had to have the permission from the Paris authorities which, as the French General Consul from Istanbul told me, will never give a visa to a refugee from a Communist regime. My status of refugee could not be concealed since as I had no passport my identity document was a *laissez passer* issued by the United States Consulate. The French high bureaucrats – whose administrative power could not be subdued by any of the French Revolutions – acted on their own, not on the basis of some Government decision to refuse to issue a visa to such an applicant. Virtually all sympathized with Communism. As Czeslaw Milosz, who lived in Paris around 1950, said in the 1981 addition to his Nobel Prize winner, *The Captive Mind*, “French intellectuals resented their country’s dependence on the American help and placed their hopes in a ... leader of incomparable wisdom and virtue, Stalin”.

Clearly, those admirers of Stalin wanted to punish by that refusal all who had not wanted to recognize how marvelous was the life in the Communist Eden and flew from it demonstratively. Cable after cable to Paris (on my account) remained without answer. The head of the British Intelligence in Turkey gave me an immigration visa to Great Britain, on the thought that because it was such a highly discriminating resolution it would impress the Paris office to approve in the end my request which was for only a “transit visa without arrest”. Still nothing happened. And I should not fail to reveal that the British Intelligence Head warned me that that visa was a fake and that if I tried to enter Great Britain on its basis I will certainly be arrested, a procedure worthy of an astute Intelligence Service.

On the opinion of almost all diplomatic officials I left Turkey to move nearer Cherburg so that I could reach it even if the visa would come just before my sailing date. Italy, which I had not yet visited, seemed the natural place to wait further. We left by boat, then the only available means, from Istanbul to Naples, where we went through another adventure.

The Naples harbor had been completely destroyed by the war bombardment. The only serviceable pier quickly became over-

crowded as another boat full with Italians from the United States docked at the same time with ours. No one could know where one’s baggage was unloaded or where one could get customs clearance.

It was quite dark by the time I could leave for the *Continente*, a European type hotel with gracious, hospitable proprietors. And to be sure, in a destroyed harbor there were no lights and no taxis waiting for fares at the gate. But there were several young Neapolitans, of those spared by the war, who would carry your luggage on a two-wheel cart to your destination.

During the trip to the *Continente* I was considering, perhaps justifiably, the possibility that my Neapolitan friend could simply run away in the dark with all my belongings. No, he did not, nor has any another Italian cheated or rubbed me during any of my long visits there. Savorily, my good friend kept singing some of their popular arias all through the hotel.

During that visit I had another occasion to note, as has been my constant propensity everywhere, things that do not fit one or another principle of the received economic theory. The principle involved then was that black market prices are always higher than the official or the free ones. On that thought I asked the hotel cashier to change some dollars. To my surprise he wanted to count them at a much lower rate than the official one, published every day in all newspapers. I had expected to do much better than that: that was black market, wasn’t it? Some bankers clarified my perplexity. Years ago an immense amount of capital had been transferred abroad illegally, through the black market: the owners were almost sure that the coming elections will put the Communists in power. When that financial outlook was reversed by the famous 1947 Truman declaration concerning the status of Trieste, that capital was gradually brought back. However, it could not come through a bank at the legal rate, for that would have revealed the delinquents of the initial operations. To avoid prosecution, the delinquents had to go through the black market overcrowded with supply of foreign currency.

On my visit I was especially looking further to meeting Corrado Gini, a remarkable statistician known above all for the uncommon indices he had designed for some intricate problems considered by the statisticians from the League of Nations. From that time I also cherish my acquaintance with Carlo Benedetti for his statistical contributions characterized by novelty and well-marshalled mathematics.

Both Gini and Benedetti are responsible for the admirable gift of Italy to statistical science, the periodical *Metron*.

The officials of the French Embassy in Rome were, like those in Istanbul, very eager to help me, but time and again Paris did not answer any cable on my behalf. My sailing date was getting nearer, so I decided to move to Geneva (Switzerland), the nearest I could then get to France. There a great surprise was waiting for me: the French Consul was the brother of General Charles de Gaulle. From his mouth I learned that with absolute certitude Paris will never, never issue me a visa. Hard to believe, he advised me to take a taxi and cross into France as hundreds were doing every day. But I could not use that stratagem for if, by chance, I had been caught and arrested as a trespasser I would have lost my visa to the United States.

As the last resort, I thought of sending an S.O.S. to Radu Plessia, another Romanian refugee, who was living in Paris. Plessia had been an official of the Romanian Department of Foreign Affairs and had done some work at the Ministry of National Economy. I was right in my expectation that as a former diplomat he would have established some congenial relations with his counterparts at the French Foreign Office, the Office that decided which visa should be issued. After I telephoned Plessia, the miracle happened: my visa for transit without arrest came on June 23, 1948, just one day before Mauritania was to lift anchor.