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***THE IMPRINT OF THE SECURITATE ON THE DESTINY
OF A MAN OF CULTURE - NICOLAE CARANDINO (1905 - 1996)***

- Abstract -

The study aims at reconstituting the way in which a bright journalist and man of culture, Nicolae Carandino, entered and remained in the attention of the political police for over forty years, practically until the fall of communism in Romania.

The used data were collected from the documents included in the surveillance files concerning Carandino along the years, as well as from memoirs.

We have depicted the main moments of his “evolution” as victim of the regime, from 1945-1947, we have followed Carandino’s destiny along his imprisonment years and, especially, during the eight years of home arrest, hybrid form of detention, in which the bars that separate the victim from the free world are no longer visible.

In the end, we have crayoned the life of this distinguished man of culture during his “blank” arrest, as he called his existence after his release from house arrest, emphasising his strength in resisting to all the pressures exercised over him along the time.

Keywords: Nicolae Carandino, Romania Communism, the Securitate, the National Peasants’ Party

***AMPRENTA SECURITĂȚII ASUPRA DESTINULUI
UNUI OM DE CULTURĂ - NICOLAE CARANDINO (1905-1996)***

- Rezumat -

Studiul își propune să reconstituie modul în care un strălucit ziarist și om de cultură, Nicolae Carandino, a intrat și s-a menținut în atenția poliției politice timp de peste patruzeci de ani, practic până la prăbușirea regimului comunist din România.

Informațiile utilizate au fost extrase din documentele reunite în cadrul dosarelor de urmărire ce i-au fost întocmite lui Carandino de-a lungul vremii, precum și din lucrări cu caracter memorialistic.

Am redat principalele momente ale „evoluției” sale în postura de victimă a regimului începând cu anii 1945-1947, am urmărit destinul lui Carandino pe parcursul

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anilor de pușcărie și, mai ales, pe perioada celor opt ani de domiciliu obligatoriu, formă hibridă de detenție, în care gratiile ce despart victima de lumea liberă nu mai sunt vizibile.

În final, am creionat existența distinsului om de cultură în timpul arestării „în alb”, cum numea acesta existența sa după eliberarea din domiciliu forțat, reliefând tăria cu care a știut să reziste tuturor presiunilor exercitate asupra sa de-a lungul timpului.

Cuvinte cheie: Nicolae Carandino, România, comunism, Securitate, Partidul Național Țărănesc

“Under dictatorships, our bright intellectuals took a proper resistance test. In the best case, they were content to stoop, according to the ancient laws, unless they hurried to howl, next to the wolves, against fancy honours and dinging silver coins. There were, of course, some honourable exceptions too, the more honourable as they were so few (...)”¹. These words, although of a remarkable actuality, were written almost 60 years ago by such an exception coming from the intellectuals of the time: Nicolae Carandino.

Born in Brăila, on July 20, 1905, his real name was Carandino Nicolas Haralambos. Bachelor of Laws in Bucharest (1926), lawyer and journalist. Reserve lieutenant, contingent 1927, Regiment 3, Artillery, France. He took doctoral studies for three years in Paris. He stood out as an opinion journalist in the inter-war period, signing with numerous pseudonyms: Ajax, Ali Baba, Antipater, N. Grecu etc.

According to his own testimony, he joined the National Peasants’ Party (P.N.Ț.) “ever since 1930”². Working in the company of illustrious journalists, such as N.D. Cocea, Ion Vinea, Em. Socor, Felix Aderca, Tudor Teodorescu-Braniște, Nicolae Carandino proved to measure up to them. He becomes known especially during the time he wrote at “Facla” Daily³, managed by Ion Vinea, shortly becoming the editor in chief of this newspaper. He was also collaborator or editor at “Credința” (Faith), “Lumea românească” (Romanian World), “Reporter”,

¹ Nicolae Carandino, *Rolul intelectualilor*, in “Dreptatea”, March 23, 1946, *apud* “Subteranele memoriei. Pagini din rezistența culturii în România. 1944-1954” (Memory Undergrounds. Pages from the Resistance of Culture in Romania. 1944-1945), introductory study and anthology by Vasile Igna, Bucharest, 2001, p. 246.

² Archive of the National Council for the Study of Security Archives (ACNSAS), Informative fund, file no. 3619, vol. 3, l. 12; in the lawsuit, the year 1933 appears as the moment of affiliation to the National Peasants’ Party.

³ Eugen Ionesco, former literary reviewer at “Facla” around the end of the 30s, was remembering in the 80s that “in those days, Facla was the leftist possible newspaper in Romania. Ion Vinea and N. Carandino and even myself, we were the target of the “intelligence” which at the time was 90% right or extreme right. Carandino was the most closely supervised and the bravest of us. And also, he was the best prepared, ideologically speaking. This is why he had such an excellent morale” – Eugène Ionesco, *Carandino*, in “Mele”, 1980, *apud* “Subteranele memoriei. Pagini din rezistența culturii în România. 1944-1954”, introductory study and anthology by Vasile Igna, Bucharest, 2001, p. 235.

“Azi” (Today), “Floarea de foc” (Fire Flower), “Dimineața” (Morning), “Curentul” (Trend)⁴.

The instauration of the dictatorial regimes from 1938 on led to the suppression of the free press, therefore Nicolae Carandino abandons political press and finds refuge in the activity of theatre reviewer for publications like “Rampa” (Footlights) (1941), “Bis” (1942-1946) or the weekly magazine “Curentul Familiei” (Family Trend).

Nicolae Carandino’s activity, due to its clearly democratic and anti-totalitarian character was brought to the attention of the State’s special services ever since the beginning of the 40s. Although we did not find informative notes or other documents from that time, they are mentioned in the documents prepared between 1945 and 1946 by most of the components of the repressive system of the time: Safety, Detectives’ Corps (C.D.), Special Information Service (S.S.I.), Capital City Police Prefecture (P.P.C.)⁵. Carandino’s supervision during the war is also proven by his internment in Tg. Jiu camp on December 12, 1942, for three months, for “Anglo-American propaganda”⁶. The fall of Antonescu’s regime and the restoration of the Constitution of 1923 provided Carandino with the brief illusion of going back to normality. Soviet interferences and the ascension of the Communist Party to the political power showed to the left-wing man that the fight for the instauration of democracy was far from being over and a new period of

⁴ Mircea Zăciu, Marian Papahagi, Aurel Sasu (coord.), *Dicționarul scriitorilor români* (*Dictionary of Romanian Writers*), vol. I, Bucharest, 1995, p. 482.

⁵ According to Detectives’ Corps’ note no. 5149 / August 31, 1946, Nicolae Carandino was known at P.P.C. from file A 16098/945 as leader of the National Peasants’ Party, in the C.D. archives in file no. 192 it was specified that “he attended the Swiss Legation, making contact with the minister Renee”, in file no. 355 he was remarked as “writer at *Dreptatea*”, and file no. 254 recorded one of Carandino’s conversations with Constantin Titel Petrescu, whom he accused of lack of tact for the situation reverse at the P.S.D. congress; in the archives of the Safety, he was known as collaborator at “*Cuvântul Liber*” (Free Words) and “*Azi*”; in S.S.I. archives, file no. 16885, he was remarked as collaborator to left-wing newspapers “*Cuvântul Liber*”, and “*Lumea românească*”. We should not overlook the words used to characterise Carandino in this last file: “old Communist agitator”, his articles contain only Communist ideas, he defended Ana Pauker before the Court”, “fanatic anglophile”, “personal friend of Emil Socor, Pavel Pavel and Marcel Pauker” - ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3619, vol. 3, l. 13-14.

⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 1; according to other sources, camp internment was made for “slandering Antonescu’s regime” or for “having circulated alarming and propagandist news in leftist newspapers, in favour of the Anglo-American-Soviets” – *Ibidem*, l. 14-15; a “Personal Record” drawn up by the Directorate of Safety Police, undated, states the following: “interned as per order no. 30.073/942 of the Minister of Home Affairs for spreading fake news regarding the war, saying that the victory will belong to the Anglo-Saxons and USSR will beat the German armies” - *Idem*, 3641, l. 7; he was released from the camp on March 8, 1943 - *Ibidem*, l. 344.

persecution was on its way. During this time, his name is closely connected with the one of “Dreptatea” (Justice) Daily, the newspaper edited by P.N.Ț. - Maniu⁷. The issue of the second series of “Dreptatea” between August 27, 1944 and March 6, 1945, as well as of the third series, between February 5, 1946 and July 17, 1947 occurred with the significant contribution of Nicolae Carandino, called upon to this effect by Iuliu Maniu himself, who appreciated him greatly. He was, for a short while, from the end of 1944 until the beginning of 1945, director of the National Theatre, then, General Director of theatres and operas.

Obviously, Carandino’s activity in P.N.Ț. - Maniu and his incisive articles in “Dreptatea” could not pass unnoticed by the communists and, consequently, by the subordinate secret services. The earliest testimony of the fact that Nicolae Carandino was perceived as an opponent of the new regime is a note from the beginning of July 1945, according to which Carandino allegedly elaborated in the office of “Bis” magazine from *Curentul* Palace, P.N.Ț. manifestos. Based on this note, the Directorate of Safety Police from the Capital City Police Prefecture ordered the checking of Nicolae Carandino and of Florian Gheorghe and Teodor Scarlat as well, alleged co-authors of the said manifestos.

After the manifestation of November 8, 1945, Nicolae Carandino’s monitoring got more intense. He was even asked on December 1, 1945 to give a statement regarding his nonparticipation in the events of November 8⁸. Although in an investigations’ report drawn up by Constable Pavel Constantin from the 2nd Brigade of Safety Police on December 30, 1945, it was mentioned that “no particular political activity was noticed concerning the above said individual”, Nicolae Carandino was still proposed to remain “in our observation”.

The investigations carried out by the services specialised in political police at the beginning of 1946 revealed in Nicolae Carandino’s past new reasons to catalogue him as an enemy of the new order. Thus, an informative note of February 6, 1946 stated the following:

“Regarding the unmasking campaign initiated against hooligan N. Carandino by “Era Nouă” (New Era) Newspaper on January 18, 1946, we find from the national peasants’ circles the following additional details:

Under Antonescu’s dictatorship, N. Carandino acted as an informant for Mihai Antonescu’s office, providing secret reports concerning left-wing journalists, through Mircea Grigorescu, ministerial councillor at the Propaganda and publisher

⁷ Nicolae Carandino was claiming in his memoirs that he was contacted on August 24, 1944 by Virgil Solomon and Radu Cioculescu, sent by Iuliu Maniu with the “order” to edit “Dreptatea” the next day. On the frontispiece, the name of the former publisher, Ionel Livianu, was to be kept – according to Nicolae Carandino, *De la o zi la alta. Memorii (From One Day to the Next. Memoirs)*, Bucharest, 1992, p. 252 (henceforward, N. Carandino, *Nopți albe...*).

⁸ ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3641, l. 12.

of "Ecou" (Echo), democratic diversion newspaper. At the same time, he was working for Iuliu Maniu, being an informant of the Swiss Legation and an agent between the leader of P.N.Ț. and Renee de Weeck, former minister of the confederation. N. Carandino was officially writing in "Curentul" pro-German and anti-Semite articles. Also, in "Curentul Familieii" he was making propaganda in favour of Nazi films"⁹.

These pieces of information, unconfirmed by other sources, are mechanically adopted by other reports and fully motivate the intensification of the supervision and control measures directed against N. Carandino.

On August 18, 1946, Constable Iordan Ștefan from the 2nd Safety Brigade carried out a search at the home of the publisher of "Dreptatea" Newspaper, N. Carandino, "suspected that he owned materials which concern national order and security". Following the search, a volume entitled "Europe - Totalitarian State", published by Theodor Vlădescu in 1941 in Bucharest¹⁰, is confiscated. Not enough for arresting the "enemy of the people", but, in the opinion of the political police, relevant enough for the danger represented by Carandino.

The pursuit and the search were meant, of course, to undermine Carandino's morale, since the elections of autumn 1946 were close (Carandino came forward for P.N.Ț. in Bucharest, on the 31st position¹¹, after having been co-opted in September 1946 as member in the permanent delegation of P.N.Ț.)¹². Significant in this respect is a new search carried out at his home on October 30, 1946, search which had a "negative result"¹³.

In 1947, he is signalled as "one of the outstanding members of P.N.Ț., who is part of the Permanent Delegation, based on his capacity of publisher of "Dreptatea" Newspaper. Benefitting from the trust of Maniu and Mihai Popovici, he is entrusted with the duty to lead the press of the party, his direct superior being Maniu. In this capacity, Carandino gives to "Dreptatea", as well as to the entire party press a tone of excessive vehemence against the democratic regime, of instigation to race hatred and enmity against USSR"¹⁴. Also, pursuit bodies mentioned that he "entertained close relationships with Anglo-American journalists, whom he supplied with the information they needed. He printed in the

⁹ *Ibidem*, l. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, l. 21.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, l. 45.

¹² Referring to police supervision, intensified after November 1946, Carandino was noting in his memoirs: "it was not a new situation, I had been chased by more or less undercover agents my entire life. This time however, it was too much." – N. Carandino, *Nopti albe...*, p. 291.

¹³ ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3641, l. 32.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 329.

editorial office of “Dreptatea” various articles or communications of P.N.Ț., banned by censorship, and which he distributed”.

Because of the aggravation of the internal situation, the democratic parties sent several outstanding representatives in the Occident for continuing there the fight against Communism. Nicolae Carandino was also included in such a group at Iuliu Maniu’s proposal. Informed one day before the planned departure, Carandino accepts Maniu’s proposal and becomes thus the victim of a trap set by the secret services: Tămădău episode. Arrested on July 14, 1947 on the aerodrome from Tămădău, Carandino will appear in court, between October 29 and November 11, 1947, next to the leaders of the National Peasants’ Party, with Iuliu Maniu at the top.

From arrest to trial, Carandino knew the torture of enquiries. They were carried out with a persistence proportional with the stake: compromising the image of P.N.Ț. leaders and dissolving this party¹⁵. Investigations were performed both by “new people” (Mișu Dulgheru, Vladimir Mazuru), imposed by the communist party in the safety system, as well as by its old specialists, accustomed with investigations.

Eloquent for the strategies used in investigations are the “Indications” written at the beginning of August 1947, probably by one of the experienced interrogators of the Safety. Without going into any more details, we only wish to specify that the arrestees had to be interrogate “at least 12 hours a day”, and specifications are also given regarding the “organisation of an agency in the arrestees’ cells, whose members had to be well trained, aware of their role and giving no clues to the interrogated ones”¹⁶. In this manner, the arrestees were practically interrogated 24 hours out of 24. Nicolae Carandino was interrogated by interrogator Ileana Doru. During the investigation, “characterisations” of the arrestees were drawn up, accompanied by the lists of questions to be addressed to them and by the questions to be avoided. In order to reconstitute the way in which they were studied as well as the investigators’ “class” optics, we include below several excerpts from “Nicolae Carandino’s characterisation”:

“Brought up in a boarding school, he spends his faculty years in Bucharest and, like all the bourgeois, he goes to Paris to continue his studies. (...) In country, he tries to practice law, but gives it up for journalism. Embracing this profession, he knocks on all doors for an as quick as possible ascension (...) August 23, with

¹⁵ The National Peasants’ Party had already been dissolved by the Deputies’ Assembly with 294 votes for and only one vote against on July 29, 1947 – according to the Debates of the Deputies’ Assembly, no. 64, p. 1449-1455

¹⁶ Marcel Dumitru Ciucă, *Procesul lui Iuliu Maniu. Documentele procesului conducătorilor Partidului Național Țărănesc (Lawsuit of Iuliu Maniu. Documents regarding the Lawsuit of the Leader of the National Peasants’ Party)*, vol. I Investigation, Bucharest, 2001, p. 79

its inherent disorders, creates the climate favourable for his quick ascension, and he moves to the centre of the reactionary activity of P.N.Ț., succeeding to become an element appreciated by Maniu and propitious to his plans (...) Character: endowed with a remarkable intelligence, he has no scruples on the way towards his goal, to rising. Extremely lecherous. He parades with his fight for democracy. In the lawsuit: he tries to adopt a firm line of intransigence in matters of “purely western democracy” and of unfailing fighter. The thesis he adopted during this trial and which he prepares to defend in court is based on the fact that no one indicated him as part of the plot and, therefore, he knows nothing of this or of the entire illegal activity of P.N.Ț.”¹⁷.

Carandino was judged, next to the other members of “Maniu’s lot” by the Military Court of Bucharest, 1st Section, which, by judgment no. 1988/947 sentenced him to 6 years of hard labour¹⁸. Upon the expiry of the punishment, the General Prosecutor of People’s Republic of Romania submitted an application for correction¹⁹ which was approved by the Supreme Court, Military College and, by Decision no. 133/955 of September 21, 1955, the case was referred for retrial, strictly with respect to the amount of the sanction²⁰.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 114

¹⁸ “Nicolae Carandino, from Bucharest, 16 Spiru Haret Street, indicted for plot and attempt to fraudulently cross the border, provided and sanctioned by art. 227 par. 1, 2 and 3 CP, corroborated with art. 184 par. 1 and art. 207 CP, by art. 579 CJM, al corroborated with art. 101 item 1 CP with I.D. 856 of 938, 1108 of 938 and art. 482 CJM.

Without one dissentient voice, in application of art. 227, par. 1, 2 and 3, corroborated with art. 184 par. 1 C.P., N. Carandino is sentenced to 6 years of hard labour and 2 years of civic degradation for treason.

Applying art. 579 CJM, he is sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment for the attempt to fraudulently cross the border.

As per art. 101, item. 1 CP, convict N. Carandino will execute the hardest punishment, that is 6 years of hard labour and 2 years of civic degradation. Under art. 193 CP, his fortune is confiscated. As per art. 326 CJM, he is obliged to pay 1000 lei, legal charges” - ACNSAS, Informative, fie no. 3641, l. 331.

¹⁹ In the “Request for correction”, the General Prosecutor of Romania People’s Republic, Alexa Augustin, was specifying that “although the first instance accused Penescu Nicolae and Carandino Nicolae, outstanding members of the National Peasants’ Party, of a leading role in the plot of March 1945 - July 1947 against the State, guided by the co-accused, Iuliu Maniu and Ion Mihalache, with the purpose of violently overthrowing the democratic government of our country (...), he applied too mild punishments in comparison with the gravity and social danger represented by the perpetrated crimes as well as by the criminals themselves”. In conclusion, Alexa Augustin was requesting “the retrial of the case so that proper punishments be applied” - Marcel Dumitru Ciucă, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 415.

²⁰ Decision no. 133/1955 of the High Court of People’s Republic of Romania, Military College, states: “N. Penescu and N. Carandino were the main pillars of Maniu’s plot, as well as its executors, as determined during the trial, therefore, the Court considers that the request for correction is well-founded and, consequently, approves it.” – *Ibidem*, p. 418.

The cause is judged again and the Military Court, through judgement no. 591 of May 31, 1956 sentences him to 8 years and 6 months of hard labour, with computation of the prevention of July 14, 1947²¹.

He spent the first part of his imprisonment in Galați Main Penitentiary, together with the other convicted leaders of the National Peasants' Party. As signalled in his memoirs, "they were lined up in the cell to the left of the corridor: Iuliu Maniu, Ion Mihalache, me, Radu Niculescu-Buzești, col. Stoica, Camil Petrescu, Piky Pogoneanu and Ilie Lazăr"²². He was subject to the scrutiny of cell agency during his detention as well. A synthesis of the informative material provided by this agency (collected in the personal file of the prisoner), made on March 8, 1948, revealed that Nicolae Carandino blamed Iuliu Maniu and Ion Mihalache for the failure of Tămădău evasion. Regarding his political future, it transpired that, after his release, he would withdraw completely from politics, focusing on the cultural issues he regrets to have left²³.

In Galați prison, attempts were made to gain him over to the Securitate. Here is how he describes this episode: "What did they want from me?" First of all, to become an "agent", good for everything, in prisons, in trials and, who knows? even in "freedom". After the force demonstration, they would list the advantages (...) Promises were concrete and in line with the prison life I knew - an additional ladle of mash, a pair of socks and, mostly, silence, a lot of silence. Instead of being tortured, I was invited to give a hand to the "discovery and punishment of criminals"²⁴.

After four years of detention in Galați, he was transferred in the penitentiary of Sighet, along with other leaders of the Peasants' Party. He was imprisoned in the same cell with Iuliu Maniu, during the latter's last days and he witnessed his very last words, uttered on February 5, 1953: "Clara, she was such a beautiful woman". He remained in Sighet until the expiry of his punishment. During all this time, he was periodically re-interrogated by the Securitate regarding various issues²⁵.

²¹ ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3641, l. 306; the text of judgment no. 591/1956 in Marcel Dumitru Ciucă, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 418-427.

²² N. Carandino, *Nopti albe...*, p. 312.

²³ ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3641, l. 333.

²⁴ N. Carandino, *Nopti albe...*, p. 323

²⁵ See the Romanian Information Service, *The White Book of the Security*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1994, doc. 118 "Nicolae Carandino's statement regarding the decision of the National Peasants' Party to refrain from attacking Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu in press, during the electoral campaign of 1946" – April 20, 1951; doc. 188 – "Nicolae Carandino's statement regarding his relationship with Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, with the historical parties and with the circles of the Royal Palace" - November 3, 1953.

His years of imprisonment can also be depicted from the confessions Nicolae Carandino made to some people he thought to be of trust during the time of house arrest, imposed after his release from prison. These confessions would quickly get to the Securitate, through the diligence of several more than zealous informants. Thus, an informative note of September 13, 1960, signed by “Lawyer Mihail”, specifies:

“He spent 9 years in prison. During the first two years, he shared the cell with Buzești [Radu Niculescu Buzești, brother of Grigore Niculescu Buzești, n.ns. F.B.] and two other politicians, all four with a high general and professional education. They would hold conferences in turn, each in his field of education (...). The other seven years he spent alone, under all possible restrictions, with no bed during the day and teased 2-3 times each night. As he spoke French, German, Italian and Greek, he would scribble on the cell walls, with a nail, lyrics, epigrams, maxims, in all languages. As he was also a good mathematician, he would solve all kinds of problems still on the wall.

He was followed by policemen-orderlies, but they did nothing to him. When officers came in inspection, he stood still like a statue, with his arms folded on his chest and they retreated backwards for fear that he might have a fit of folly and attack them, they thought he was not sane. (...)

He says that, after 9 years of imprisonment, his morale is admirable, and, after recovering physically, he feels as if he were 30 again. Although he is 55 years old, he claims that his vision is as clear as 10-15 years ago. (...) In prison, his cell was next to the one of Buzești, and during all these 4 years he kept in touch with Buzești using Morse alphabet, with a nail. Buzești asked him about theatre and philosophy and he asked Buzești about mathematics. The source characterises him as highly intelligent, endowed with a general education one does not come across too often. Very refined and likeable”²⁶.

Upon his release from the penitentiary, on June 8, 1956, Decision no. 640/956 of the Ministry of Home Affairs assigned him to house arrest for 60 months in Bumbăcari locality, Călmățui district. On June 29, 1956²⁷, Carandino was already in Bumbăcari, as proven by the medical certificate attesting that he “was suffering from myocarditis and, probably, a pulmonary fibrosis of tuberculous nature with fever and a permanent cough”²⁸. In September 1960, following the dissolution of Bumbăcari (as home arrest place), he was transferred, still under house arrest, to Rubla, Brăila district, and upon expiry, his home arrest

²⁶ ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3641, l. 150.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, l. 306.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, l. 327.

was extended for other 36 months²⁹, through Decision no. 16.163 / May 30, 1961 of the Ministry of Home Affairs³⁰.

During this time, based on the data from displacement file no. 1638, Galați Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Home Affairs decided, on November 1, 1958, to open an individual surveillance file on the name of Nicolae Carandino, with the purpose of finding “the suspect relations of the individuals under house arrest, as well as with other enemies from abroad, also the hostile activity they carry out; to support this activity by irrefutable proofs”³¹.

The informative surveillance was carried out mostly by surrounding Carandino by a variable number of informants, recruited, most of them, from his companions.

Relevant for the Kafkaesque environment in which the deportees lived their lives and for the incredible degradation that can affect the human being is a conversation that Nicolae Carandino carried on February 12, 1961 with two close acquaintances, deported just like him: Golici Mihail³² and Glogojeanu (Glugojeanu) Radu. This conversation is recorded in two informative notes. The first specifies that “talking about the streets in Brăila, whether Carandino knew them or not, he (Carandino) said the following: “I knew Brăila very well until the *flood*””. The second mentions Carandino’s answer like this: “I knew very well old Brăila, that after the *flood* (that is, after August 23, 1944), I do not know anymore”. The first note is signed “Grigorescu Radu”, *recte* Glogojeanu Radu³³. The second was signed by “Lawyer Mihail”, *recte* Mihail Golici! Comments are needless.

We should also mention that much of the information regarding Carandino was obtained by the Securitate from his brother-in-law, Lică Crăciunescu, director

²⁹ *Ibidem*, l. 24; In January 1961, when house arrest was coming to an end, Carandino confided to some close friends: “I was arrested 14 years ago as a simple and insignificant journalist. In prison, I was aggrandized and I was subject to the same treatment as ministers, isolated and closely supervised. For these reasons, I am sure that, although my house arrest comes to an end in a few months, they will not let me go and will extend it by 24 months at least” - ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3641, l. 140; His predictions came true.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, l. 379.

³¹ *Ibidem*, l. 5.

³² Former cavalry colonel, participant in the Eastern campaign.

³³ About this, another informant was noting on February 17, 1961: “... he claims he was a lawyer at the Patriarchy of Bucharest. Not so intelligent, as insidious and bold. Extremely curious. He looks for connections (...) Among those under house arrest, rumour has it that he is one of the informants of the Security. Very dangerous due to the tendentious and provocative manner he uses in conversations. Even if he were an informant, he is capable of being double-faced, serving also certain political interests against the regime” - ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3641, l. 234.

at Brăila Subsidiary of the French Society of Danube Navigation and agent of the 5th Directorate of the Securitate³⁴.

In fact, Nicolae Carandino, in spite of the experience he acquired during his lengthy detention, still fell in the trap of people of good faith, his confidence in people never being completely annihilated. This explains why he had “hostile” talks with his close acquaintances, although he was aware of the fact that the Securitate recruited its informants from those under house arrest³⁵. Thus, an informative note written by informant “Panaitescu Virgil” on October 10, 1960, relates the following words of Carandino: “I made the acquaintance of several people under house arrest, but I will not get friends with them until I am convinced what sort of people they are, for some of them might be Securitate informants”³⁶. Therefore, his confidence in friendship, as a reference value for humans, and the conviction that people can be known, were intact for Carandino, in spite of everything he had seen, heard and suffered in the hell of prisons.

Apart from these convictions, he kept his optimism and humour, priceless weapons in the fight against the oppressive system. Relevant for this aspect is the way in which Carandino was telling to one of the Securitate informants, in 1961, that “when he was under house arrest in Bumbăcari, a child gave him a very, very plastic definition of elections. The child asked Carandino if he voted and he told to the child that he did not even know how to vote. The child told him: “they give you a piece of paper, you go into some sort of closet, and then you go out”³⁷.

The Securitate continued to assiduously monitor Carandino in the subsequent period as well, his file growing thicker and thicker with the informative notes that caught even the least significant gestures and attitudes that could be interpreted as “hostile” to the regime. In order to outline the image that the Securitate had formed of Carandino after four years of surveillance, we will give below an excerpt from a synthesis drawn up by Brăila District Securitate Service on November 21, 1962:

³⁴ N. Carandino’s case seems to support a claim made by a prisoner, victim of the delations himself: “In this country, if things continue in this manner, out of three persons, one is a former informant, another is a current informant and the third is a future informant. I add a fourth - the permanent victim” – Nicolae Călinescu, *Preambul pentru camera de tortură (Preamble for the Torture Chamber)*, Timișoara, 1994, p. 190.

³⁵ From an informative note of September 17, 1958, it transpires that Nicolae Carandino pointed to a group of friends that “today, when one talks to somebody, one must be wide-awake and must know how to change the subject immediately when somebody else comes along, for there are cases when even the best friends betray” - ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3641, l. 286.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, l. 135.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, l. 126.

“Being surveyed in informative purposes, it results that he entertained the closest relations with other people under house arrest, former members of the Peasants’ Party, whom he visits, sometimes making negative comments regarding certain aspects of the internal and external politics. These are:

- Solomon Virgil, aged 68, former member in the Central Committee of P.N.Ț. Maniu and Iuliu Maniu’s Deputy Secretary, monitored by individual file;
- Anca Victor, aged 64, member of P.N.Ț. from 1918 (!), with an intense activity within this party, she was part of “King Mihai I National Release Committee”, sentenced to 10 years of hard labour, monitored by individual file;
- Dragoș Gheorghe, aged 63, former leader of the Youth Peasants’ Party of Transylvania, at present agent of our bodies;
- Coposu Cornel, aged 48, former Deputy Secretary General and Personal Secretary of Iuliu Maniu; he carried out a sentence of 15 years of hard labour for the activity performed within P.N.Ț., recently assigned under home arrest;
- Ivasiuc Alexandru, aged 30, former leader of an organisation contrary to the regime during the events of Hungary, agent of our bodies;
- Radu Florescu, aged 58, former landlord and clerk in the USA Legation of Bucharest, convicted for the distribution of banned publications, monitored by individual file.

The relationship between them and Nicolae Carandino consisted in mutual visits and complete trust in one another and, therefore, they expressed freely their political views in the conversations they had. The most frequent talks relate to the political past of each of them, emphasising especially the personal qualities of Iuliu Maniu, greatly eulogized by each³⁸.

Following the close scrutiny that he was subject to for four years, the Securitate bodies got to the conclusion that “the said Carandino Nicolae, should he be determined to actively collaborate with our bodies in order to inform us regarding things in the locality, we could engage him in another sort of collaboration, that is: to write a series of articles regarding certain aspects of his personal - private activity and political affairs, aspects which have always been present in the old politicians. (...) To that effect, several contacts were made, finding that the said Carandino would be adequate and, especially, useful for publishing certain data in periodicals³⁹”.

Indeed, as revealed by other documents, in the spring and summer of 1962, the 2nd Office of Brăila District Service, led by first lieutenant Bălan Ion, in

³⁸ *Ibidem*, l. 25.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, l. 26.

collaboration with the 2nd Service of Galați Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Home Affairs, led by captain Dumitriu Andrei, contacted several times Nicolae Carandino “in view of the recruitment”.

A real psychological war ensued between Nicolae Carandino and the Securitate officers. Unassuming the risk of a direct refusal of the recruitment proposals, Carandino preferred to entertain an ambiguous situation, maintaining himself in expectation. In a “Report on the personal acquaintance of the said Nicolae Carandino”, of February 14, 1962 (“personal acquaintance” was a mandatory stage in the recruitment process), Captain Dumitriu Andrei was appreciating that “during the talks, the said individual seemed to be intelligent, with a lot of discernment and logics and with vast knowledge” and that “he was adequate for being recruited and used by our authorities”⁴⁰.

On June 15, 1962, Carandino was contacted again, being brought to Galați by Colonel Eugen Vistig himself, the chief of Galați Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Home Affairs. According to the “Report note” drawn up after this event, Carandino adopted a “very realistic position”. In fact, Carandino expressed his discontentment and wonder at the fact that after 15 years of imprisonment and house arrest he was still punished for having expressed his will to be useful to the society as artistic councillor in a theatre.

Speculating on Carandino’s natural crave for freedom and for a normal life, the Securitate officer asked him “whether he could be of use in other fields, such as literature for instance”. At that moment, guessing what was expected of him, Carandino “placed himself on a position of partial refusal, trying to avoid the issue. As his interlocutor insisted, he tried to explain that, being isolated from life for 15 years, he was unacquainted with the achievements of the regime and, moreover, the fact that he was under house arrest was yet another impediment for he would not have the moral strength to write about a regime who still repressed him”⁴¹.

For an even clearer picture of the way in which the Securitate lured its victims and in order to understand the way in which many of them gave in to the temptation of a “pact with the devil”, accepting collaboration, we will give below an excerpt of the said document:

“Having got there, realising his wish to no longer be under house arrest, we built upon it, telling him that, at his age, he still had many years ahead of him and, if he understood the issues we were to talk about, he would have nothing but advantages and he would be able to go back to being a respected man, washing away his past through work and achievements.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, l. 406-407.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, l. 416.

Carandino N., interested by the subject, inquired what he would be asked to write; we explained our intentions to him and he said that it would be hard for him for he was not too well advised in the matter.

Aware of his inner struggle, we closed the subject and told him to think about it and if he indeed wanted to get out of the situation he was in, he should accept what we asked of him⁴².

Interesting enough are the conclusions to these talks also: “he is troubled by his situation (house arrest) and very interested to get out of it. He still has wrong ideas but, eventually, out of his wish to solve his personal situation, he will accept our proposals. We should keep on contacting him, insisting on materially motivating him⁴³”.

As seen above, on November 21, 1962, that is four months after the discussion with Colonel Vistig, Carandino still does not answer to the luring mermaid song of the Securitate. Very skilful, Carandino knew how to keep up the hopes of the Securitate in a future collaboration. In the same period, he accepted to write a series of statements about Foca Rode Andrei, Radu Florescu, Dionisie Trifa (Bishop Viorel Trifa’s father), priest Butnariu, Radu Glogojeanu, Pavel Pavel. None of these contains incriminating facts regarding the above, and his statements stereotypically begin with the phrase: “asked by the Securitate authorities about... I declare the following” or “upon the inquiry of the Securitate authorities, I give the following answer...”

Without accepting to collaborate with the Securitate, Carandino succeeded in creating a credible image in the eyes of the Securitate officers⁴⁴, so that on August 13, 1963, Colonel Vistig Eugen signed the “Decision for closing individual file no. 1433 regarding Carandino Nicolae and its classification”. In the chapter “detailed motivation of file closure”, it is specified: “he was contacted by the 1st Directorate in order to be used”. There is no clue to the fact that Nicolae Carandino accepted collaboration. On the contrary, Nicolae Carandino remained under home arrest until June 1964 although the extension of the house arrest period expired in May 1964.

After the release, as most of the political prisoners, Nicolae Carandino remains in the attention of the Securitate⁴⁵. Informative notes signal ever since the

⁴² *Ibidem*, l. 417.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ On an informative note from the beginning of 1963, an annotation was found, dating from February 8, 1963, according to which Marshal Grigoraș, chief of Service 3 of the 2nd Directorate allegedly claimed that “Carandino is almost recruited” - ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3619, vol. 1, l. 128.

⁴⁵ According to Florian Banu, *Grațierile din 1962-1964: punct de inflexiune sau continuitate în politica partidului comunist? (The reprieves from 1962-1964: inflexion or continuity points in the policy of the Communist Party?)*, in “Dosarele Istoriei” (History Files), no. 2(102)/2005, (CNSAS Bulletin, no. 10), pp. 58-61.

beginning of 1965, that “he played bridge in the home of Mocanu Gheorghe and had a hostile attitude towards our socialist regime”. Also, the Security was informed that Nicolae Carandino “was interested in gaining over young people whom he would tell about the years spent under this regime, as he claimed”⁴⁶.

Based on such information, on September 14, 1966, the 3rd Directorate of the Securitate Department opens a “verification file” meant to determine whether “Carandino N. performs a hostile activity along the lines of the former P.N.Ț. or of another kind” and “with which other former prisoners for P.N.Ț. activity he still keeps in touch and for what purpose”⁴⁷. A first “Plan of measures”, with the same date, for solving such objectives, surrounded Carandino by three informants, from his entourage, the monitoring of his correspondence for 6 months and Carandino’s trailing for “identifying all the individuals that served as his connections.”

After 7 months of checks (three informants were used, the secret control of correspondence, investigation and I.T.L. measures), the Securitate “established” that the suspect “maintains periodical contacts with Coposu Cornel, former Deputy Secretary General of P.N.Ț., monitored by us by individual file, and Buteanu Aurel, former Secretary General of P.N.Ț. Youth Organisation for Transylvania and Banat, monitored by Banat Directorate of the Ministry of Home Affairs”. Furthermore, he “regularly corresponds with Schineanu Lazăr, former social democrat, at present fugitive, settled in Rome”. Also, “on several occasions, Carandino Nicolae manifested a hostile attitude towards party and country leaders (...) stating that the laws regarding the divorce and pregnancy interruptions are antisocial laws”⁴⁸. As a consequence, on May 20, 1967, the 3rd Directorate, Service 2, adopts the “Decision for changing the examination file into an informative - individual file”. The conspiratorial name attributed to Carandino was “the Greek”.

This passage to a superior form of surveillance gave rise to a new avalanche of supervision measures. Without going into any more details, we will only point to the episode in which Nicolae Carandino, who had supported the publishing in Romania of a novel written by Luigi Pretti, at that time Minister of Finances in Italy, received the negative answer of the Securitate regarding a journey to Italy where he had been invited by Pretti. This “blank arrest” as Carandino calls it, is illustrative for the new register of the repression.

The individual surveillance file was closed on July 1, 1969, therefore, after more than two years of supervision and harassments. The closure of the file was motivated by the fact that “the said individual does not perform hostile activity at present”. The surveillance exercised by the Securitate did not disappear entirely, it

⁴⁶ ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3619, vol. 1, l. 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, l. 4-6.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, l. 3.

only decreased in intensity, the “Greek” being still monitored “within the scope of the issue represented by “Bourgeois Parties”.

On November 18, 1971, the 1st Directorate of the State Security Council started the informative surveillance of Nicolae Carandino because he “entertained suspect relations with former P.N.Ț. leaders and, together, they comment hostilely the policy of our party and of our country”⁴⁹.

On January 1, 1971, the individual surveillance file of the “Greek” was transferred to the Security of Bucharest City, Service 130, and surveillance continued. We should notice that the Securitate had refined its methods so that, without loosening surveillance, it managed to create to its victims the illusion of a certain freedom. N. Carandino took advantage of this situation for putting into practice his literary projects and managed to publish a series of original works: *De la Electra la Dama cu Camelii (1971)*, *Autori, piese și spectacole (1973)*, *Actori de ieri și de azi (1973)*, *Radiografii teatrale (1976)*.

From 1977 on, the main concern of the Securitate was Carandino’s activity of writing his memoirs. A first volume⁵⁰, entitled *De la o zi la alta. Memorii (From One Day to the Next. Memoirs)*, referring to the years up to 1940, was published in 1979 by Cartea Românească Publishing House (not in 1978 and not by “Eminescu” Publishing House as erroneously recorded in the documents of the Securitate).

Then, Carandino started to work on a second volume, which he temporarily entitled *Întâmplări de ieri, gânduri de azi. Atitudini și constrângeri (Events from Yesterday, Thoughts from Today. Attitudes and Constraints)*. This volume was referring to the years 1944-1964 and included the description of his prison days, but also “slandering references to certain political events that had occurred in the country during that period”. The Securitate intervened by “specific means” so that the volume, submitted to various publishing houses, was rejected due to its “inadequate content”.

Apart from the typed manuscript, Carandino had recorded the content of his memoirs on eight tapes, tapes which circulated in his circle of friends, everything under the close scrutiny of the Securitate.

In 1981, Carandino was contacted by Dan (Dean) Milhovan, editor in chief at “Dreptatea” Newspaper, published in USA, whom he entrusted with an excerpt of this second volume, comprising a portrait of Iuliu Maniu. This excerpt was subsequently published overseas, accentuating the worries of the Securitate. However, apart from surrounding him with informants and installing phone calls

⁴⁹ ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3728, vol. 1, l. 2.

⁵⁰ According to a note made by the Security on October 8, 1973, at that time Carandino had already written 36 pages of the work, meaning to add other 140 pages approximately “as he decided that this volume would comprise 25 sheets, that is, 500 pages” - idem, vol. 5, l. 195.

and correspondence intercepting means, the Securitate remained in expectation. Barely on March 8, 1984, following the elaboration of a "Stage note in individual surveillance file - the Greek", a house search was approved (with the cover of the police authorities) for confiscating the typed copies of the memoirs volume, as well as the audio tapes⁵¹. The "informative interrogation" of N. Carandino and of his "main connections" - Vojen Victor Ion, Coposu Corneliu, Kalustian Leon, Hîncu Diamandescu Radu - was approved.

After the search of April 3 and after Carandino's interrogation, the Securitate authorities established that the distribution of these memoirs "entertains among the people with political and criminal record (as well as among others) an atmosphere hostile to the regime of our country". Consequently, measures were proposed for "dissolving the entourage" by "warning the said Carandino Nicolaos Haralambos, Ionescu Alexandru, Kalustian Leon and Hîncu Diamantescu Radu".

Carandino's warning took place at the Security Inspectorate of Bucharest City on July 12, 1984. The effects of this "warning" can be seen in a "Analysis note in individual surveillance file, the Greek" of December 20, 1984: "The Greek stopped his relationships with the people from his entourage who were warned by our bodies in the dissolution process of this entourage, except for Kalustian Leon whom he still meets once in while at "Athenee Palace" or at "Writers' House". (...) His health condition worsened suddenly and, although he spent August and September at Bran, to rest, no improvement has been noticed so far. This is mainly due to the fact that none of his writings are accepted for publication, not even the theatre reviews. To our sources, he claims that this situation is caused by our Securitate bodies who hares him"⁵².

Another note from November 23, 1985 reveals that N. Carandino had resumed his work at a third volume of memoirs and was meeting Pisoschi Ștefan, Kalustian Leon, Octavian Ghibu and Vasile Cameniță, all in the records of the Securitate. Consequently, measures for intensifying supervision are adopted by introducing the operative technique at "Athenee Palace" and at N. Carandino's sister place, maintaining the "S" measures (intercepting letters) and pursuit during his travels outside the capital city. Moreover, the "Greek" had to be contacted periodically for "positive influencing"⁵³.

These measures did not have the expected results so that, apart from collecting many informative notes and materials obtained through the operative technique, the Securitate failed in its attempt to discourage Carandino. Using the technique of alternating the stick with the carrot, the Securitate even gave its

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, l. 3.

⁵² ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3728, vol. 1, l. 70.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, l. 72-73.

approval to the publication of another work of Carandino: *Teatrul așa cum l-am văzut* (*Theatre Seen by Me*) (1986). The effect was not as intended.

In a note of the Securitate from May 27, 1987, we find some information regarding the efforts made by Carandino to find a way to publish his memoirs. It appears from this note that “the writer Stelian Tănase has at home tape recordings of the personal journal of the said N. Carandino, former leader of the National Peasants’ Party and close friend of Iuliu Maniu. Recently, five such tapes were given to a source of our unit who listened to them. It appears that they comprise memoirs of N. Carandino from 1944-1964, with a particular stress on years 1945-1947 when he was editor in chief at the official gazette of the National Peasants’ Party, “Dreptatea”, after 1947 when he was in prison and under house arrest in a village from Bărăgan”⁵⁴.

As Stelian Tănase was already in the attention of the Securitate for his “relations with foreign diplomats accredited in Bucharest with whose help he meant to publish abroad works which had not been published in country”⁵⁵, Carandino and Stelian Tănase will be the main characters in several of the Securitate documents from that period, with the code names “Grecul” (the Greek) and “Ștefan” (“Stelică”).

The main concern of the Securitate regarding the connection between these two was to prevent them from sending abroad Carandino’s memoirs, recorded on tapes, especially since a version of these memoirs had already appeared at a publishing house of the Romanians from the diaspora⁵⁶. The pursuit was relentless, the authorities resorting to surveillance, correspondence censorship, intercepting not only phone calls, but also the talks they had in public places, such as Capșa beerhouse⁵⁷.

⁵⁴ Stelian Tănase, *Acasă se vorbește în șoaptă. Dosar & Jurnal din anii târzii ai dictaturii* (*At Home, We Whisper. File and Journal from the Late Years of the Dictatorship*), Bucharest, 2002, p. 22.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

⁵⁶ According to a Security note, a copy of the memoirs version which had been collected by the Security in 1983 had come into the possession of Milhovan Dean, American citizen of Romanian origin, owner of “Dreptatea” Publishing House from New York. In September 1986, Dean visited Carandino in Bucharest to ask for his consent to publish the manuscript in USA. For fear of repercussions, Carandino refused at first. Then, Dean informed the author that he had obtained the agreement of the “Romanian competent forums” and on February 16, 1987, he communicated to him that the volume appeared under the title “File de istorie” (History Pages) - ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no. 3728, vol. 1, l. 273.

⁵⁷ See the stenograph of the conversation carried at Capșa by Stelian Tănase and N. Carandino on November 5, 1987, in Stelian Tănase, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Note regarding the installation of the “IDEB means” at Capșa in - ACNSAS, Informative fund, file no.3728, vol. 1, l. 212.

Carandino's pursuit continued with the same intensity in the last years of the regime as well. We found an analysis note written on November 8, 1989, just before the generalised fall of the system.

In order to underline the ridicule of the situation and the aberrant activity of the Securitate, we will exemplify with several excerpts from this note: "the target, due to his old age, 84 years, and due to certain affections, is immobilized in bed. (...) Therefore, he is visited sometimes by friends who inquire about his health; some of them, during their short visits, try to update him and to discuss with him issues of international politics. The target does not engage in such discussions, claiming that nothing interests him anymore"⁵⁸.

Any sane person would think that this "case" should be closed, but the Securitate had its own reasoning: "Given the informative-operative situation of this case, we will continue to act for the purpose of:

- knowing which people visit him and the nature of the talks they have on such occasions;
- preventing the unwilling engagement of the target in activities hostile to People's Republic of Romania;
- preventing the alienation of the patrimony assets he had in his home;
- We will continue to use the complex "S", I.T.I. and operative technique means for being informed about the concerns of the target, as well as of the people who inquire about him"⁵⁹.

The last decade of Nicolae Carandino's pursuit underline the generalised paranoia of the system, the Securitate making no exception to this. His life became normal again only upon the fall of communism in Romania. Even though he collided with this system ever since its instauration, Nicolae Carandino had the strength and the chance to outlive it⁶⁰.

Nicolae Carandino's destiny, as revealed by the documents written or gathered by the political police, is an exemplary one, one of a true man of culture, and especially one of a remarkably upright person.

We deem that, in this deep moral crisis that affects the contemporary society, faced with a lack of authentic role models, such a personality provides young generations with a first class model.

⁵⁸ ACNSAS, Documentary fund, file no. 117, vol. 5, l. 48.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ Nicolae Carandino died on February 16, 1996.