

REPRESSIVE MECHANISMS WITHIN THE
ROMANIAN SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
ON THE ONSET OF THE COMMUNIST
REGIME. THE CASE OF PROFESSOR
GHEORGHE SIMOTTA

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Abstract: Following the August 23rd, 1944 events, the sovietisation of the Romanian education proclaimed its shift from fascism, a process that carried on through the 1948 reform. The list of its major effects comprises the purge of academia and their replacement with politically compliant peers, the concessions made to the senior professors and opening of their political files, intimidation and surveillance, the consideration of the social background criterion upon admission into universities, along with the pressures applied on the existing students, their inclusion into the new political academic structures, the shift in the curriculum towards ideologization. For the particular case of the Faculty of Architecture of Bucharest, a large number of academia was removed while others were allowed to keep their teaching positions yet subjected to years of abusive tests – intimidation, constraint, intelligence surveillance, attempts of recruiting from the Securitate etc. These people have to be recognized for being able to thwart such actions – when circumstances were favourable – and managed to provide continuity to the school, a partial return to normality after the closure of the “*tormenting decade*”. Among these teachers was Gheorghe Simotta, an esteemed professor of the interwar Romanian architecture, whose case will be delved into from the perspective of the documents in the Securitate archives.

Rezumat: Imediat după 23 august 1944 sovietizarea învățământului românesc a clamat defascizarea acestuia, proces continuat mai apoi prin reforma oficială din 1948. Între principalele efecte ale acesteia s-au numărat: epurarea cadrelor didactice și înlocuirea acestora cu profesorii obedienți, tolerarea unor vechi cadre didactice, dar încadrarea lor informativă, intimidarea și controlul acestora, supravegherea componenței sociale la admiterea în universități însoțită de presiunile asupra studenților existenți, încadrarea acestora în noile structuri politice universitare, transformarea materiei de studiu în sensul ideologizării. În cazul particular al Facultății de Arhitectură din București, au fost dați afară un număr impresionant de profesori, în vreme ce alți câțiva au fost tolerați, urmând pentru aceștia ani de adevărate încercări – intimidări, presiuni, urmări informativă, încercări de recrutare din partea Securității etc – ei având meritul de a reuși să reziste și – atunci când vremurile au permis-o – au reușit să ofere școlii o formă de continuitate, de revenire parțială la normalitate, după încheierea „obsedantului deceniu”. Între profesorii tolerați se găsește și Gheorghe Simotta, figură ilustră a arhitecturii românești interbelice, al cărui caz îl vom analiza din perspectiva documentelor din arhiva fostei Securități.

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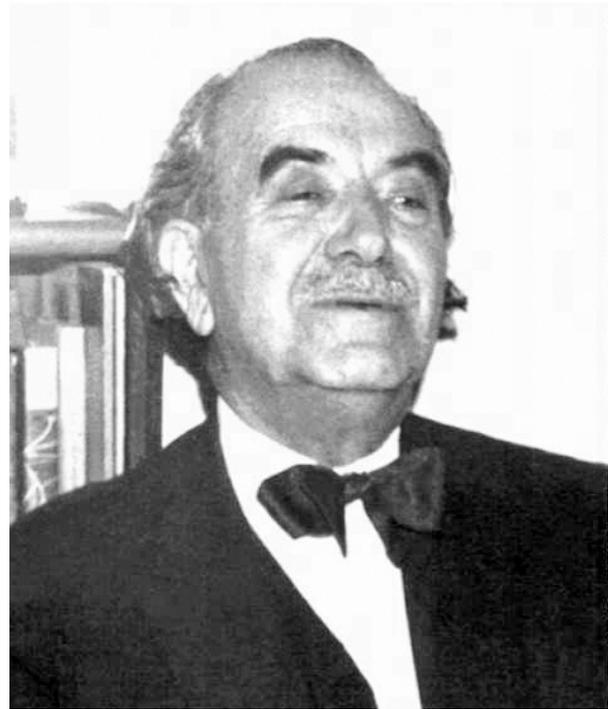


Fig. 1. Gheorghe Simotta in the 60s

The sovietisation of the Romanian education system debuted immediately after August 23rd 1944, veering from fascism¹ and later getting worse, mainly after the 1948 reform. Alongside principles showcasing the natural and normal development of a field of activity – even though the manner of implementation was aiming at something else, the paragraphs in Decree no. 175 in August 1948 included a few elements with a direct reference to the politicization and the total control of student life. There is no other plausible understanding of those articles, such as, “*to educate the youth in the spirit of popular democracy and to raise the cultural standing of the nation, to prepare the high school and higher education degreed specialists, on scientific basis, so as to conform with the needs of consolidating the*

¹ The purge of academia was regulated via three acts: Decree 486/1944 (to stipulate the purge of the people who had belonged to fascist-type organizations); Act 594/1944 (to add the people who had made possible the fascist-type organizations); Act 217/1945 (to add the people with anti-democratic views), *apud* Someșan, Iosifescu 1998, p. 454. Their effects were cumulated with the ones from Law-decree 996 on March 30th, 1945, which stipulated the “cleansing” of the public administrations; in practice, any clerk could become the object of the stipulations. As for the Faculty of Architecture of Bucharest, the only case is of the acting Dean’s, Professor Architect Constantin Iotzu. For further details, see Mitric-Ciupe 2017a, pp. 133-147.