160 YEARS SINCE THE BIRTH OF ELENA VĂCĂRESCU

Nicolae MAREȘ

Motto - *the Romanian idea cannot be dissociated from the cult of the Romanian past.*

Elena Vacarescu

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Camil Petrescu wrote about the noble descendant of the Văcărești family that she has the truest Romanian blood, she honors with her personality two literatures - Romanian and French. Personally I would say - universal literature - in its entirety. /NM/

Elena Văcărescu is known both as a writer and as a successful diplomat. She was a member of the Romanian Academy and laureate of the French Academy Award. Proving a great character, she self-exiled in Hexagon, when King Carol I disavowed her engagement to the future King Ferdinand of Romania, the one named after the First World War - Intregitorul.

Elena Văcărescu was born exactly 160 years ago, on September 21/October 3, 1864, in Bucharest, being the daughter of the diplomat Ioan Văcărescu and Eufrosina Fălcoianu. She was related to noble families such as Cantacuzino and Rosetti, being descended, on the paternal line, from the famous Văcărești family. Iancu Văcărescu was her grandfather. Eloquent is the fragment in which Elena evoked her childhood years: "In my grandparents' house, where I lived, there was a quiet patriarchal existence and, according to the custom of the time, strongly contested between the traditions of the East and that thirst for the West, for which our nation, avid civilization and listening to the urge of origin, I have always been possessed".

The chronicles of the time depict Elena Văcărescu happily sitting in the shade of old trees, where she hid from the governess of British origin and family members, to write poems. He will complete his studies in Paris, where he will study philosophy, poetic art and history, taking courses at the

Sorbonne University. **A**mong her teachers we find Sully Prudhomme, Leconte de Lisle, Jose-Maria de Heredia and others.

He debuted in 1886 with "Chants d'Aurore", the volume enjoying favorable reviews from specialized critics, being rewarded with the Special Prize of the French Academy.

In 1888, she returns to Bucharest, becoming maid of honor at the wedding of Queen Elisabeta /Carmen Sylva/; it was a good opportunity to establish the most cordial relations between the two literati. He traveled with Queen Elizabeth to the princely courts of Germany, Austria, England or Italy. On that occasion, he will meet the emperors Franz Joseph of Austria and Wilhelm II of Germany.

In 1889 he published "Dâmboviţei's Rhapsody", a collection of popular songs, depicting the existence of the Romanian peasant, opus translated into German, even by the queen; then the work will be published in French, English and Italian.

In 1890, after a long period spent with the Royal Family, between Elena Văcărescu and Prince Ferdinand, more than romantic love relationships were established - secretly supported by Carmen Sylva. The two decided to get engaged in secret, without the consent of the rigid King - Carol I.

It is known that, at the engagement ceremony, Elena Văcărescu, the one who would go on to become the queen of Romania, caused great admiration with her words: "For me, my oath means that no other man will ever approach me so as long as I live. And no one will be able to release me from this oath "... The relationship between Elena and Ferdinand lasted for almost a year. But, under the pressure of gossip, Carol I disavowed the engagement between the two. This in the name of the House of Hohenzollern to which Ferdinand belonged. The reason was stupid - the "alteration" of royal blood with Romanian blood. Equally stupid was the statement of the president of the Council of Ministers, the conservative Lascăr Catargiu, who in turn categorically opposed the relationship between the two, stating categorically "Your Majesty, this is not possible!".

Years later, the self-exiled woman will record the scene of the separation between the two as follows: "/Ferdinand/ controls his sobs, rests his forehead hopelessly on my shoulder. (…) At that moment, I shouted: «Only Romania and its future matter. You will be a great king! The rest, your happiness or mine means nothing"

Shortly after, he will also write the following message to Ferdinand:"Tagi Guangi much loved, dear Ferdinand, I am stunned, crushed by pain. For eight days the tortures and humiliations are falling on me. Today, the king, who they managed to mount terribly, asked me to leave. Yes, I must leave in shame. No one believes in our love, but God knows, God judges us. They say I twisted your mind and you knew it all along, didn't you? That it was not so, that I only care for your heart, only this strong passion in front of which I have resisted for so long, that I was always the one who put you on guard against the consequences that I am the one overwhelmed by now.

They took everything from me, my reputation, my love stronger than life, and the queen, the queen is hardened, annihilated. I am finished, liquidated. The equally cruel and unjust king, he, whom I so loved and faithfully served. Pray to God, Ferdinand, that I do not come to despise him. Our desperation is atrocious. Oh, Tagi, Tagi, who will pity me, the queen? I'm so afraid that dad will kill himself. Write to me, I beg you. I love you so much, Hélène."

In the meantime, King Ferdinand's family decided to marry him with a royal being - according to the statute -, being chosen as his consort - Maria - the daughter of Alfred Ernest of Edinburgh, so the son's niece of to Queen Victoria of Great Britain, and having Maria Alexandrovna as her mother, the daughter of the Tsar of Russia, Alexander II .

The marriage took place on January 10, 1893, and the two had six children, the eldest, baptized Carol, would become King Carol II of Romania in the 30s of the last century.

Elena Văcărescu resumed her life, at first in Venice and Rome, and later settled in Paris. Here he initiated a literary salon where important literary personalities were present, such as Marcel Proust, Miguel de Unamuno, Aristide Briand, Sarah Bernhardt or Paul Valéry.

In 1908, he published the novel "Amor vincit" - and in 1911 "Vraja", works inspired by Romanian mythology. They were followed by the collections "Kings and queens that I have known" or "Le Roman de ma vie".

In 1912, he wrote the play "Cobzarul", which was performed at the Paris Opera. Also during that period, he established collaboration relations with the Romanian publications "Adevărul" and "Dimineaţa".

In January 1919, Elena Văcărescu became a member of the Romanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, being also elected general secretary of the Romanian Association attached to the League of Nations, a position from which she supported the cause of peace. It is the time when he met Nicolae Titulescu - between the two establishing a close relationship, which will last until the death of the great diplomat.[1]

In 1922, she was elected a permanent member with full rights in the presidium of the Commission for Intellectual Collaboration, sponsored by the League of Nations, and in 1924, she participated, along with prominent personalities of the European intellectual world, in the establishment of the International Institute for Intellectual Collaboration.

The Romanian exegetes did not highlight the fact that Elena Văcărescu also stood out as a translator. She translated into the language of Hugo, the verses of Mihai Eminescu, Octavian Goga, Lucian Blaga, Ion Minulescu, George Topîrceanu, Ion Vinea and others. Elena Văcărescu's creation was in turn translated into Italian, Danish, Dutch and even Chinese.

On June 11, 1925, Elena Văcărescu became an honorary member of the Romanian Academy, being the first woman to have this privilege, coming as a well-deserved public recognition of her artistic and diplomatic merits. We reproduce the following excerpt from his reception speech. "Born from the purest Romanian soil, raised generation after generation in the whirlwind of Romanian centuries, I breathed the fragrant breeze of our springs (...) I love my country for all its authentic originality, from which my own originality emerged (...) I I served the Romanian idea, I tried to spread abroad the fame of the Romanian nation and I served the expansion of the

[1] Cf. appendix 1.- George G, Potra Pro and Contra Titulescu see and Elena Văcărescu, *„Projected across political horizons“,* exerpts from a conferance held in Cannes, March, 18, 1941, respectively Hélène Vacaresco, *Nicolas Titulesco,* in *Hélène Vacaresco. Une grande européenne,* édition soignée et avant propos par Constantin I. Turcu, Editions de la Fondation Culturelle Roumaine, Bucarest, 1996, pp. 152–154.

Romanian soul in the world (...) I first learned that the Romanian idea cannot dissociate from the cult of the Romanian past".

In 1927 he received the "Legion of Honor" order from the president of the French Republic; it is also the year in which the "Universal Library" is established to support translations. She becomes a member of the International Committee for the diffusion of Arts through Cinema. In 1930, she was awarded the "Crown of Romania" Order as a high officer, and in 1934 she was among the founders of the Romanian House in Paris.

From 1945, Elena Văcărescu was a cultural advisor at the Romanian Legation in France, becoming a member of the Romanian delegation that participated in the Paris Peace Conference the following year. Throughout this period, she will continue to be actively involved in supporting the national cause, showing herself as a "Romanian of the truest Romanian blood, who proudly affirms her Romanian origin and soul"; these are the appreciations of the writer Camil Petrescu, mentioned above.

Elena Văcărescu passed to the eternal, on February 17, 1947, at the age of 82, being buried in Paris, so that in 1959, her earthly remains would be brought from France and buried at the Bellu Cemetery, alongside those of the illustrious his ancestors, the Văcărești family. She bequeathed most of the family's wealth to the Romanian Academy in her will. My colleague - the university diplomat Ioan Stăvăruș, who brought all his manuscripts to the country, handing them over to the Romanian Academy - deals with the above. Elena Văcărescu's memoirs being published in 2023 by the distinguished Mrs. Stăvărus, Ioan's wife.

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"A Christopher Columbus of the political order of the "New Continent""

Titulescu died recently. Our great Titus is no more! What a wonderful being we have lost: the enigmatic master of the verb, with his unusual strength and silhouette projected over all political horizons.

I spent months and years of my life with him, collaborated, thought and suffered with him for twenty years... I remember the League of Nations, the happy Europe, too sure of itself (and - alas - of others!). the meetings in

which, with a sure step, with a high forehead, with broad shoulders, with an imposing demeanor, Titulescu passed through the crowd of delegates to go up to the tribune. How close this image is still to me and, at the same time, how far away! For, there, in Geneva, he was encouraged by unanimous admiration; his great project seemed to be realized, to be built in spite of so many contrary feelings and so many blind plans. In the evening, in our meetings, of the Romanian delegation, he always wanted to carry out his project, to present it as concretely as possible: the creation of a really useful Little Entente, the Balkan Entente; both ententes supporting each other and forming the pillars of the Near and Middle East.

But England was intoxicated by the idea of her future trade with Germany, and the "neutrals" (Sweden, Norway) followed her, having the same thought. Upon Stresemann's arrival in Geneva, I see Titulescu speaking about the sinister fulfillment of his prophecies, with a trembling hand gesture and a lost look. And - alas - wouldn't he, himself, be among the first victims of this fulfillment?

Driven out of the country, driven out by the King and those who surrounded him, with a dim look and a hesitant step, this is what the brave and tireless Titulescu had become, the one whose ideas had flown like a banner on the highest mast, dominating! […]. He lived stormily, his hands rose and fell in a rhythm that was a speech. His labor power was inexhaustible. The satisfaction of obtaining justice supported both his legal erudition and his remarkable sensitivity.

He would not change his beliefs for anything in the world. Everything for Romania's rights! He helped her with such laborious will to earn them. He had become the staunch defender of this cause.

He who was so indignant at the lack of gratitude for true patriots, did not suspect that he himself would one day be banished from the family altar where live, in their eternal homeland, the great shadows of the past and who must -remains to the holy country forever. Oh, Titulescu!

Once, talking to me about the poet Mistral[2], whom he loved, he told me almost shouting: "People like him are not only forces of nature, but real events!" This would suit Titulescu so well too. The event that he constituted

[2] Fréderic Mistral (1830–1914). Franch writer of provencal language. The founder of the literary movement of felibris literare. Relation with Vasile Alecsandri. Nobel Prize for literature(1904).

consisted in the fact that, in control for a while of a certain situation, the importance of which he knew how to define precisely, he wanted to lead it to full stability. […].

Like no one else, he understood the plan of destruction that Germany was nurturing, as well as the absolute blindness of some of the French before their own destiny, their abusive indulgence in equally dangerous flattery and threats. […].

When, in 1936, Titulescu, already ill from the pain caused by the knowledge that his work would soon be removed, when he left power, a cry of triumph was heard in Italy and Germany, a cry whose repercussions are heard every day in the occupied countries and even in the free zone.

One of the true pillars of European resistance to the current victor [fascism - n.r.] had been knocked down.

Are there people who do not realize this? […].

Titulescu believed, like Machiavelli, that the greatest good that can be done - and which is also the most desirable - is the good of one's own country. Titulescu served the interests of his own country everywhere. […].

He was driven out of Geneva with the club because he had discovered, under the thorns and roses of Geneva, Germany, Germany swelling every day beyond the brim, by virtue of the amazing privileges which had been granted her to develop so powerfully. Titulescu had followed this process for 18 years; of this enterprise he had studied its contours and discovered its shores. It can be said about him, from this point of view, that he was a Christopher Columbus of the political order of the "New Continent".

The plan of Germany, a plan which at first was hidden by internal movements, but which, with all the attempts at assurance given by Stresemann and his people, drew the promontory and gulfs of its entire geography, finally, the attack and the defense which Germany did not escape not a moment in sight. […].

Titulescu saw Germany dominated by a fixed idea: the revision of the Treaty of Versailles. Since the Treaty of Versailles, Germany has not stopped protesting against the integration of Romania, which it considered excessive, and it was very severe towards the political and administrative capacities of the Romanians, towards their culture and their past. Titulescu always kept an attentive ear ready for the symptoms that heralded the rematch, claimed by Germany and its allies. Titulescu signaled early on the machination by which Berlin gave Versailles a pickaxe from a distance.

Titulescu appeared as an obstacle in terms of Germany's policy in the Balkans.

But it was at his home, in Romania, that Titulescu would be defeated. His policy, the result of which was destined to abolish war, was to embarrass the financial movement, the vicious game of factory production, which Germany maintained and from which so many countries and, above all, so many politicians, benefited.

Lacking Titulescu, his opinions and contribution, Romania committed a serious act of ingratitude and lack of foresight, because the King was poorly trained or, rather, because he was also caught in the golden network of business. […].

People disappear, but their great ideas remain.