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Competing Voices of the Drive to Planning? The Cooperatist Engagement with Corporatism in Romania

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Abstract: The article inquiries into the interplay between the discourses of cooperatism and corporatism in pre-communist Romania, by locating both trends within the fold of the drive to economic planning prevalent in the 1930's and relating them to the development of syndicalism and social policies over the long run. The sophisticated engagement of the cooperatist theorist Gromolsav Mladenatz with the spread of corporatist ideas and practice in Europe is placed at the center of the account and contextualized in the national ideological and political setting, with an emphasis on his efforts to explore the validity of the claims advanced by the contemporary economic theory with a right-wing orientation to strike a revolutionary path away from liberal capitalism, as well as on his largely negative assessment of the same claims. Mladenatz's own searches for a way out of the economic predicament of the time is shown to have led him, at the end of the period covered, towards a departure from the tenets of dirigisme (otherwise shared, on all accounts, by the cooperatist and corporatist camps). The corresponding contextualization of Mihail Manoilescu's view of corporatism, by relating it to the various strands of the Romanian politics of professional representation and to all the ideological attitudes of relevance, is the larger objective targeted all throughout.

Keywords: *cooperatism; corporatism; economic planning; syndicalism; social policies.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *cooperatism; corporatism; economie dirijată; sindicalism; politică socială.*

Published in 1935 (one year after the first French edition of Manoilescu's main work on the topic), a Belgian survey of the corporatist turns recently taken by the economic and social policies of various countries and of the related ideological developments – sustained by a pleading for the same design drawing its main inspiration from the trend of social Catholicism (Jarlot, 1938) and written against the immediate background of the constitutions with corporatist credentials adopted by Portugal in 1933 and by Austria in 1934, in the footsteps of the paradigmatic arrangements introduced in Italy since 1926 – goes as far as to consider the Bulgarian case (alongside Brazil) – thus invoking the decree for the organization of the professional groups of September 1934, issued by the dictatorial regime of Kimon Georgiev Stoyanov (Muller, 1935, 151–154) –, but fails to pay any attention whatsoever to Romania. This attitude of neglect would in fact be replicated by other comparative researches of the time, undertaken by either qualified supporters (Perroux, 1937, 27–176) or qualified critics (Pirou, 1939, 73–124) of the corporatist doctrine and of its partial applications. In spite of this, the country exhibited at the time two political organizations promoting the doctrine in question – Grigore Forțu's Citizens Block for the Salvation of the Country (founded in 1932) and

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Manoilescu's own National-Corporatist League (initiated in 1933) –, in continuation to the discourse launched in 1929 by a movement of the (mainly) white-collar professional associations, demanding the refashioning of the parliamentary system on the basis of professional representation as a cure against political parasitism (Rizescu, 2014; Rizescu, 2015).

Assessing corporatism from a cooperatist standpoint

Over the postwar period, the tendency of disregarding the local context of Manoilescu's theory of corporatism has persisted, in stark contradiction with the emphatic invocation of the same ideas as exemplary for the general drive towards (semi-fascist) authoritarianism taken by East-European political regimes across the interwar age (Janos, 1970), as significant – in conjunction to the theorizing on protectionist policies of economic growth advanced by the same author – for understanding the long-term and world-wide career of the analyses of backwardness and of the strategies of development (Love, 1996), as a privileged reference for the conceptualization of neo-corporatist practices connected with welfare state devices in the settings of advanced democratic societies – studied by comparison with their counterparts in developing nations (Schmiter, 1974) –, and even as having a heuristic value for delineating the hidden corporatist nature of communist social-economic structures (Chirot, 1980). The local critical discussions of the corporatist design – advanced mainly within the ideological camps of liberalism and of the Left – have to be seen, of course, as an integral part of Manoilescu's context, and it emerges that the most sophisticated and consistent approach of the sort – involving a wide comparative horizon – was advanced by the theorist of cooperatism Gromoslav Mladenatz. The present article is meant to clarify the contours of this approach, disclosing its meanings as indicative for the general relation between cooperatism and corporatism in Romania and for the way the two trends of theorizing were related to the predicament of a gradual – however unclear – drive to economic planning throughout the 1930's.

In a "history of cooperatist thought" published in 1935 (as the revised version of a book first issued in 1931, with a French translation at Paris in 1933 and two subsequent Spanish translations, in Mexico and in Argentina), Mladenatz sets the baseline for his engagement with the topic by explaining how the supporters of cooperatism, hitherto confronted "with just two social systems" – namely "liberal capitalism on the one side, and socialism on the other" – now have to tackle the demands of "new social and economic systems, either already functioning or in the course of being implemented" (Mladenatz, 1935, 198). He further explains how, therefore, "the predicament of the time that cooperatism has to face is the one of understanding to what extent it can accommodate itself with the new economic and political regimes in the contexts of which it has now to exist". In other words, the task incumbent upon the theorist is to find out whether "cooperatism can exist at all in the frame of the Soviet system, or else in that of fascist corporatism, of Hitlerist national socialism or of the Catholic type of corporatism which is currently being entrenched in Austria" (Mladenatz, 1935, 201–202). Acknowledging that "originally the promoters of these systems manifested their hostility towards cooperatism", he takes account of the fact that "as time elapsed, this attitude has changed, and we can see how the new forms of organization of national economies allow now a narrower or a larger space for cooperation". Accordingly, there is a need for examining, in particular, "the problem of tailoring the cooperatist units to the corporatist system of fascist economy" (Mladenatz, 1935, 202–203, 216).

The engagement is broadened in two books delivered by Mladenatz in 1937 – dealing with "the status of the economic enterprise in the actual economy", in order to address in the end in greater detail the problem of the "small enterprise" and, hence, of cooperation in a changing economic world (Mladenatz, 1937, 73–109) – and, respectively, in 1943, this time inquiring into the purported emergence of a set of altogether "new foundations" for economic science. The first work pays special attention to examining the economic and political regimes of Italy, Germany and Austria – and especially their genuine or self-styled corporatist dimensions –, with the other one surveying the field again by dropping out the Austrian case and including, instead, those of Portugal and of Vichy France (all the five cases being treated on the basis of both first-hand information and secondary sources). An expanded edition of the second book, published in 1945 but apparently prepared for publication before the end of the Antonescu regime in August 1944, maintains the text intact (Mladenatz, 1945, 5–101) while adding to it a generous section accounting for recent – and mostly corporatist – theories and trends of thought, including Manoilescu's views (Mladenatz, 1945, 101–164). Delineating the powers and responsibilities assigned to corporations – as "state organs with a national coverage bringing together employers' and employees' syndicates" – in the official declarations of the Italian fascist regime (and pertaining to the field of social policy as well as to those of politics and economic policy), Mladenatz is drawn to the conclusion that "up until now, at least, one cannot speak properly about a political organization on corporatist foundations of the Italian state – to the extent that "power is vested into the Grand Fascist Council, itself an emanation of the party that gives expression to the nation" –, and neither about the structuring of economic life on corporatist bases – in so far as "the economic functions of the corporations are not mandatory, being moreover only vaguely defined by the legislator" and "the corporation is not a self-governing economic unit, but a state organ". Hence, the regime can best be placed under the label of "state corporatism" (not a genuine one), while "fascist economy cannot be characterized as subjected to programmatic planning", the label most suited to it being that of "dirigisme" (Mladenatz, 1937, 43–48). In fact, as he adds, "present Italian corporatism does not emerge as an economic system in the proper sense of the notion", but only as a regime where "national economy is expected to be subjected to the control of political power, by the means of some special institutions giving representation to both capital and labor" (Mladenatz, 1945, 38).

The claims of Italian fascism to have overcome class conflict are examined by taking as a point of departure the fact that the official publications "deny or disregard the existence of antagonist social categories" and "emphasize the need of forging relations of collaboration between capital and labor within the enterprise", to the extent that "entrepreneurial activities are defined as social functions, and as such subordinated to the interests of the national community" (Mladenatz, 1937, 55, 57). This vindication of accomplishing social harmonization advanced by the defenders of the regime is rejected, however, in light of the fact that "fascism does not bring any innovation in the domain of property relations within the enterprise", thus not altering in any way "the idea of private property" and adding nothing to "the established forms of enterprise – the capitalist private enterprise, the cooperatist enterprise and the various types of public enterprise" (Mladenatz, 1937, 46). Maintaining that "state intervention does not in actual fact go beyond what we encounter nowadays in other national economies that do not claim to have a revolutionary character" (Mladenatz, 1937, 57), the Romanian analyst subscribes to the authoritative view of Louis Rosenstock-Franck – shared by other

authors as well – regarding the functioning of fascism as a disguise for oligarchic rule (Mladenatz, 1937, 50; Rosenstock-Franck, 1934, 392).

Nazi Germany is found to fit in the main into the conclusions of the investigation devoted to Italy, thus exhibiting the tenets of "an exchange economy controlled by the state", with an "anti-liberal, but not an anti-capitalist nature", however displaying a greater amount of state intervention into the domain of the private enterprise (Mladenatz, 1937, 61, 64). The Nazi party program of 1920 is acknowledged as offering – in spite of its largely naive and unsystematic character – "enough revolutionary elements marking a genuine break with the liberal-capitalist regime", being also shown, nevertheless, to be used by the political regime installed in 1933 rather "as a guideline for targeting long-term objectives" (Mladenatz, 1937, 58–59). The corporatist trappings of the system amount to virtually nothing, with the notion itself gradually dropped out from the official discourse due to its association with the subversive idea of de-centralization (Mladenatz, 1937, 60). The Nazi state is ready to allow the (largely decorative) existence of corporations, but "not the emergence of a national economic order with a corporatist nature" (Mladenatz, 1945, 67). As patterned by the theorist of Austrian origins and with Catholic theoretical leanings Othmar Spann starting with the first, 1920, edition of his book on "the true state" (Haag, 1976), the "universalist" conception of corporatism based on the principle of the "organic articulation of all elements participating to economic life" – while at the same time treating as of secondary importance "the reform of the economic unit, or of the enterprise" – has fallen into disgrace by virtue of being implicitly "opposed to the vision of a centralist state, not to say anything about a 'total' state absorbing all functions of the national society" (Mladenatz, 1945, 118–119). The same condition of marginality is shared by the rival economic school led by Werner Sombart and resting on the notion of "German socialism" (Love, 107–111), itself envisioning "a national life – and a national economy for that matter – shaped and ruled in an authoritarian manner by the state", but "organized in a non-homogenous and non-dogmatic fashion, allowing thus a welter of economic forms to flourish" (Mladenatz, 1945, 137–138).

As practiced in Austria under Dolfuss and in Portugal under Salazar, but also in France under the regime of Vichy installed in July 1940, corporatist experiments are all indebted to the teachings of social Catholicism, revolving around the Papal encyclicals of 1891 (*Rerum Novarum,* delivered by Leo XIII) and 1931 (*Quandragesimo Anno,* coming from Pius XI and reinforcing the principles established by the former document). The respective principles are described by Mladenatz as "not amounting to a unitary system of social economy" (Mladenatz, 1945, 110) and moreover as upholding at the same time the value of individualism and the need for social protection, while "leaving to the state to decide what precise meaning such notions must be given" (Mladenatz, 1937, 65). As for the last objective, the Catholic social doctrine "emphasizes the great importance of initiatives coming directly from the people concerned, that have to manifest themselves by the means of free associations composed of either workers, or employers, or the representatives of capital and labor together" (Mladenatz, 1937, 66).

Staying in continuity to this vision, the Austrian regime "plainly approves of free competition in the economic field, as long as its scope is constrained by moral imperatives and by the imperatives of the state", assigning to the state "the role of a regulator alone", rejecting strong versions of interventionism and providing for a "law of subsidiarity" according to which "the organization and control of economic activities have to be in the main the responsibility of autonomous associations" (Mladenatz, 1937, 69–70). Discovering that in Austria "the economic

enterprise has suffered even less [than in Italy and Germany] essential alterations" and underscoring "the greater scope allowed for cooperatist enterprises" here, the Romanian theorist is keen to argue that the alleged "Catholic corporatism" embraced by the Austrian state "cannot be characterized as real corporatism" (Mladenatz, 1937, 71). The Portuguese case is found as somewhat different, to the extent that, although the official discourse – inaugurated by Salazar's speech on the "new state" of July 1930, before being translated into the articles of the March 1933 constitution – points to the forging of a structure resting heavily on the "associations developed from within civil society" – and in this connection assigns important functions to the organizations with a cultural character, alongside the economic ones – in practice "there are only slight visible differences between this regime and those of Italian fascism and German national socialism" (Mladenatz, 1945, 39–41). The experiments in the field of Vichy France are discovered as rather incoherent, not matching their corporatist self-definition – mainly due to the fact that the bodies forged with the objective of assembling a corporatist structure "do not enjoy rights of economic self-government", besides not being built "upon strict professional lines" – and indulging into mere statist policies without a particular profile (Mladenatz, 1945, 48–49).

Alongside Spann, Sombart and Manoilescu, the French economist François Perroux – later involved, during the postwar period, in policies of development in Latin America while entirely abhorring his past dedication to promoting the vision of corporatism in interwar Europe (Love, 1996, 111–112, 265) – is given the largest coverage in Mladenatz's survey of (mostly corporatist) economic ideas. It is highlighted the emergence of Perroux in the Vichy context as a quasi-official voice of the inconsistent searches for building a corporatist order (Mladenatz, 1945, 146), with the bulk of the analysis falling, nevertheless, upon his earlier inquiries into the topic. These are based on dissociating a larger understanding of corporatism – as a regime that creates a framework for the smooth collaboration between capital and labor on the basis of state arbitration and fully within the capitalist system – from a stricter one – pointing to an evolution moving beyond the confines of capitalism and resting on the notion of the "community of labor", itself a particular interpretation of the notion of corporation, conceived as a public institution giving equal representation to capital and labor and entrusted with the control of prices on the market (Mladenatz, 1945, 149–141; Perroux, 1937, 7–24). As for the second understanding, Mladenatz is of the opinion that the type of organization envisioned by Perroux "can be qualified as corporatist, as it currently happens, only on the basis of extending very much the meaning of the term" (Mladenatz, 1945, 151). As for the first one, we must underscore the way it clearly anticipates the prevailing meaning of corporatism coined – starting with the 1970's – for designating neo-corporatist practices of intermediation in the spaces of functioning or emerging welfare state arrangements (Schmitter, 1974; Panitch, 1977). Nevertheless, at the moment 1945 the Romanian commentator likes to show how, "for attaining his objectives, Perroux does not appeal to state power, but instead to the conscience of those involved, asked to immerse themselves into a 'communitarian civilization'" (Mladenatz, 1945, 151–152). This basically sets the French theorist in the same category with the Swiss corporatist projects – and to the experiments undertaken in their footsteps – briefly examined by Mladenatz, discovered as predicated on bottom-up developments, as manifesting "a clear hostility towards the authoritarian and totalitarian forms of state" and altogether as "representing the democratic type of corporatist economy" (Mladenatz, 1945, 131–132).

A confusing relationship across the Left-Right divide

Manoilescu is summarized and assessed by Mladenatz with a stark reference to two particular issues: that of the relationship that capital and labor are supposed to establish in the frames of the corporations and that of the role assigned to the state within the envisioned order of an "integral and pure corporatism", which is meant to accommodate the non-economic professional bodies on a par with the economic ones and to reshape the structures of political power anew as entirely emanating from the welter of corporations (Manoilescu, 1934, 77–83). The first problem is settled by disclosing the unequal positions assigned to the employers' and, respectively, workers' syndicates within the institutions of the corporations designed by Manoilescu, quoting the latter to the extent that "guiding the collective economic activity is much rather a responsibility of the employers' syndicate than of the corporation at large". This involves a departure from the Italian conception that vindicates a relation of equality between the two types of syndical organizations within the corporative bodies (Mladenatz, 1945, 125). The conclusion is, here, that "the system of Manoilescu is deficient precisely with respect to the question which is of greatest concern for us, namely the economic one", an observation that holds true as long as one is dedicating to upholding the statement that "a basic feature of the corporatist system is precisely the accommodation of the interests involved by observing the principle of solidarity" (Mladenatz, 1945, 126). The second problem is addressed by drawing primarily on the "program for reforming the Romanian state" on corporatist lines designed by Manoilescu in 1933 as an official document of the National-Corporatist League (Manoilescu, 1933), found as "lacking of precision precisely with respect to the important issue of the relations between the state and the corporations". This is shown by the fact that, while stating that "national life is to be organized entirely by the corporations", it does not clarify "which attributions hitherto bestowed upon the state are to be preserved by it, supposedly outside the domain of national life" (Mladenatz, 1945, 127–128).

Although nicely sarcastic, this evaluation is much too elusive for allowing us to understand fully Mladenatz's opinion about the relevance of the corporatist model in the Romanian setting. No reference to the local experimentation with the respective model – cast in a right-wing, authoritarian nationalist garb –, during the Carolist, National-Legionary and Antonescu regimes is contained in the volumes of 1943 and 1945, while the one of 1937 only refers in passing to the corporatist leanings of the law of 1936 for the reorganization of the professional chambers and for the creation on this basis of the Higher Economic Council meant to establish the framework for a bargaining between capital and labor under state arbitration ("Legea pentru înființarea Consiliului Superior Economic și organizarea camerelor profesionale", 1939 [1936]; Bold et al., 1980, 134–167). This legislative act is taken as indicative for "a powerful tendency towards the establishment of mandatory professional organization" (Mladenatz, 1937, 105), but no insight into the participation of the corporatist idea to the development of social policies in the country is given in this connection (Rizescu, 2016). It seems, in fact, that what actually matters for the defender of cooperatist ideas is not to formulate a clear-cut refutation of such local developments, but to disclose the rather benign content hidden by the revolutionary rhetoric of the corporatist projects, together with their practical ineffectiveness. Indeed, shown as belonging together with a larger category of economic visions pointing to a "third way" – different from both liberal capitalism and socialism –, they are discovered as merely "united by the idea that the antagonisms between the two economic factors

of capital and labor have to be somehow neutralized" (Mladenatz, 1945, 161–162).

The attitude towards the corporatist design forged within the camp of cooperatist advocacy in Romania could have only been predicated on the broader and long-term attitude taken by the representatives of the same trend of social and economic theorizing towards the issue of professional representation of the syndical type, itself correlated with the overlapping syndicalist and, respectively, cooperatist engagements with the objectives of social policy. The international wisdom in the field of the early XXth century had established that, "as the consumer cannot dispense himself from the producer and the other way round, or, in other words, as each of us must be a syndicalist and a cooperativist at the same time, we must find means for conciliating these two types of interests" (Mutschler, 1912, 34). A Romanian sympathetic critique of revolutionary socialism taken from a liberal standpoint and advanced in the same period – as a preamble for a sweeping engagement with the need to broaden liberalism towards embracing social concerns (Petrescu-Comnen, 1910) – indicates cooperatist practices and syndical activism as intertwined positive outcomes of the reformist socialist zeal (Petrescu-Comnen, 1909). The connection between cooperatism, social policies and the politics of professional representation would remain close throughout the interwar period in the country. This is shown by Mlanenatz's own participation with an article about cooperation to a collective volume delineating the activities of the Ministry of Labor over its first decade of existence, together with related developments (Mladenatz, 1930), at a time when, in a manner telling for the continuous interplay between the two trends of social reform, Albert Thomas – the influential director of the International Labor Office of the League of Nations (of which Mladenatz was a member) in the 1920's and a guiding figure for the Romanians working in the field – was celebrated in France as a leading exponent of the cooperatist movement (Poisson, 1933).

Staying in the footsteps of other interventions on the topic (Osvadă, 1924), Mladenatz takes deeper searches into the problem of the relations between syndical institutions and cooperatist enterprises in 1931, when giving the first edition of his book on the history of cooperatist theory. Showing how, in France, "cooperation in agriculture has grown from within the syndical agrarian organizations" and how, on the other hand, "the consumers' cooperatives must be seen as constituting for the workers a continuation of syndical activities", he underscores that "this must not lead us to a confusion between the two types of activities of concern for the working class, in terms of their basic principles and social functions" (Mladenatz, 1931, 91, 157). This is because "the syndicate is exclusively a class-based organization", bringing together "the members of a profession, or of an industrial branch, or even only the workers of one single enterprise". On the contrary, "consumer cooperatives require the participation of an as large a segment of the population as possible in order to succeed" and, as such, they "move beyond the interests of a profession or even the interests of the working class at large, serving instead the interests of all those who, by disregarding commercial profit, are intent of obtaining consumer goods at just prices" (Mladenatz, 1931, 158). Although referring, in the same book, to the British trend of "guild socialism" as envisioning "the collaboration of the worker syndicates with cooperation in the very process of production" (Mladenatz, 1931, 166; Cole, 1918), Mladenatz would later come back to the issue in 1934, in order to argue that, "employing different methods, the syndicalist and the cooperatist types of activities must also maintain their autonomy from each other", thus showing how "the syndicate is a professional organization, while the cooperative has a broader circle of adherents and it cannot be confined to one single guild or economic category" and maintaining that

"the syndicate is an instrument for fighting, but cooperatism is an activity that induces into the body of the present economic regime the preconditions of a new economic system, such as to shape the solidarity of all laboring elements" (Mladenatz, 1934, 11, 12).

All strands of corporatist advocacy emerging in Romania in the 1930's like to present the project as a cure for the divisiveness of class-based syndicalism (Dragnea, 1932; Polihroniade, 1933 a), by the same token rejecting cooperatist designs together with the entire vision of left-wing agrarianism and particularly blaming the patterns of cooperatist economy established in the country since the end of the XIXth century as venues of budgetary draining (Crainic, 1932; Crainic 1937; Manoilescu, 1936b; Rădulescu, 1937). More conciliating views, pleading for adjusting cooperatism to the requirements of nationalist corporatist politics, are occasionally expressed (Pienescu, 1933; Carpinişanu, 1936), but the two discourses tend to evolve as locked in a sharp conflicting relationship. Mladenatz himself criticizes in 1933, in the left-wing newspaper *Adevărul,* the conception of a parliament resting on professional representation alone (Mladenatz, 1933), in the context of other departures of the sort taken by the periodical (Batzaria, 1933; "Absurditatea corporatismului", 1933; "Cooperatism şi corporatism", 1933).

Later, however, the political and ideological trend of agrarianism would tend to assume a confusing strand towards the issue of corporatism, vacillating between attitudes of rejection and of approval. Thus, in 1936, the National Peasant Party leader Ion Mihalache is reported to have argued, at a meeting of the professional sections of his political organization, that "the task of redressing the economic situation of the country can only be accomplished by the cooperatist movement in collaboration with the professional associations, but this cannot be done in the frame of the parties-based state, requiring, instead, the building of a new, corporatist state" (Petrescu-Costeşti, 1936, 17). We can also find him in the same year, nevertheless, rejecting the corporatist model as part of an attack upon the national-Christian ideology and quoting in this connection an Italian testimony according to which, in the fascist state, corporatist politics is "only an attempt at democratizing the dictatorship, after the destruction of political parties" (Mihalache, 1936, 6–7). And we also discover him in 1940, touching upon the topic when participating to a collaborative assessment of the cooperatist devices and practices in Romania – together with the agrarianist ideologue and politician I. Răducanu and the Danish expert M. Gormsen –, thus referring to the policies taken by the Roosevelt administration in the USA and invoking the (quasi-)corporatist outlook of the anti-crisis strategy employed by the American president in the industrial domain, alongside a wide appeal to cooperation in agriculture (Mihalache, Gormsen and Răducanu, 1940, 28). Manoilescu takes a delight in pointing to such inconsistencies (Manoilescu, 1936a). It is against their background that we have to place the strenuous attempt at clarification advanced by Mladenatz, together with the double-edged attitude on the subject adopted by the cooperatist theorist T. Rădulescu-Thanir (Rizescu, 2015, 171–172), when relating the demands of his project of economic reconstruction (Rădulescu-Thanir, 1936) to the realities of a growing nationalist politics, trying to accommodate his doctrine with the corporatist conception of Nichifor Crainic (Rădulescu-Thanir, 1937) and later rejecting the conception of Manoilescu in conjunction with the fascist doctrine of the Iron Guard in the economic domain (Rădulescu-Thanir, 1938).

The extensive treatments of the topic of corporatism taken in Romania after the adoption of the Carolist constitution of February 1938 – meant to create the baseline for establishing a political order of the kind – tend to be either enthusiastically faithful to the tenets of the Italian example (Angelescu, 1939), or cautious to ponder the relative

merits of the German and the Italian models of institutional organization and economic policies (Marghescu, 1941), or else eager to argue for the necessary wise adaptation of totalitarian politics to the local conditions (Jornescu, 1940; Vintilă, 1941). However (unavoidably) unclear about the way the insights derived from his comparative survey apply to the circumstances of his country, Mladenatz certainly appears as a dissenting voice. His position can be better characterized when related to another one displaying the same kind of skepticism regarding the revolutionary implications of the corporatist discourse. The constitutional jurist Tudor Drăganu takes a leaf from the pluralist theory of the state offered in the early XXth century by Léon Duguit (Duguit, 1922, 105–152), writing in 1940 as a qualified supporter of the doctrine made official by Carol II – in order to be then held in (ineffective) esteem by the Legionaries in power and by Antonescu –, but arguing that "corporatism is not evolving such as to become a system close to what Mihail Manoilescu calls 'pure corporatism', that is a political system where the only source of legislative power is represented by the corporations". Instead, all the countries experimenting with the idea display, in fact, the landscape of professional representation functioning as only an adjunct to "various political factors" (Drăganu, 1940, 147–148). When shedding light in this fashion on each other, the two authors emerge as united by the perception that a century of corporatism would never come about.

Paths away from the interwar dirigisme

In 1935, Mladenatz introduces his brief considerations regarding the demand of pondering the compatibility between the doctrine he serves and the rising trends of economic theory and practice by acknowledging that "the cooperatist system, as we conceive it, is itself meant to obtain an organization of the economy, being of course sustained by peculiar aims" (Mladenatz, 1935, 201). One year before, when issuing together with Ion Răducanu a book surveying the "present economic trends", he discovers as their common denominator a tendency towards "dirigisme", supposedly resonating with the tendency towards the prevalence of "a collectivist and anti-materialist spirit" underscored by his colleague (Răducanu and Mladenatz, 1934, 46–47, 16–17).

When taking over again, in 1937, the task of elucidating the meanings of the transformations underway in the economic sphere, he starts by rehearsing the prevailing opinion according to which the world is moving towards "the end of the liberal-capitalist economy" and the corresponding "emergence of a new economic regime", an expectation shared even by many adepts of liberalism (Mladenatz, 1937, 11, 14). The answer to the question is then anticipated – on the basis of dissociating between "liberalism", "capitalism" and the broad patterns of "individualism" as they apply to social and economic life – by the statement that "one can only notice, for the time being, a move away from economic liberalism". The diagnostic is further detailed by the clarification that not the generalization of unmediated state administration of the economic enterprises is the most conspicuous trend, but that of the "control of economic life" by the political authority, or else of the state "aiming at subordinating particular economic activities to the general interest" (Mladenatz, 1937, 39, 41). Corporatism fits into this general model, contributing to the shaping of "a powerful state interventionism, set on the course of putting in place a system of planned economy, without, however, any design of demolishing the capitalist regime, but on the contrary, with a view to strengthening it and helping it to avoid the downfall" (Mladenatz,

1937, 72). The label of "dirigisme" is vindicated again by Mladenatz, in 1943 (and in 1945) as the most appropriate description for the transformations accounted for. The notion of a "break between capitalism and economic liberalism" is itself restated, this time with the qualification that "although the criticisms in focus here are mostly concerned with the methods of economic liberalism, they also bear upon the status of the capitalist regime" (Mladenatz, 1945, 17, 21).

Of all the competing social and economic trends proceeding together with cooperatism in the larger fold of the drive to some version of planning or dirigisme – or beyond them, into the realm of the full socialization of economic life –, the one that captured the attention of Mladenatz most consistently was certainly that of socialism. We can find him in 1919, pondering the chances for extending the emerging Romanian cooperatist movement from its privileged agrarian area of manifestation into that of urban economy and acknowledging in this connection "the parallelism between the socialist and the cooperatist doctrines, which demand together the socialization of the means of production and exchange", in order to show how "the only thing that sets them apart is the dedication of the socialists to the idea of class struggle, to which the cooperatists oppose the doctrine of harmonious understanding" (Mladenatz, 1919, 6). This stays in plain conjunction with utterances coming from other theorists of the time, like the economist I.N. Angelescu in his sweeping comparative survey of the interplay between cooperatism and socialism in Europe, published in 1913, arguing for the obsolescence of the revolutionary types of socialist pleading and establishing the conclusion that "cooperation forges a harmonious relation between classes", thus "on the one hand contributing to the destruction of those which are not able any more to perform a positive role in the modern social-economic organization and on the other hand setting limitation to the aggrandizement of others" (Angelescu, 1913, 708–709). Otherwise, the representatives of the cooperatist camp can departure from the vision of local socialism on the agrarian issue – based on the theory developed by Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and demanding the unhindered play of the capitalist patterns in this economic segment even at the cost of peasant proletarianization, thus preparing the transition to socialism on the path of full-blown capitalism –, as shown by an intervention taken in 1911 by Ion Răducanu (Răducanu, 1911).

When placing the subject in a longer historical perspective, in 1931, Mladenatz tries to clarify the position of his doctrine as staying in between socialism and liberalism, starting by pointing how "almost all the precursors of the modern cooperatist movement consider this one as hard to distinguish from the systems envisioned as based on the socialization of the economy" (thus conceiving of "the cooperatist regime as virtually identical with the socialist one"). On the contrary, as he goes on to show, "a part of the actual founders of the modern cooperatist movement [...] manifested themselves as stark adepts of liberal economic thinking", to the same extent as "the Marxist leaders of the socialist movement branded the cooperation as an institution embodying the principles of economic liberalism" (Mladenatz, 1931, 117). Appending in the same book a 1927 article on "the problem of cooperation in relation to socialism and capitalism in the Romanian scholarship on social-economic matters", he ponders again the virtues of a middle road in economic theory and practice and the role of cooperation as part of these searches (Mladenatz, 1931, 187–198). In light of the circumspect character of such interventions, it seems that Mladenatz was not contradicting himself too much when, giving a book-length treatment of the topic of "socialism and cooperation" in 1946 – during the period of the transition to the communist regime – he devoted a whole chapter in an accommodating manner to characterizing

the cooperation as "the socialism of the transition period" (Mladenatz, 1946, 131–161), thus asserting that "cooperation has been adopted by virtually all socialist currents, including that of communism, as a vehicle for the transition from capitalism to the new economy, but also as one of the instruments employed for building the new society" (Mladenatz, 1946, 160).

In the 1930's, the searches for an economy based in one way or another on planning are widespread across the ideological spectrum, with much the same vocabulary displayed by theorists of fascism (Polihroniade, 1933b) and by left-wingers from the camps of agrarianism (Madgearu, 1934), socialism (Mirescu, 1934) or socially minded liberalism (Drăghicescu, 1934), with few voices arguing the opposite case, on classical liberal grounds (Constanțiu, 1936). The rhetoric of the sort is heightened in the period of the right-wing dictatorships (Tatos, 1939), being also supported with the help of translations from the relevant international literature (Englis, 1938). The international search for new forms of organizing the economy was itself very widespread at the time (Siegfried et al., 1934), even British economists otherwise dedicated to upholding the values of political liberalism being drawn to underscore that, "in the course of the last few years, the western world […] has begun to ask whether Russia – and Italy too – may not be right in their insistence on national planning, however wrong they may be in their aggressive repudiation of the overriding claims of freedom" (Blackett, 1932, 3). Arguing that "the new dirigisme seems to target a […] more precise objective [than old-style interventionism], namely the adoption of central plans for organizing production such as to avoid crises and to eliminate their effects", an authority of the field considers that "the vast majority of the systems of reorganization can be placed under the label of corporatism, in so far as they are mainly based on the idea of articulating together the demands of the producers and those of the consumers" (Dechesne, 1934, 161, 150). Can we then characterize the critical involvement of Mladenatz with the philosophy and politics of corporatism from the standpoint of cooperatism as nothing else but the full expression of a divide between Left and Right within the larger fold of the (multilayered) drive to embracing economic planning over the last pre-communist years in Romania?

Mladenatz's very depiction of corporatism as a muddled attempt to save the capitalist system at the cost of sacrificing liberalism – moreover marked by contradictions and inconsistencies and suffering from an oligarchic bias – might offer a key for calibrating the answer. It can be revealed to us, indeed, as resonating well with the evaluation advanced in 1934 by the French Gaetan Pirou – featuring often as a reference in the pages of the Romanian author –, intent on showing how, "served by the decadence of liberalism, the cause of corporatism also derives strength from the unpopularity of statism", with the qualification that corporatism "is the representative of a conception about society as rather static and not dynamic, rather conservative and not progressive" and "an instrument for subjecting the consumer to the producer, the worker to the employer and the social to the national" (Pirou, 1934, 23, 65). This comes as a preamble for a latter survey of corporatist theory by the same analyst – by placing it, now, alongside the contemporary "neo-socialist" advocacy of Marcel Déat, Barthélémy Montagnon or Hyacinthe Dubreuil on the same boat of the strivings underway for reforming the capitalist order –, set in conjunction to expressing a preference for the "neo-liberal" solution but also anticipating the postwar denunciations of corporatism as a "false remedy" against the ills of statism advanced in the same country before the emergence of neo-corporatist theorizing (Pirou, 1939; Audouin and Lhoste-Lachaume, 1962). Most clearly associated with the American Walter Lippmann – and with his pleading for the "principles of a

compensated economy" as opposed to the misleading "principles of a directed economy" championed by the mainstream interwar defenders of planning (Lippman, 1934, 45–60, 38–45) –, the new variety of liberal thought invoked was supported in France by Louis Rougier under the label of "constructive liberalism" (Rougier, 1938, 84–88), as an ideological foundation for his rejection of the "economic mystiques" bordering on the totalitarianisms of the day (including the corporatist ones), but also as a stage on the path of theoretical clarification leading to the "ordoliberal" take-off in postwar Europe (Ycre, 2003).

Staying fully within the fold of this last development, the German Wilhelm Röpke – engaged for long with the economics of fascism (Röpke, 1935) – gives in 1942 a characterization of corporatism as self-contradictory – due to its very lack of determination in dealing with the shortcomings of liberal capitalism – that can be read as expanding upon the earlier ideas of Pirou, when branding the defenders of the doctrine in question as looking forward to discover "some way of jumping into the water without getting wet". The design involved is shown as "the pet idea of all those whose speech is neither yea nor nay, who would like to express freely their aversion to liberalism and individualism without acknowledging collectivism as the logical consequence, who are looking for a third way without much understanding the details of the economic life and the biology of society". There is given a further explanation to the extent that, while "the professional and business associations offer promising possibilities and, properly integrated into the entity of the state and economy, they produce much that is good, [...] one cannot render them a worse service than to assign them functions which are bound to corrupt them as well as the whole body politic" (Röpke, 1950 [1942], 93). Towards the end of his book of 1945, Mladenatz gives a cursory coverage of the (broadly defined) school illustrated by Lippman, Rougier and Röpke – deemed as supporting the notion that "the way to be followed rests on a combination of liberty, order and progress" –, also making reference to a Romanian work of the same year, published in the same series and presenting the British 1942 Beveridge plan for social insurance (Mladenatz, 1945, 158–160; Lupu, 1945, 17–195). One can see here an indication regarding the path Mladenatz's thinking was heeded to take, had it not been diverted by the installation of communism. The deeper meanings of his involvement with the challenge of corporatism from a cooperatist standpoint and within the horizon of the drive to dirigisme prevalent in the 1930's emerge as better clarified in the light of this.

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