EDITORIAL

Academician Eugeniu Gh. Proca, founder of modern urology school in Romania. A memory

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Motto: "*You only live once – but if you work it right, once is enough*." Joe E. Lewis

The history of Romanian Surgery will record, I am absolutely convinced, the name of Academician Eugeniu Gh. Proca (January 12, 1927 Godeni Muscel - 07.03.2004 Bucharest). As he testified in a televised interview, he wanted to become a general surgeon, he did not like urology at first, but in the end, as it happens in life, "you love who you live with." [1]

Image 1: Academician Eugen Proca at the age of great responsabilities and professional fulfilments

He didn't regret at all the fact that he became a Romanian urologist, transforming the Romanian urology to which he added new development opportunities; therefore the title of this article is perfectly true. Moreover, after many years, I can see that his first love – general surgery –seems to disappear as a stand-alone specialty, slowly but surely…

Urological surgery is a noble, beautiful, difficult and extremely consuming profession. As one of my colleagues, a surgeon from Constanta – Professor Vasile Sârbu – wrote: "The Romanian surgery amazed through two miracles. One of them happened at the end of the nineteenth century when, in two to three decades, starting from almost nothing, it came to the level of the brightest surgical schools in the world. The second miracle took place in the twentieth century and it refers to the ability to improvise, to do great surgery in all areas, under dramatic conditions, with instrumental, material and technology shortcomings. "[2] Perhaps the chance of Romanian surgeons was the fact that in the twentieth century the three Ministers of Health, who were surgeons, proved an exceptional organizational spirit in their mandates, (Acad. N. Hortolomei 1939-1940, Prof. Dr. Voinea Marinescu 1954 -1966 and Acad. Eugen Proca 1978-1985). I do not mention the name of Prof. Constantin I. Angelescu, a surgeon and a professor at Brâncovenesc Hospital and then at Filantropia Hospital because his ministerial mandate – excelent in substance! – took place at the Ministry of Public Works 1914-1916 and at the Public

Instruction.

Image 2. At the Hospital Prof. Dr. Th. Burghele (previously called Panduri) near his colleagues: primary urologists and secondary urologists

Having all the available means of information from the present, in which we all become when we want and especially when it is not the case, curious "researchers" in the biographies and in the personal identification numbers of everyone from everywhere, I do not want to present the commonly known things regarding the life and work of an overwhelming man, such as Acad. Eugen Proca, I only want to reveal some rather special information.

The professor was born on January 12, 1927, in Godeni, from the former county Muscel. He was a "trueborn inhabitant of Muscel", the only son of Gheorghe C. Proca and Maria Proca. The people from Muscel, who lived close to the mountains, are known to be fiery and combative spirits (see "partisans from Muscel"). Brilliant graduate of "Dinicu Golescu" High School in Câmpulung Muscel, he becomes a student of the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest in 1945 and at the same time, a student of the Medical-Military Institute. This educational ambivalence has almost always been a solution for many skilled children coming from families with modest material conditions.

Image 3. Standing beside Acad. L. Gherasim and Gl. Prof. Dr. Doc. Iuliu Şuteu

I will tell you something that I saw with my eyes and I heard with my ears a long time ago. A very long time ago...

I was a student of the Medical-Pharmaceutical Institute (currently University of Medicine and Pharmacy Carol Davila, Bucharest) and a Corporal student at the Medical-Military Institute. By the kindness of the Party Secretary of the Medical-Military Institute, as I was a student with honorable academic achievements, in the summer session 1974-1975, I was allowed to prepare the exams to come, late at

night, in a room which was more protected against the ubiquitous noise in the area of the North Railway Station. It was then that I discovered the catalogues of former graduates, in the room called "IMM Museum". There were large, thick-tatted books in a dusty cabinet. This is how I browsed, with curiosity, the catalogues of promotions of future military doctors, in which the high school photo was attached to each student. The promotions of 1940 and 1942 showed me the young and confident faces of the future generals and surgeon professors – Iuliu Suteu and Traian Oancea, once emblematic people for the Central Military Hospital. Looking at the pages which turned yellow over time, I was contradicted to find out at some point (it was midnight), the name Eugene Gh. Proca, Godeni, Muscel 1927 January, who entered the Medical-Military Institute in 1945 and below, across the whole sheet of paper, it was written with a red, thick pencil, I have such a vivid recollection of the word: "EXPELLED!".

Image 4. Minister Eugen Proca beside some of his collaborators

Years passed incredibly fast for all of us and while I was a secondary physician, studying my second specialty – urology, during a short break between two surgeries, I told the Professor what I had discovered 20 years before. We were living in difficult times, quite similar to the present ones, but I saw his unblinking blue-grey eyes shining and he even told me the story which was also mentioned by Dr. M. Mihailide in the footnotes of one of his books [3]. He said he had been expelled from the institute because he had lit the fire in a stove using the newspaper published by the party – “Scanteia” newspaper. He also mentioned the way in which, on a Sunday from April 1961, being on duty at the hospital, he took care with full empathy and unaltered human kindness of his former faculty colleague, who needed dialysis. He was uremic and only dialysis prolonged his life.

His faculty colleague was the one who had informed the State authorities about the fire lit in the stove!

Academician Eugen Proca was a Christian orthodox who believed in life after death and who, I am sure, is looking at us with empathy from up there. Academician Eugen Proca is not only the creator of the modern urology school from our country. He is and will always be an emblematic figure for Romanian surgery.

For as long as I was around him, in my perception he was a true "Imperator", intelligent to extreme, self-exigent, caustic with cheaters, tenacious, with a huge culture, always eager to self-improve and aware, at all times, that a surgeon's job does not have a program.

Anyone using a computer can easily find out about his scientific and clinical achievements: performing the first hemodialysis – April 7, 1959, World Health Day – at the hospital raised by the Professor or Academician Th. Burghele, performing the first kidney transplant in Romania in February 1980 (the operation for which he had been mentally and spiritually prepared for a very long time) and about his paideic model. What almost nobody knows is that when he was the second Minister of Health as term of office (7 years), he used to work 24/7. At six o'clock in the morning he was examining patients. Then he went in the surgery room. At 11.00 a.m. – 12.00 p.m., he went to his office from the Ministry where he tried to solve many problems of

that time: the birth issue (which is now of almost no interest to anyone), the introduction of medical promotion contests and many more, and in the evening, at 8.00 p.m. – 9.00 p.m., he returned at the hospital to see his patients...

Apparently, Ceausescu's wife was very proud of Minister Prof. Dr.Proca saying: "He is our only Minister who actually works."

The fact that the name of Academician Professor Dr. Eugeniu Proca, 15 years after passing into a better and fairer world, is not found in the memory of some of our institutions, is an additional proof that the Latin parable "Nemo propheta in patria sua " (Luke's Book, Chapter IV, verse 24) or in English translation: "No one is a prophet in his country" remains forever and, unfortunately, perfectly true!...

It seems that Oscar Wilde also enlightened our understanding with the following aphorism: "the truth is rarely pure and never simple…"

I dared to reveal something from my own truth about the work and life of this Man.

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