

Virgil Gheorghiu on Communism, Capitalism and National Socialism

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The focus of this publication is the study of Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu (1916–1992), an important and controversial writer in contemporary Romanian literature, best known for his novel *The 25th Hour*. His writings are characterised by the condemnation of the horrors inflicted by Nazism and communism and his critique of capitalism. The book by Iuliu-Marius Morariu presents Gheorghiu's ideas on these three ideologies which dominated the twentieth century and highlights his contribution to the literature on the subject. Based on Gheorghiu's analytical observations, Morariu attempts to identify similarities and differences between these political doctrines. The author poses three research questions: (i) what are Gheorghiu's reflections on these ideologies, (ii) how relevant are they nowadays and (iii) how did the context influence him? Morariu undertakes this task through an inclusive, qualitative approach; given the interdisciplinary nature of this study, analytical–deductive, narrative and inductive methods were also employed in developing the arguments.

The book has five chapters, preceded by an introduction and finishing with a general conclusion. In the introduction, the aims and objectives, the methodology and the achievements and limitations of the research are spelled out. It includes a review of the state of the research of the topic on which this study focuses. The first chapter outlines Gheorghiu's biographic profile and his works. It places him in his historical context and concludes with discussing the relevance of his work. The second and third chapters address his reflections on communism and his perception of National Socialism. Both have two main sections: prior and post 23 August 1944, the day which paved the way for Soviet occupation. The next chapter explores his reflections on capitalism. Similar to the previous chapters, it has sections prior to and post-1955, the later period covered until 1992. His first experience of capitalism was his time at an American

prison camp, following his arrest as a diplomat from an enemy country. The fifth chapter presents a discussion on the feasibility of Gheorghiu's political thought in today's context. The final conclusion crowns the book with a summary of the main findings of the study.

This publication by Morariu is actually not only about a prominent literary figure in Romania, but about an interwar diplomat, journalist and, later, a Romanian Orthodox priest. Despising communism, he chose exile instead of living under such a regime following its establishment in his homeland post-Second World War. The objectives of the book, stated in the introduction, are systematically addressed with numerous and regular references to sources which mainly support the claims made in the main text. This text draws heavily on primary sources, including 30 of the 40 books penned by Gheorghiu, his correspondence with Mircea Eliade and materials from the Romanian Securitate. The manner in which the sources are used is not only interesting but gives an insight into the command of the arguments that the author puts forth in his exposition of Gheorghiu's notions, experience and opinion about communism, Nazism and capitalism. This is not surprising, as this publication is essentially based on the doctoral thesis – entitled *Virgil Gheorghiu's political reflection on communism, national socialism and capitalism* – which the author successfully defended at the Faculty of Social Science, Angelicum Pontifical University, Rome. The thorough bibliography of the book is divided into three sections: primary sources, secondary sources and other articles.

Gheorghiu's biographical overview and the context which forms the backdrop to his writings are presented in a convincing manner with meticulous detail. Over a third of the footnotes of the book are in this chapter. These notes are used to support the points raised in the main text; they provide convincing evidence with respect to the same, and offer additional useful information for the keen scholar. Of the three chapters, one on each of the political ideologies, the one on communism is the longest and contains nearly 30% of the footnotes of the whole book; the shortest is on Nazism and is nearly half the length of the one on communism, accounting for nearly 10% of the footnotes. Communism, like the Bolshevism in which it is rooted and the National Socialism against which it stands in opposition, can be described as a secular religion. Both communist and National Socialist ideologies aimed at establishing a new world order. They are not about power but power itself. Gheorghiu noticed similarities in both regimes: both outlaw opposition, and the atrocities of the Soviet gulags are not dissimilar to those of the German concentration camps. In addressing communism, Gheorghiu makes a number of observations and disapproving remarks, yet he does not undervalue the position of Nicolae Ceaușescu, the successor of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej. Unlike his predecessor, who was faithful to Moscow, Ceaușescu was open to the West. Whilst Gheorghiu was against the ideology of communism, he was not committed to National Socialism, understanding

well that it is evil in essence. The chapter on capitalism discusses the crisis of contemporary society which promotes consumerism. Gheorghiu equates this ideology with the ideology of consumption. He is concerned with the synchronisation of ideologies and cultures through the language of consumption. Similar to communism and National Socialism, capitalism is a belief system which is misleading, it is all about escaping reality, it is an illusion. Grounded in reality, all three are deceptive systems which are leading civilisation to tribalism. Just as communism and National Socialism were not successful in establishing societies which met the standards of their respective ideologies, capitalism is not the alternative to redeem the world.

The main contributions of the book are three-fold: it offers an analytical study of Gheorghiu's philosophy, it seeks understanding of his crucial arguments and it highlights their relevance today. The work will prove useful to scholars interested in Gheorghiu's reading of political ideology through literature, those exploring trends and developments in contemporary Romanian literature, and also to the casual reader interested in its theme. The arguments put forward by Morariu are not only plausible but are effectively a theory worth investigating within the realms of political and social sciences and may prove to offer a foundation for international relations and diplomatic studies. Although it has nearly 250 footnotes, the style of writing is flowing; it is both readable and engaging for the general reader who may opt to read the main text without losing track of the points being discussed.

Iuliu-Marius Morariu, Virgil Gheorghiu on Communism, Capitalism and National Socialism, Berlin: Peter Lang, 2022, 260 pp.

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