

ELIE CARAFOLI AT THE ROMANIAN ACADEMY

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DOI: 10.13111/2066-8201.2009.1.2.3

Heading towards the Romanian Academy

Elie Carafoli was born in Greece, Veria, not far from Thessaloniki. His parents, of Romanian nationality, were at the forefront of those who fought for the defense of their ancestral language/ mother tongue and for social and political rights of the Romanians of the Balkan Peninsula. These Romanians are mentioned in chronicles written about the Fourth Crusade, in which are also shown the regions inhabited by them: United Walachia, Minor Walachia, Upper Walachia. The inhabitants of these lands were called Macedonian - Romanian. After Ali Pasa satrap of Ioannina (Epirus) ruthless persecution which, among other things, burned twice Moscopole town, followed the exodus of Macedonian-Romanian to neighboring countries: Italy, Serbia, Greece, Austria-Hungary, but especially to Romanian countries.

In these particularly difficult circumstances, Elie Carafoli attended primary school in the city of Veria, (where he was born), within the Romanian school, then entered the Romanian Commercial School in Thessaloniki, finishing the third grade in 1915, after which, considering that a further training at a high school would be more appropriate for him, in 1915 he enrolled in the fourth grade in Romanian high school in Bitola (Monastir), Serbia. But scarcely had school started when it closed because of the occupation of Serbia by the Central Powers armies, despite bitter resistance of Serb army.

Should I leave the academic Elie Carafoli to narrate adventures that followed: *"Here I was, the school broken off and separated from family: Romanian country's image suddenly appeared in my mind insistently. I still convinced two students of the same age than me and we started from Bitola to Bucharest, on those roads full of danger, because the deployment of troops and war materiel transport, with all deprivation deriving precisely from this state of war, without transportation, with very few supplies, but large hope and courage. We traveled sometimes walking, sometimes by trucks loaded with heavy guns, which had to be carried from one battle-front to another, enduring dangerous jolts on those miserable and sloppy roads.*

However we head steadfastly towards our target. Meeting with many difficulties, we were stopped by military organs, they were intrigued by "our hike" and we were often detained in the barracks until instructions were received to be left to continue our way to the country. I am still impressed by boldness and courage with which I drive towards goal which I dreamed; at that time nothing would stop me to reach this goal: Romania. Arriving at Giurgiu, the most difficult and dangerous stage had been defeated. I went on to Bucharest. I found the images opened up before my eyes enchanting, as magical. Everywhere I heard the Romanian language as a song full of charm".

Arrived in the country he continued his studies at the high-school “Gheorghe Lazar” of Bucharest and at the military high-school «Manastirea Dealu» after which he enrolled in the *Polytechnic School* of Bucharest which he graduated in 1923, taking his diploma of electromechanical engineer. He then went to France, in Paris, where, at the Sorbonne University took his license and has held a doctorate in physical sciences and mathematics. I will not refer to his work in Paris, or to his scientific work. Some other colleagues will do that with more competence than me. I will limit to his activity within the Romanian Academy, an institution which I have the honor to represent at this anniversary session.

Elie Carafoli at the Romanian Academy

On August 12, 1948, shortly after the reform of this great Romanian forum of culture, Professor Elie Carafoli was elected active member of the Romanian People's Academy – the former name of the Romanian Academy, having thus the possibility to begin an organized scientific research. As a result, a year later, in 1949, the *Institute of Applied Mechanics* was founded, an event from which we celebrate today 60 years. This institute was reorganized several times and we can say that the *National Institute for Aerospace Research “ELIE CARAFOLI” - INCAS* - Bucharest together with the *Institute of Solid Mechanics* of the Romanian Academy are nowadays the successors of that *Institute of Applied Mechanics*.

Being from the beginning director of the Institute of Applied Mechanics Academician Elie Carafoli managed to shape it in a modern form of a systematic research organization with a well defined orientation, both for basic research and for technical applications in industry. Special attention was given to the training of scientists, who through their works received recognition both in the country and abroad. Among these I'd like to mention several Academicians as Nicolae Tipei, Theodore Oroveanu, Virgil Nicolae Constantinescu and Professors as for instance Augustin Petre, Mihai M. Nita, Liviu Librescu and many others.

Among the achievements of Academician Elie Carafoli as a Director of the Institute of Applied Mechanics I'd mention the organization of seminars, symposia and national conferences with international participation, where many foreign scientists could find on the spot the activity and achievements of the institute.

Academician Elie Carafoli was President of Department of Technical Sciences of the Romanian Academy and, as such also a member of the Presidium of the Romanian Academy, during 1966-1983, one of the most difficult periods, when, following a hostile attitude from the State and Party Leadership, the Academy Romanian lost all its institutes.

Elie Carafoli Academy was responsible editor of two journals of the Academy, “Studies and researches of Applied Mechanics” and “Revue de Mécanique Appliquée”,

journals that have helped the increase of the scientific prestige of our country in the field of Applied Mechanics.

Now, please allow me, in my capacity as professor of theoretical mechanics at the department and then at the Faculty of Aerospace Construction for 40 years, to say just a few words about the activity of academician Elie Carafoli as a teacher.

Back to Romania from Paris, in 1928, he was called at the Polytechnic School of Bucharest, to inaugurate a course in aerodynamics and aircraft mechanics in Romania. Through a natural process of evolution and successive changes which the teacher had proposed in the meantime, a department was set up within the Faculty of Electro mechanics, including several disciplines such as aerodynamics, aircraft mechanics, aircraft construction, jet engines construction and others.

After 1944 was a time when, according to provisions of the armistice with the USSR in our country was no longer allowed to teach technical aviation courses in higher education. It is the merit of three people and I 'd like to mention them: Academician Elie Carafoli, Professor Dinculescu, Rector of the Polytechnic University of Bucharest for 14 years and Constantin Ionescu-Bujor, who was General manager responsible of the higher education in the Ministry of Education, for many years, which managed to keep secret in official documents, a group of 10 students at the Faculty of Electro mechanics, who were secretly taught aviation courses without an official existence of a "department of aviation."

In 1971 was founded the « Faculty of Aerospace Constructions » It was a homage rendered to Academician Elie Carafoli who reached that year the age of 70 , and 43 years of teaching, an occasion that was celebrated in the Academy Hall.

Allow me to welcome the presence of two distinguish ladies: Monique Carafoli, Academician Carafoli's wife and Eliane Carafoli, his daughter. I remember how beautifully academician Elie Carafoli spoke about his family on December 23, 1971 in the Academy Hall. I quote: "I will not end without paying a deserved homage to my wife, who assisted me in many moments of life and encouraged me with all the affection that I needed in my work."

To close, let me congratulate wholeheartedly everyone working at the National Institute for Aerospace Research "Elie Carafoli", for the results obtained until now and wish them great success in their future work. I want also to congratulate those who thought of paying homage to the great scientist who was academician Elie Carafoli. I remember the words of our great historian, Demetrius Onciul: "Honoring our ancestors, we prove that we deserve them".

Thank you for your attention!