

I.G. Duca: "Cooperation is a mean of harmonization in the fight between capital and labor"

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Abstract

This paper emphasizes the contribution of the famous Romanian politician I.G. Duca to the development and independence of the cooperative sector in our country. There are reviewed some of his published opinions, and also a small excerpt of a political debate against Nicolae Iorga and Ion Mihalache. The works of IG Duca outline the moral side of cooperatives, considered to be of great importance in the attempt to implement the cooperative system in the Romanian economy, characterized by specific conditions.

Key words: cooperative, village, peasants, government, politics

In the gallery of big scientific and political personalities of the pervious century, preoccupied with the problems of cooperatives, a special place was held by **I. G. Duca** (1879-1933), leader of the National Liberal Party, many times minister or prime minister (1933).

Known jurist, I. G. Duca was a promoter of a policy oriented towards French and British political and financial circles.

His ideas and conception on the cooperation are presented in a work published in 1902 in Paris with the title: "Les sociétés coopératives en Roumanie" ("Cooperative societies in Romania"): "Cooperation - I. G. Duca wrote – is a system which assumes and proposes to resolve the social problem, by slowly and progressively transforming the present economic situation, through the help of an associative form, whose members, by a set of attributes, contribute to the enterprise and simultaneously benefit from it".

Further, to the question if this cooperative system is possible, a system that is organized by law during the respective period, I. G. Duca answers in the same work: "We believe that it will not be able to live through it, because always, big ideas that kneaded the world and had a tremendous influence on its destine, at first appeared in a splendid light, only to end as some limited and

precise reforms. This was the case of liberty, this is the case of cooperation, and probably this will be the case of socialism. World is no such little as one idea could govern it, and the social problem is too complex itself for a solution to be able to fulfill all its needs”.

Such ideas, he promotes in his political activity, which justifies the expansion of the cooperation during the first part of the 20th century. That's what I. G. Duca wrote in a paper published in 1921 in the “Cooperația română” (“Romanian Cooperation”) journal: “Cooperation is a mean of harmonization in the fight between capital and labor, the happiest of all conciliation forms proposed until today. But in reality, only two formulas were found to bring together the interests of work and capital. These formulas are: cooperation and participation to benefits.

Cooperation has, over the participation to benefits the superiority to completely setting aside all the shortcomings of the capitalist regime.

In other words, cooperation is a solution more radical than participation to benefits. The difference between them is the fact that one's action, that is the participation to benefits, acts in breadth, while the other one's, the cooperation, in depth. By one, happier results are achieved faster, but they are incomplete. By the other, you conquer slowly, but you conquer completely. In the end, the cooperative movement has another use: cooperation is not only an economic formula, is a superior conception on life, a supreme attempt to establish altruistic report between humans. Participation to benefits, which is still practiced by governments preoccupied to destroy the germs of a dangerous social agitation, does not have this idealistic side. Between both formulas, there is the distance between a solution and a belief”.

The beginning of the century is clearly favorable to cooperative ideas and organization. After the existing examples and experiences, both in occidental world and in our country, it takes shape, more and more pregnant, a cooperative movement which is theoretically sound and included in legal provisions. The boost of this movement was objectively reflected in the mode to conceive cooperation in our country, especially on economic and political plan.

The illustrious politician I. G. Duca emphasizes the moral side of this type of economic and social organization, as being of primordial importance in applying such concept in the specific Romanian environment. This is the answer he gives to the question asked by Nicolae Iorga in the Parliament, on November 26th, if he is capitalist or cooperator: “I am cooperator, because I am convinced that, truly, the future belongs to cooperative movement. I believe that, in villages, this movement must be developed, because it is the only capable to comply with the credit needs of the villagers. But I am not a man

who only keeps his eyes on distant shores, but also must take into account current realities. Or, in current realities, there are capitalist societies that I do not have the power to disband. Then a question arises: these companies are to be left in foreign hands, or we, Romanians, should shape that movement? Anyone who knows me is aware that I have been offered places in tens of boards and tens of societies and I didn't agree to take seat in any board but two, and I shall take advantage of the first opportunity, all my friends also now, to leave my position in those banks".

Regarding the autonomy of the cooperation and the role of the state, of central house and of federals, I.G. Duca states: "for the Central House, the control right is only a right to advise and enrich. It wishes to be more a school than a supervisor... and therefore anytime a wrong is done to you, you should come to the Central House, and it would be happy to advise you and insist that proper justice prevails. So every enmity should disappear, any resentment of fear or shyness".

"You must also think, gentlemen, at the federation of popular banks. The ideal of the Central House is that, as soon the popular banks would be strengthen, they should support, federalize between themselves and satisfy, through own means, all their needs, so the help from the State should not be necessary".

The autonomy of the cooperative movement and the role of the state in its organization is visible from the report on December 21st, 1918, in which, as minister of agriculture, he presented to the king, to be signed, the Decree law that establishes the Central of Cooperatives and the allotment of villagers: "Our hope, we say it without delay, is that soon the Romanian cooperation will reach an organization so strong, a so high conscience of its redemption social meaning, as the State can renounce without shortcomings at all attributes that today it's still due to exercise. We express no doubt that through the new form taken by the Central of Cooperatives; it will contribute to the achievement of this goal".

During the first decades of the 20th century, a pivotal problem of cooperation was related to the autonomy of this movement in connection with the influence and tutelage of the state. I. G. Duca, referring to the control of the state and of the central institutions, spoke at a conference in 1910, in front of the control personnel and stated: "It is true that anyone who holds a position of power he is predisposed to make abuse of it and You committed yourselves to this sin, you went too deeply in the administration of cooperatives, I want to draw your attention on the fact that once you have gone down this slope, it would be hard to stop in time so that you would not disturb, through your intervention, the development of cooperative idea in its natural way".

Few years later, in 1918, being minister of agriculture and learning from an elected member of the Central of popular banks, that the idea of federals does not find all necessary support at the directorate of the Central, which foresees their replacement by State subsidiaries, he categorically states: “this cannot be done, it would mean to turn 10 years back”.

Another idea frequently present in the preoccupations of the economist I. G. Duca is linked to the educative role of cooperative activity and, especially, the elimination of politics from this activity. That’s what he said in 1905, at the Congress of cooperators in Bacău: “every time a villager comes to ask you for a loan, every time he asks for a prolongation, every time you meet him, advise him, enlighten him... the ideal is that peasants to reach redemption by themselves... to remove politics from popular banks... and also personal enmities and ambitions”.

Of these words, as out of his activity as director, it can be drawn his dominant idea, also shared by E. Costinescu, author of the Law of 1903, that, by passing from the organization of state credit to the cooperative credit, the first thing that is to be respected and developed is private initiative, so villagers would escape the derogatory situation of expecting the mercy of the State. Another dominant idea he instilled in the souls of cooperators was the neutrality of cooperation to politics, idea that was carefully nourished by his successor Fotin Enescu.

Separation between policy and cooperative organization is recorded as a force idea in all activity of I. G. Duca, even if he is a politician.

Political and scientific personalities of the 3rd decade in the previous century: Nicolae Iorga, I. G. Duca, Ion Mihalache face each other directly regarding the issues of politics in cooperation, on the occasion of the discussion on the Chamber on the message of the king. That’s what the stenographic notes include, related to the opinions expressed by the three politicians, in the question of politics in cooperation:

I. G. Duca: “You have the right to go to popular banks and conquer them; to go to the federals and conquer them; we have no right on the popular banks, or tell our political friends in counties: “see to the popular banks”, because then we commit a crime that it should be denounced at the tribune of the Parliament, as Mr. Mihalache did today.

N. Iorga: You’d do better to leave alone the banks, all of you.

I. G. Duca: You are right. Me also, while I was director at the popular banks and while being member in the council – and here are people who were there with me and can inquiry on my words – I have always told the cooperators: do not involve the popular banks’ movement into politics, because you will compromise it. And we didn’t start to make politics in the popular

banks, but we always added that if politics will be made by the other parties, then let it be known that we will make politics as well.

I. Mihalache is the first who become, as minister of domains, to make politics in popular banks. On this ground, he will find us on his path.

N. Iorga: God forbid that I would come to power in the government and you make politics in cooperation.

I. Mihalache: Mr. Duca, with you I think I can clearly reason.

You have said that I made politics, going to the congress, and that I gave the word of command. Could you state more precisely what word of command did gave?

I. G. Duca: I don't remember, after four years, all the details. But, if you are interested, I shall remember and also bring to you the photo.

I. Mihalache: Mr. minister, let us leave to others the technicalities and workarounds. I do not accuse you for fighting – I shall explain myself, and Mr. Iorga will see that he is in serious error when he believes that a right and fixed line of demarcation can be established between the economic struggle and political struggle, since both of them aim at the emancipation of peasants' class (prolonged applauses on peasants' benches), Mr. Iorga be patient, I shall develop.

N. Iorga: I do not want to cause you any harm, by revealing an entire dossier of banks, confederated to draw out some politicians, who had no other merits, but had the banks in their own hands and so they were able to dominate the elections through these banks.

Subsequently, neither of you should make politics in the banks, do not mock the peasantry that you are pretending to serve.

I. G. Duca: You are absolutely right, but I hold on once more to be known by the National Peasant's party, if the movement of cooperatives in villages is to be considered as its own patrimony, if it will desire to channel this movement in its own favor, then not only it will find us on its path, but certainly they will find you, Mr. Iorga'

To give a clearer shape to I. G. Duca's position in this matter, we quote the article published in, in the journal "Cooperația română" (Romanian Cooperation): "let us hope that they who are called today to give the cooperative movement from rounded Romania its judicial form, they will know to inspire themselves in this wide social, humanitarian and idealistic conception of the cooperation, and will thus prepare for tomorrow, the guidance of the Romanian society, to an organization formula, more righteous and more harmonic".

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