Professor Ioan Pop de Popa (1927-2021)

On April 30, 2021, a great personality of Romanian surgery passed away, unanimously considered the creator of modern cardiovascular surgery in our country. After him remains an impressive work and will certainly remain the genesis of the specialty of Cardiovascular Surgery, which he mastered. A remarkable fact remains the establishment of the Romanian Society of Cardiovascular Surgery (since 2002 with its own publication "Romanian Journal of Cardiovascular Surgery"), the Center for Cardiovascular Diseases Bucharest (Fundeni) and the six heart surgery centers in university medical centers, including one in Bucharest military medicine. This whole network is and will be served by the 160 Romanian specialists who were trained in his clinic, first of all professors Vasile Căndea, Ion Socoteanu, Mircea Bârsan, Grigore Tiniță, Mircea Pătrut, but also many other highly specialized primary care physicians who work in the country or abroad. He also specialized 11 surgeons from abroad, others showed him distinct respect where he practiced this difficult specialty in Europe or on other continents. He was born on October 6, 1927 in Oradea, the particle "de" in his name being used by some families in Transylvania to indicate the origin of the family, its ancestry.

His father, a teacher, was also called Ioan Pop de Popa, and his mother's name was Lucretia, they had four children, all with a very good education. Ioan Pop de Popa, the son, attended primary school in Oradea, then started high school also in Oradea at "Emanoil Gojdu" and graduated from "Samuil Vulcan" in Beiuș where the family had moved. In 1944, as a student, he volunteered in the Apuseni Mountains for liberation. He studied brilliantly at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj (1946-1952), which he graduated with "Magna cum laudae". As a student and then intern, he was a trainer in Anatomy, between 1949-1952, then he promoted assistant to Surgery in the First Clinic of the intransigent professor Aurel Nana, raised on the ascending golden vein of Pop Alexandru, Iacobovici, Toma Ionescu. From a young age he had an innovative spirit, being passionate about novelties, inventions, progress. He created a student society with passionate young people, among whom was the student Radu Deac who was a third-year student of the medicine faculty (He will become one of the greatest personalities of this specialty, with national and international recognition and will lead the cardiovascular surgical school in the clinic founded by Pop de Popa in Tg. Mures). In this first Cluj period of

his life as a surgeon, Pop de Popa invented, between 1953-1954, the first Romanian artificial heart and the first artificial lung, manufactured in The Cugir Armament Factory (CP4, patent 453/ 1954), which was among the first 4 artificial hearts in the world. The product was tested in Bucharest, in front of a commission, being denied serial production, for the risk of blood clotting on connection tubes which could logically be improved. It was the first injustice done to him in a troubled life, the last being the removal from the management of the Cardiac Surgery Center at Fundeni Hospital, which he had created years before. He used this pump in Cluj at the first experimental operations on the heart stopped in our country, performing the first heart transplants, the subject of his doctoral thesis, the first case being communicated by the young Radu Deac from his team. What these "pioneers" were doing was considered at the time as something utopian, science fiction. The research of these enthusiastic "utopians" has kept us references about "Hemodilution in Extracorporeal Circulation", new terms for the Romanian medical literature. being invited to work for Professor Andrew Kay of the Royal University of Sheffield-England. In 1956 he married Doina Pop de Popa, future professor of Ophthalmology. In 1962 was transferred to Tg. Mures where there had been a Faculty of Medicine since 1948, with teaching in Hungarian (which enters a new era, that of the Romanianization of university education in this city and in our country, the disappearance of the Mures Autonomous Hungarian Region). At IMF (Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy) Tg. Mures he was the forefront of this change in which other teachers took part (Arseneascu, Bancu, Popovici, Dudea, etc., all brilliant teachers and great patriots). His Majesty was selected for his courage, youth and proven patriotism, but also because he also spoke Hungarian fluently, but quite quickly he set up and led a new department in 1965, "Clinic of Surgery 2 and Cardiovascular Surgery." It was the first clinic of this kind in Romania. It should be mentioned that after

1953, when N. Hortolomei performed the first scheduled cardiac surgery in Romania, the first steps in this area were taken in Bucharest. Pop de Popa came to specialize at the clinic of Voinea Marinescu, a great forerunner of the field, who had moved Hortolomei's clinic to Fundeni Hospital, in the service of I.V. Burakovsky, but especially in the USA, in Houston between 1970-1971 at Saint Luks Hospital, then in Portland, Oregon and Mayo-Rochester. He returned in glory to Tg. Mures, with his doctoral degree from Cluj, (Experimental research with a personal heart transplant procedure-Clinical reflections) became an associate professor, then professor and vice-rector of the IMF, working efficiently in a clinic of great standing and performance. In 1974, at the unexpected death of Professor Voinea Marinescu, he was transferred without his will or request, to Bucharest, to the management of the Fundeni Clinic and to the position of adviser to the country's president, for health, which no one could refuse, the era of totalitarianism. The position held in Fundeni was desired by other specialists, primary care physicians who worked there, which created a problem, somewhat logical, for the rest of his life. In fact, in the clinic in Fundeni worked Professor Dan Setlacec, a pioneer of this specialty, passed to general surgery for almost a decade and a half by Voinea Marinescu, this gesture is not the work of Pop de Popa as insinuated by the malevolent. He felt the most uncomfortable moments after he was removed from the position of presidential adviser and especially after the "revolution" of 1989 when he even endangered his life, according to his own accounts. At Fundeni Hospital, he used the political position to advance medicine and created the Specialty of Cardiovascular Surgery, then the Center for Cardiovascular Diseases which brought next to surgery, the cardiology clinic and cardiac catheterization laboratory, new and modern operating rooms, diagnostic and research bases. The very high mortality he found there fell sharply, from almost 60% through the measures taken. Valuable doctors around him were promoted university

professors (I. Pavelescu in Timisoara, Dan Fagarasanu in Cluj, V. Cîndea at the Heart Disease Center of the Military Hospital). Among the young people later became professors in these centers doctors Ion Socoteanu, Mircea Bârsan and in Iasi Grigore Tinică and in Constanta Mircea Pătruț. He effectively created and managed a Growing Center where Romanian heart valves, linear and bifurcated collagenated artificial arteries, the first biological boar pig valve, the first Romanian pacemaker (mounted on July 26, 1974 with ASCAR). He created the Pop de Popa Foundation for the Protection of Patients with Cardiovascular Diseases (FOBAC) in 1991. No one challenged his brilliant mind, the orderly surgical talent, after the Transylvanian school, the fundamental role in creating the modern surgery network cardiac in our country, the quality of authentic innovator and researcher materialized in over 600 scientific papers, and in the 12 monographs, his great heart and love for surgery, for the suffering man. Less well known is his research in genetics and immunology, his participation in the Geneva Heart Transplant Legislation Conference, but his friendship with all the great personalities of the surgical world in his specialty is unanimously recognized, including Christian Barnard who visited him at Tg. Mures in 1971. Authentic doctors, and without erosion of partisan souls, appreciated him for the monographs "Transplantation of organs and tissues" (1967), "Heart - Pathology and surgical treatment", Cardiovascular surgical pathology (Vol V to the National Treaty-1991), "Cardiovascular Physiopathology" (1989), "Pathology of the inferior cavity system", etc. He was honored with numerous titles and academic positions, including the one of Member of the Romanian Academy of Medical Sciences, of

the Paris Academy of Surgery, of the New York Academy of Sciences, Doctor Honoris Causa of several universities, including Ovidius from Constanța, Honorary Citizen of Oradea, Member of the Writers' Union of Romania, etc. He was a candidate for the Presidency of Romania from the Romanian Humanist Party. He received the award "Gh Marinescu" of the Romanian Academy, the Order "Star of Romania in the rank of Knight" (2004), "Commemorative Cross of the Second World War", "The emblem of honor of the Romanian Army", and others. He was a figure who shone in Romanian medicine, he was loved but he was not once crucified because, in a huge labor, he found himself in collision with countless people and characters which he described in his memorial volumes: "The Illusion of Power", "Sweet and bitter", "Back in time", "Memories at the age of the syntheses of life", which is also the source of these confessions. But over the decades history will preserve what he created, and I am convinced that many will receive his name, such as the artificial arteries and heart valves that already bear his illustrious name. I lost a great surgeon, teacher, researcher and innovator, creator of spiritual goods. But he lives and will live through what he gave to medicine and will remain a milestone of national surgery. The prayer to our Father "And forgive us our trespassers," and he in heaven will surely say, "As we forgive our trespassers." May God rest him and bring him the peace he did not have in earthly life. God protect the Romanians in their white robes, on earth and in heaven.

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