MemoScapes

Romanian Journal of Memory and Identity Studies

Communism:
Between History and Memory

Published by CSMI

www.studii-memoriale.ro

Editor's Introduction

The various acts of remembering, the forms and contents of identities are today under constant and global scrutiny. The interest in memorial and identity mechanisms has been increasing since the beginning of the 20th century, driven by philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists. (Historians joined them much later.) Actually, an interest for memory can be found in the Western societies since Late Antiquity, if one takes into account the writings of Saint Augustine, among others.

However, it was only in the 1970s that we entered what some have called the 'age of testimony' or the 'age of witnesses' ('l'ère du témoin', in the terminology used by Anette Wieviorka[1]), where appealing to memory has become the preferred method of accessing a recent, often traumatic past. The memory of witnesses thus plays an important part not only in the quest for individual and social justice, in valuing the victims of the various atrocities of the 20th century, but also a way for Western societies to engage with their recent past.

The appeal to memory as a means of overcoming cultural and individual trauma, to re-establish social justice and to fill historiographic gaps has been used also in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism. For the countries of this region, memory has taken on the role of an alternative discourse to the official Communist narrative, which was too highly ideologized, schematic, rigid, and eventually false and falsified.

Memory is an individual faculty, and societies can be said to remember only "insofar as their institutions and rituals organize, shape, even inspire their constituents' memories"[2]. This inspiration finds its sources in the present since we always interpret the past through the lens of the present. This means that each memory culture focuses on some aspects of the past according to the 'memorial regimes'[3], which struggle to accommodate sometimes conflicting remembrances in order to create public consensus about the past.

A selected collective memory and its public representations and expressions is called by Jan Assmann the 'cultural memory'. "Cultural memory is a form of collective memory (as defined by Maurice Halbwachs[4]), in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, a cultural identity"[5]. Cultural memory is "a kind of institution based on fixed points in the past"[6]. This past is not preserved as such but is cast in symbolic figures animated by memories[7]. "Cultural memories are maintained across generations by societal practices and institutions such as texts, rites, monuments, commemorations, symbols"[8].

The cultural memory unifies a group "through time and over space by

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[1] Wieviorka (1998).

[2] Young (1993), xi.

[3] By 'memorial regime' I understand a matrix of perceptions and representations of the past which defines at a certain time the structures of public memory. Michel (2010), 12-17.

[4] Maurice Halbwachs argued that individual memory depends on socialization and communication, that it is always a reconstruction of the past according to the needs of the present or influenced by the present in a dialogical interaction with others. The collective memory has a performative dimension, and it is shaped by the memorial social frameworks (*les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*). Halbwachs (1994).

[5] Assmann (2010) a, 110.

[6] *Ibidem*, 113.

[7] Assmann (2010) b, 47.

[8] Manier, Hirst (2010), 253-254.

providing a narrative frame"[9]. This narrative frame can travel in space and time and gives individuals, groups, or communities the opportunity to bond with their past and to envisage their future. The cultural memory informs the normative memorial framework and the memorial representations of public actors, who in turn are themselves fashioned by these memorial representations and norms[10].

Historical memory (Pierre Nora's 'les lieux de mémoire' highly exemplifies it) represents one of the components of cultural memory, alongside the official public memory, rituals and other cultural artefacts. Historians are those who give shape and meaning to this memory, but its contours depend on the social frameworks of memory and, sometimes, on immediate reality.

Historians have been trying since the dawn of historiography as an academic discipline to distance themselves from memory, through the set purpose (discovering the truth) and the means they took into consideration (objectivity through methodology), in their description and analysis of the past.

Marc Bloch used to say to his son: "L'histoire: c'est comprendre". It was hoped and it was expected that history (writing about the past) should be outside events and beyond these, which would lead to a critical and objective appraisal of the topic under scrutiny[11]. History aspires to a justification whose substance lies at the core of its discourse as scientific discipline[12].

The works of Paul Ricoeur[13] or Hayden White[14], as well as those of other scholars following in their footsteps have shown that history and memory depend on the gaze of the present, its substance laying in the narration and not in finding the ultimate truth. Both history and memory are under the influence of the 'memorial regimes', their approach towards the past being instrumentalised by the present context, ideological frameworks, everyday experiences, and so on.

The writing of history as well as memory play and important role in creating, developing, and supporting the national/social/cultural identities. Identity content and shapes are not fixed but flexible, changing over time and in space. Identity is always (for individual but also for communities) multiple and versatile depending on the context, social patterns, memorial frameworks, but also on the social, political, cultural and economic evolutions of various societies.

In the age of globalisation, identities become fragile, reaching a complexity which is much harder to pinpoint and define. Cultural as well as communicational memory are, in turn, subjected to a process of deep fragmentation and constant reconfiguration. Global technologies, internet, new media, contribute fully to this process which destabilise individuals and societies alike and shape new memorial cultures. These memorial cultures are transversal, frail and unstable, sometimes acquiring a global dimension. Memories are constantly created, but no longer retained, as new memories always try to take their place. Fast memory is the new form of memory.

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[9] Eyerman (2004), 161.

[10] This type of memory was called by Johann Michel 'official public memory' (mémoire officielle). Cf. Michel (2010), 15-17.

[11] Bédarida (1993), 7.

[12] Jewsiewicki (2004).

[13] Ricoeur (1985); Ricœur (2000).

[14] White (1975).

The research of the memorial and identity bric-à-brac proves to be of a tremendous utility. It helps us underline the various forms and contents of the (new) memorial cultures, the (new) acts of remembering as well as the (new) contents, shapes and interactions of the multiple identities which defines individuals and communities. Furthermore, understanding the memorial and identity mechanisms can help us to find answers to essential questions for the human condition such as: who we are, from where we came and (maybe) where we go.

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MemoScapes. Romanian Journal of Memory and Identity Studies aims to explore the construction of memorial cultures and the various forms of identity (individual, group, social, cultural, etc.) that may be discerned in any society. It focuses primarily on European communities, but also looks towards other continents, when comparative approaches seem promising. The Journal explores a range of topics, such as the connections between communicative and cultural memory; myths (as elements of cultural memory); the creation of social/cultural/national/local identities; the process of patrimonialization and museification from a longue durée perspective. *MemoScapes* aims to give a new impetus to the study of the modern and post-modern social imaginary of Europe, with special emphasis on the Central and Eastern part of the continent.

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The first issue of our journal, *Communism between History and Memory*, deals with remembering and analysing communism in Central and Eastern Europe. The two aspects are difficult to investigate and consensus among researchers is hard to come by. On many levels, communism is still a 'foreign country', which needs to be (re)discovered.

Understanding post-communist societies requires an understanding of the way they deal with their recent past. Communist regimes inflicted traumas not only on the individuals who were directly targeted by persecution and repression. Rather, they traumatised the whole society, as fear, dissimulation, manipulation, and repression were constant features of the communist system[15].

Twenty-seven years after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, the memory and historical record of the regime remain controversial. On the one hand, the history of communism is closely associated with the denunciation of the crimes perpetrated by the regime. On the other hand, particularly among the political left, the so-called 'modernity' of communism is brought to the fore.

The memory of the regime is even more divided than the historiographical paradigms on communism. Denunciation, nostalgia, ironic criticism, post-nostalgia are competing in the public space in order to gain over the audience. As the activists who denounced vehemently the crimes of communism in the 1990s are slowly leaving the stage, a second generation of nostalgic admirers of communism has made its appearance into the public space. Young people tend to view the communist period rather favourably while an ironic memory of communism became increasingly visible.

Immediately after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the 'rediscovered memory'[16] of Central and Eastern Europe became the subject of numerous articles and books

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[15] Dobre (2016), 300.
[16] Brossat, Combe, Potel, Szurek (1990).

written by Western scholars[17]. They analysed collective/individual/national memory of communism from different angles: nostalgia vs. amnesia[18], 'genres of representation'[19], public monuments of the communist era[20], and public policies on memorialising communism[21]. A few scholars have focused on the de-communization process and its legal and political ramifications[22].

In Central and Eastern Europe, the historiography of communism was driven out by a 'militant urgency'[23]. The desire to render justice to victims has been joined by the need to present an alternative discourse about communism[24]. It is not surprising that the two main topics for research have been political persecution and daily life, both based on the accounts of direct witnesses. These two topics are still relevant today (as one may infer from this first issue of *MemoScapes*). Recently, new topics have drawn the attention of the (mostly young) researchers of communism: international relations, economic aspects, the evolution of the nomenklatura, political police, communist public policies, communism as lieu de mémoire, memorial regimes and so on[25].

This first issue of *MemoScapes* illustrates few of the above mentioned trends in remembering and studying communism, 27 years after the fall of this regime. It assesses, on the one hand, the institution of an official memory of communism as an 'illegitimate and criminal regime', and, on the other hand, the different types of nostalgia which characterize the acts of remembering communism performed by the common people. The volume also puts into the spotlight the academic debates on communism in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the key issue of cultural trauma as expressed in the public and individual narratives on communism.

Claudia-Florentina Dobre

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[17]I will mention here only the most influential books on the topic.

[18]Troebst, Brunnbauer (2006); Todorova, Gille(2010).

[19]Todorova (2010).

[20]Combe, Dufrêne, Robin (2009) ; Johnson (2011), 269-288; Robin (1997), 337-355.

[21]Maurel, Mayer (2008); Todorova, Dimou, Troebst (2014).

[22]Welsh (1996), 413-428; Calhoun (2004); Stan (2008); Stan (2014); Grosescu, Fijalkowski (2015).

[23] Laignel-Lavastine (1993), 45.

[24] Pippidi (1996), 261.

[25] On the Romanian historiography of these topics see more in Dobre (2016), 9-18. On communist and recent past memory in

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Central and Eastern Europe, see Pakier, Wawrzyniak (2015).

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Liliana Deyanova

Contemporary Historiographic Debates on 'Communism' and the Secrets of Archives

Abstract

This article aims at challenging the 'totalitarian paradigm' applied to Bulgarian field of social sciences through the study of the Political Police Archive as well as the activity of the academic and university institutes and centres while investigating the memoirs of researchers, activists, political police's agents. The goal of this study is to understand something quite specific – whether one can speak of a real, and not theatrical, transformation in the social sciences during communism in Bulgaria.

Keywords: 'Totalitarian Paradigm', Social Sciences, Secret Police' Archives, Communist Ideology

Do indeed the archives opened after 1989 'categorically' disprove the claims of 'revisionists who have criticized the totalitarian paradigm', as Stéphane Courtois says in a broad stroke so typical of him (commenting on the endless fights between the so-called 'two paradigms' in the historiography of communism)? For they supposedly showed how the Communist Party pulled the puppet strings 'from top to bottom' by virtue of its principle of 'democratic centralism', and they supposedly proved these 'facts'[1].

I will prefer other authors who have found a different 'proof' in these same 'archives of repression'. I examine the logics of the current historiographic debates on 'communism' through the prism of a very particular research topic – the social sciences in the archives of political police.

This text is part of a larger study on the changes in the field of Bulgarian social sciences after the 1960s and the years of the 'thaw'. I compare the public

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[1] Stéphane Courtois in Znepolzki (2010), 30-41. By the manner in which Courtois himself, in the second volume of *The Black Book of Communism*, edits and even recombines the texts of the Bulgarian authors in that volume – the text of prof. L. Ognyanov with texts of P. Tsvetkov and D. Sharlanov – blending into a supposedly jointly written article, entitled 'Under the yoke of communism', we can clearly see how 'proving' are those 'facts that

speak for themselves'. Unfortunately, this is how that article will be remembered and quoted. And so what if I remember that it was not Lyubomir Ognyanov who put that title and that he didn't know that the article would be triply authored! To quote Orwell, I remember that the Party didn't invent airplanes but how am I to be sure that the others will remember as much? See more on the new historiographic debates in Todorova, Dimou, Troebst (2014).

narratives of scientists (the anti-Stalinists, the 'young generation', the reformers) with the narratives in the archives of State Security (Durjavna Sigurnost, hereafter SS (primarily the Sixth Directorate of State Security and the Cultural-Historical Intelligence)[2].

The State Security archives shed light on diverse forms of non-autonomy of the scientific field and its relations with different situations in 'the field of power' (understood as in Bourdieu, not identical to the political field[3]). But the hypothesis here is that such conclusions are not anything new or unknown before the opening of these archives.

Like other researchers (E. François, S. Combe, J. Rowell) I find even some 'disappointments by the archives', they come to be just another more concentrated use of the 'wooden language' that is so well known and studied ideologically. There are no 'hidden treasures' in the State Security archives, no *fundamentally* new documents on the heteronomy of the transforming field of social sciences, such as sociology and history, in the late '70s. To show that, I analyse in parallel archives of specialized scientific institutes (e.g. the Institute for Contemporary Social Theories which, almost as early as at its creation in

the late 1960s, was doubly affiliated, to the Academy of Sciences and to the Central Committee of the Communist Party). This comparison allows us to see similar discursive logics, similar strategies, shared repertoires of action (and not seldom similar documents written by the same authors) against, for example, the ideological diversion of the Western scientific 'centrals' on which 'express information' was gathered in order to 'signal the more important phenomena and trends in the enemy camp'.

I understand scientific autonomy and critique in the tradition of the paradigm of Pierre Bourdieu. In his, influenced by Weber, 'empirical science on reality' there is no answer in a general form, there is only analysis of the 'happening-this-way-and-not-that-way' of 'battles' and 'stakes' of a historically concrete scientific field, of its conjunctures, its phases of institutionalization, 'spaces of the possible', 'making hopes and chances fit together', '*doxa*', '*illusio*'... Following Bourdieu and his renouncement to 'the abstract opposition between immanent (internal) and external analysis of science', I think that autonomy is a collective and historically conquered achievement, that it is guaranteed by the mechanisms of the scientific field and by the state of the 'field of power'. But fields are 'relatively autonomous microcosms' and scientific autonomy is relational (since the value of the capitals of every field depends on the value of the other capitals and their 'exchange rate' – e.g. currently the exchange rate is especially high of 'social capital', of access to knowledge networks etc.).

The 'field of power', however, is not 'the political field', it is a space of relations between agents and institutions whose common trait is that they possess specific capital that is necessary for taking

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[2]Used archive databases: The Central State Archive (TsDA) – hereafter CSA – Folder (hereafter F). 311B, inventory (hereafter op.) 1, op. 2; CSA, F. 1B; SGODA (State and Mayoral Archives of Sofia), file (hereafter f). 1790, op. 10.; Archive of KRDOPBGDSRSBNA (Archive of Ministry of Interior), f. 01; f. 22 (op. 1, 5, 28, 30, 33, 35, 36, 48, 75, 80, 82, 114, 122, 153, 156, 168, 179-183); f. 20, f. 03, f. 15, f. 23; f. 24, f. 38, f. 44, f. 66. A detailed description of used databases and bibliography in my article published in *Sociological Problems Review*, no. 3-4 (2014), a special issue *Contradictions of the Heritage*, edited by Darin Tenev and Todor Hristov.

[3]Bourdieu (2012).

a dominating position in the respective field and controlling so-called meta-capitals and the exchange rate of diverse capitals. To say it like Foucault would, we are indeed simultaneously subjugating and subjugated.

This theme is of interest to me because I am asking myself how autonomous our scientific 'good practices' are at the present time, whether the new type of institutions of expert knowledge are autonomous (and how to regard their dependence from the neo-liberal global programs of 'promoting democracy' without taking recourse to conspiracy theories of total domination). That is why I am working on this related problem – the autonomy and integration of social sciences in the ideological apparatuses of pre-socialist and socialist state, but also on the collective memory of scientific freedoms and dependences.

One of the main hypotheses underlying this analysis, based on my previous studies[4], is that the specific institutionalization of Bulgarian cultural and scientific institutes, the lack of 'normal' scientific public space and of clear professional differentiations and rules facilitated the functioning of the State Security. With its characteristic plasticity, perfected throughout the decades, it set in motion, ingeniously or just routinely, different combinations of persons, groups and institutions, or was it rather set in motion by them, in the name of 'the Party, the state and the people'? The cascades of decrees and circulars at various hierarchical levels, together with the incessant 'letters' and word-of-mouth

orders on exceptions from these same orders, are mechanisms presupposing constant specific interactions and renegotiations, network games, which stabilize insecurities but also the chances of obedience (and this specific maintenance of domination – for it is maintained in interaction – as Jay Rowell says, 'is not taken into account by the theories that assume that structures of domination are stably fixed and obedience *in fine* rests on fear'). In a word, my analysis is a critique of the so-called 'totalitarian paradigm' and its strange updates in the field of contemporary social sciences in Bulgaria[5].

The changes in the social sciences of late socialism are not just a 'mask of power' and the ideology of reformers is not a 'false consciousness'. In this paradigm, I start with the hypothesis of periodically occurring *shortages of knowledge* in that society and the necessity of 'backup structures', i.e. networks that compensate for these shortages (with the *inversions of 'public' and 'non-public'* in the network gift exchanges and 'double games', the symbioses with the party-state apparatus)[6].

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[4] My own analysis of tens of interviews of historians, sociologists and other researchers of communism done within an international research under the guidance of Maria Todorova and Stefan Troebst and published in Todorova, Dimou, Troebst (2014).

[5] Here I quote Jay Rowell and I have in mind his critiques against the reifying readings of archives, against those who read literally and who take abstraction from the fine classifying systems in that society, or those who 'do not distinguish between decision and fulfilment' Rowell (2006), Rowell (2007). Combe (2009) Combe (1999).

[6] See more in Deyanova (2009); See also the special issue of *Sociological Problems on socialism*, with studies of the Institute for Critical Social Studies, 2011. A fine criticism of 'reifying readings' of the Bulgarian 'communist archives of power' is done by Todor Hristov. A critical analysis in Marinov (2006).

Ideology as Science against Ideology as Diversion

The State Security, according to a decree of 1978, 'performs its activities under the guidance of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), respectively of the Politbureau and the First Secretary. The Sixth Directorate of the SS, that is, the political police, was created by a decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the BCP by 18 November 1967. Its purpose was the 'struggle against ideological diversion, against counter-revolutionary, nationalist and other anti-state manifestations in the country'[7]. Intelligentsia, including 'scientific intelligentsia', was the target of the first department of the Directorate and later of the specially created second department that dealt with young people and university teachers. The eighth department was the one of information and analysis. The Cultural-Historical Intelligence was created in 1973.

In the archives, 'the actions and deeds contained in the received information' and the 'consummated criminal manifestations' were classified in accordance to their respective 'colouring': 'anti-state agitation and propaganda, 'deviations from class and party positions', 'suspicious links with citizens of capitalist countries, including traitors of the Fatherland', 'persons with treasonous intentions'. According to a 'memo on the operative situation in the objects serviced in the sphere of department 2', in 1975 among university teachers there are still 'sons and daughters of former industrialists, high officials and open

enemies of the people's power'[8]. 'Disloyal actions' were described: 'before the students, a professor ignored the tenets of Marxist-Leninist philosophy and praised the theories of Kant and Hegel'[9]. A member of the privileged Union of Active Fighters against Fascism and Capitalism expressed his dissatisfaction with the new line of the BCP and criticized the invasion of our troops into Czechoslovakia. Agent Hristofor reports that assoc. prof. X 'gave incorrect evaluations on the character of the Uprising of 9 September 1944' and called G. Dimitrov 'an undisciplined nationalist'[10].

I will illustrate in greater detail the renewed work on the struggle against ideological diversion because that was one of the motives for the creation of the Sixth Directorate of the SS. In 1970, the SS issued, for internal use, the pamphlet 'Western scientific and cultural institutes – tools of ideological diversion'. The thesis is that, under the cover of scientific and cultural activities, these institutes engaged in anti-communist propaganda and aimed at an 'erosion of socialism'[11]. These were of three kinds: institutes that study socialist countries in all of their aspects; bodies that 'work upon and recruit as

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[7] See the book of Metodiev (2008), 181. For the Bulgarian SS, see also Ragaru (2010), 203-229.

[8] CSA, h. 22, i. 1, a.u. 36; Here and elsewhere I quote the archives of the political police (i.e. the former archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs which has now been handed on to the so-called Commission on Files) in the format that is standard for Bulgaria, listing h. for 'holding', i. for 'inventory', a. u. for 'archive unit' and s. for 'sheet'. According to the same memo, among university teachers there were 3467 members of the Bulgarian Communist Party, 70 members of the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union, 78 members of Dimitrov's Communist Youth Union, and 3556 were unaffiliated.

[9] *Ibid.*, s. 2; s. 44-45.

[10] *Ibid.*, h. 22, i. 1, a.u. 179, s. 258.

[11] *Ibid.*, h. 44, i. 4, a.u. 4, s. 3.

agents scientific workers, students and specialists' through scholarships (under observation are the Humboldt Foundation, the DAAD, the Association for Scientific Internships in France, etc.); institutes that establish contact and directly work upon and possibly recruit Bulgarian scientists as their agents. Such an erosion was performed e.g. by the Munich Association for the Study of South-Eastern Europe (established in 1952 and later also created an institute[12]). This was under observation as an institute with subversive purposes which stands in the shadow and 'in which, probably, is also the best working, in terms of timing and place, diversionary means against our country'[13].

What is common among these, however, is that according to the SS archives concerning the struggles of 'scientific ideology' there seem to be no significant traces of that *specific turn in the field of the social sciences that has been described in the memoirs of scientists* and their later published memories and analyses. In the operative and mental map of the SS, the specific differences are not sufficiently visible either between the diverse scientific places (institutes and groups). Differences, however, are visible in the form of monitoring and control over these scientific bodies. For some, more information is collected, for others there is respect and even trust. However, I have studied only a few cases in order to be able to compare with my main object of study, the Faculty of Philosophy and History of the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia[14]. Here gradually the

clash becomes evident between Stalinists and anti-Stalinists, the 'old' and the 'young' (also called 'ideological spies'). In the eyes of the Sixth Directorate of the SS, the questions of détente and the increased pressure for respecting rights, including the freedom of speech and of information, were a form of 'ideological diversion'. With such a conception, they monitored and controlled the 'operative situation' in the scientific life in Bulgaria and abroad: at the World Congress of Philosophy in Düsseldorf, 'attempts were made of imposing the discourse of human rights, of dissidents, of attacking the Marxist-Leninist philosophy'[15]; some Bulgarian scientists were reported as 'standing on revisionist, nihilist, nationalist and pro-Western positions'.

This type of control, struggles and dependencies are indeed, as I said, long known and studied. Moreover, on *ideologemes*, on the study of and the responding strike against ideological attacks, we find more and richer data in many public institutions of the socialist state, including scientific institutes,

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[12] See *Association and Institute for South-Eastern Europe,* Register 47, no. 2658, from 29.10.1971 to 1982, a file 'regarding ideological diversion'.
[13] *Ibid.*, s. 32-39.
[14] This Faculty was established in 1951, with the specialties of Philosophy, History, and

Pedagogy. Since 1972, the Faculty of History has been separate. Even before 1968, which is indeed the beginning of the period that I study, the struggles with Stalinists had gained momentum. One of the first known controversies, and one that mobilizes the SS services, is about the dissertation of doctoral student Zhelyu Zhelev that criticized Lenin's definition of matter (two decades before the controversy on the book *Fascism* by the same author). As well as his paper read at the BCP-commanded conference 'The mistakes of Stalin in philosophy' and his appeal that 'philosophy should stop being a servant to politics' evoked a scandal. Zhelev was excluded from the Party after seven Party meetings and other public and non-public polemics and then forced to settle in a remote place. After 1989, Zhelev became the first democratically elected President of Bulgaria.

[15] CSA, h. 22, i. 1, a.u. 136, s. 12.

seminars, and publishing houses than in the SS archives[16]. Some of them provided scientific materials and were in 'elective affinities' with the 'secret structures caring for the security of the state. The Central State Archive has an array of documents e.g. on institutes of the Academy of Social Sciences and Social Governance (which was created to unite educational and institutional bodies arising around the Higher Party School[17].)

Let us compare e.g. with the documents and publications of the Institute for Contemporary Social Theories (hereafter ICST)[18]. (At its very beginning,

in 1968/1969, it was doubly affiliated: to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and to the Central Committee[19]). This comparison allows us to see similar discursive logics, repertories of action against the internal and the external ideological enemy. There are also common documents written by the same authors, directed – like the efforts of SS officers – against e.g. the ideological diversion of Western scientific 'centrals' on which 'express information' was gathered in order 'to signal about more important phenomena and tendencies in the enemy camp, all in taking counter-measures on the side of our ideological front'[20].

I have mentioned above that after its emergence in 1968 the ICST became doubly affiliated: 'with regard to its special tasks, it was considered appropriate that it should be affiliated with the Presidium of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, whilst in fact remaining under the immediate governance of the Central Committee'. The institute was created for 'studying the new phenomena in the sphere of ideological struggle, coordinating the scientific research activity in this sphere, informing the Party's leadership about such phenomena, and suggest practical measures in the struggle against anti-communism, bourgeois ideology and revisionism'. Initially it was meant as an immediate organ of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party but then it was decided that it should have a hired staff, and so it became an institute of strange status – 'with the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences

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[16] CSA, h. 1, Protocol A, no. 311 of the session of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the BCP, 18 October 1966. The agenda also comprised the item 'On enhancing the struggle against the ideological diversion of capitalism'; the decision was taken to create 'an institute or the study of the problems of and for directing the struggle against anti-communism…' Other institutes are also mentioned which should 'increase their scientific and theoretical activity for the denouncement of the reactionary essence of anti-communism… systematically fight against neo-positivism'.

[17] CSA, h. 312B, i. 1. Immediately after 9 September 1944, the Central Committee of the then Bulgarian Workers' Party (Communists) decided to create a party school of several months. Since 1947, the course became one year long, and after the Fifth Congress of the BCP – two years long. In 1969, as a result of another reorganization of party and science structures, the Higher Party School became a part of the newly created Academy for the Preparation of Cadres for Social Governance (since November 1970 named Academy for Social Sciences and Social Governance).

[18] See CSA, h. 311B, i. 1 and i. 2, respectively for the periods 1969-1974 and 1975-1980. The Institute for Contemporary Social Theories (ICST) (initially called Institute for Society and Ideology Studies) was established by a decision of the Secretariat of the Central

Committee of the BCP on 27 March 1968. In 1974, 112 people worked there.

[19] See CSA, h. 311B, i. 1, Historical Note on the ICST, 1-4.

[20] *Ibid*., h. 311B, i. 2, s. 2.

while staying under the immediate governance of the Central Committee'.

The coordination plan approved by the Bureau of the Presidium of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in February 1972 stipulates, for the purposes of struggle with anticommunism, a 'functional system of coordination' with other institutes. The 'complex scientific body' develops, for the needs of the secretariat of the Communist Party, different theses on the strategy and tactics of the communist party in the ideological struggle. And also a special method of studying the ideological activity called 'situational analyses' a version of the so-called content analysis.

The report for July 1978 of one of the fourteen branches of the institute, namely the Department of Mass Media, says that, for their analyses of propaganda, they systematically observe not only the foreign media but also 'certain Bulgarian printed media and broadcasts of Radio Sofia with regard to how they implement the struggle against bourgeois ideology'. Three 'signal notes' were written to the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Party, regarding exclusively the photos exhibited in the window of the US Embassy and suggesting that a 'denouncing book against Radio Free Europe' should be written.

They had many resources for visiting the West. At the mentioned World Congress of Philosophy, 16 persons were sent, of which only 5 were actual delegates. The State Security, whose function was to monitor the expressions of 'revisionist, nihilist and pro-Western stances' at each specific stage of development of Bulgarian socialism, has in its archives the mentioned information that on that congress there was another 'attack against Marxist-Leninist philosophy'. In the reports of scientific workers on their stays in Western scientific institutions, one reads definitions that are sometimes identical to the language of information, materials and reports on this problematic in the State Security archives: 'a bourgeois economist, a reluctant apologist of contemporary imperialism, a friend of the peaceful coexistence of the two systems', 'maintaining reformist illusions, not devoid of democratism…'. The same archive tells us about dissatisfaction with the propaganda of the liberating role of sexual revolution 'under whose form the line of sexual licence is being promoted'[21].

Truths of Science and Causes of the State

In the SS, they did not only fight ideological diversion. 'They' took an active part in the mediation of the more or less close relations between party politics and scientific practices, between party knowledge and scientific knowledge: on the 'Bulgarian language' of Macedonia, the Bulgarian self-awareness of Islamized Bulgarians, of the ancient past of the country and the need of new scientific bodies. Here one could find documents on programs and the activities of committees, university departments.

I put 'them' between quotation marks because 'power has no centre', 'the state is not an apparatus' (Bourdieu), and the State Security is not a monolithic structure. Let us not succumb again to the logic of the institution that considers itself the 'shield and sword' of the power, including a shield of scientific truths. Let us not be caught in its trap – as S. Kott says - and describe just what 'they' want to be described. Let us not reify the 'field of power' because one could find there a

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[21] *Ibid*., a.u. 15, s. 3; s. 40.

pulsation of attractions and rejections, of obedience and resistances, diversely stable and diversely directed configurations of scientists, competing party leadership groups, specialists and laymen, scientific intelligence and counterintelligence officers, current, former and future 'objects' (forced, seduced, pragmatic…) who exchanged secrets and public knowledge, with 'double games' but also with intergenerational enmities and solidarities, and why not also 'utopias'. But one must described this – as Bourdieu shows in his study on 'the field of Manet' – from an individual to a more individual level, one must trace the genealogies – if we stay in the 'impressionism' of our case – of a nationalizing history, of a sociology becoming sighted, of a philosophy in liberation from the canon of dialectical and historical materialism (which does not mean liberation from 'ideology').

'The new discourse of Bulgarian history' of historians on the 1970s is not non-ideological and 'replacing the class-party approach to the past'[22]; it takes place because new groups, new 'habitus', new interests appear. It is true, however, that there is a process of 'real professionalization of the historical guild within the framework of socialism'. The new national and sometimes anti-official (e.g. 'Russophobic') discourse of historians provoked institutional polemics and inter-national clashes in which the State Security, as we may see from the archives of its newly created departments[23], found a fertile field of action. The 'leading

officer' – often a historian by training – has the self-esteem of an expert on the topic (and sometimes he is one in fact – prof. SS "V" is 'the leading officer of scientist T.'). He gives advice as to what documents would be most valuable (e.g. 'for the purpose of backing up our truth on Macedonia') and how XY could acquire these documents from the libraries of the Bundestag or the Vatican 'to which our intelligence has no access'. He searched for information on 'persons with a good attitude towards our country'. The 'operative worker' of the SS received reviews and expert opinions, listed with archive units from valuable libraries, he knew to whom to give them to make them publicly useful[24]. The operative worker proposes, for the purposes of the easier refutation of the claims of the historians in Skopje, that 'the rational elements of their work should find their place in the Bulgarian scientific works'. And, of course, he stresses that 'the basis of recruitment is patriotic'.

These practices become specific in dependence of the field of operative activity. The relations with Macedonia and the politics of historians of Skopje were an important engagement. Especially after a 'direction from above' was issued to 'activate the agents' operative work on the line of Macedonian nationalism'. Lists were compiled of 'persons detected in inclinations towards Mihaylovism'. Consultants on Yugoslavia were taken on board. The persons sent to monitor reported whether and how far the behaviour was challenging to Yugoslav delegates at the respective scientific meetings and whether the Bulgarians managed 'to get through some of our

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[22] Elenkov (2009), 633, 635.

[23] E.g. the Cultural-Historical Intelligence whose archives demonstrate different attitudes towards the scientists. One of its officers significantly makes a parallel with the different 'unique in its legality' body at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, created to collect documents on Bulgarian history.

[24] Thus a scientist received a commission to write an article on human rights which would be published in the channels of the SS.

theses on the so-called Macedonian question'.

Another central topic is the so-called Revival Process in which the State Security and the external 'operative workers on a social basis' were involved *en masse*. No matter if, in their memoirs, they describe a 'boycott' on the part of the mass of scientists, despite the party-academic line that ordered themes, plans, decisions[25]. The archives allow us to trace the polyvalent 'back-up role relations' within the public National Coordination Council at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences– of the experts in its core and its periphery, of those in the core who were in the SS, etc. The map of operative work was large-scale, the actions in cases like these were systematic, on an everyday basis, from the tasks of training the imams in the region of Mihaylovgrad and up to the publication of articles in Bulgarian and foreign periodicals. The SS hat lists with the themes of the members and institutes of the Academy of Sciences. It had a card database on the opinions held about Bulgaria by experts in Ottoman studies from the Balkan region and it wanted to neutralize their negative reactions[26]. Archives contain data on the activity of the National Coordination Committee on the Revival Process but also criticisms on it. There were ruminations on possible places of specialization for the SS, on the creation of a Bulgarian propaganda institute (1986), or how to 'infiltrate ourselves into a big university like McGill in Canada'. In these archives we also find scenarios on how department 08 should provide materials for official publications.

I do not wish to say that the specific details of these 'scenarios' and mechanisms of physical and symbolic violence is not scientifically important, but we should go beyond the detective-style unweaving of 'another scandalous case' supposed to prove that the SS was 'a state within the state' or a 'transmission of the will of the Party'. The truth on 'sabotage' is not in the archives of the SS (I only mean academic sabotage) nor is the truth on the 'non-coordinated boycott of the academic community' of which V. Mutafchieva speaks. We analyse the scientific production of that time, the properly scientific periodicals, the content of university courses of that time etc. where the party paradigm on the Revival Process is hardly dominating. And however much we increase the number of studied files and the information on the seminars of 'the young'[27], we will not understand what, why and whether indeed has changed, if we base ourselves on the ever more stable hypothesis of 'totalitarian science' according to which scientists were coming on the part of the science that was free in the West in order to show us the 'real data' on socialism, or they acquire these data in the so-called 'niches', resisting the party-ideological dominance.

I re-asses that the goal of my description of a very small and chaotically collected part of these archives (but also chaotically composed and hoarded by the SS activists themselves who worked on

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[25] Mutafchieva (2005), 265, 360.

[26] 'Dr. X is an undeniable expert … but it is hard to commit him to our theses'; there was hope 'to gain positions in Austria'; there was the need to use 'agent Kleon to convince a publishing house in Holland…'

[27] And let us not speak of the blatant incorrectness and the lack of understanding of the real force lines and 'capitals' of the participants in seminars, circles, departments, of the historical logics of their emergence. (E.g. in document of the CSA, h. 22, i. 36, s. 153 on the seminar 'Face and Mask' created by A. Kiossev and myself, which that document interprets as a seminar on 'the mask of power'.)

different campaigns, levels, persons) is to understand something quite specific – whether one can speak of a real, and not theatrical, transformation in the social sciences. My hypothesis is that the new scientific conceptions, debates and centres in the Faculty of Philosophy and History (e.g. Sociology, later also Cultural Studies) were not a result solely of the transformation of Marxist ideology or of the political-ideological strategies of the ruling Party and its 'first aids'.

The approach which, as I said, seems more productive to me is to trace how scientific categories and socialist social practices began interacting and new practices began to emerge, how new 'utopian segments' emerged in the ideology itself and how they too turned quickly into instruments of domination. This type of causality is hard to understand by those who ask themselves whether social sciences were just ideological instruments or, on the contrary, resistances (from the 'niches') against the Marxist 'scientific ideology'.

We must continue – after this initial 'scan' – through more archive units, parallel to the specific research of cases, of places, of used 'names' and classifications. But even that would not be enough to trace the transformations in the scientific field that are of interest to us. Because we will miss[28] the updated maps of that same field, with the 'contextualization' on other 'functionaries'[29], as well as the new maps

of the institutions controlling them. For instance, although the central censoring institution *Glavlit* was closed down, there was a series of offices on which the publication of a scientific book depended: the Central Committee of the BCP, Department of Means of Mass Propaganda; the officer responsible for the respective sphere in the Department of Science and Education, the Sixth Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Committee for the Press, the General Directorate of Book Distribution, etc. Besides that, 'a secret institution [was] created by a decision of the Central Committee' (presided by a professor) to consider 'only books whose printing was stopped by the militia, by the specific bodies etc., i.e. by an anonymous power that no one knows and is not acquainted with'[30].

Archives show (I only refer to the studied field and period) the internal contradictoriness and lack of autonomy on the part of the SS. And it is hardly a fact that 'in view of the nature of the secret world, only they can say what in fact happens there, and they are forbidden to do so' (as is the hope of T. Garton Ash, as he studies the file on himself in the Stasi).

Memories reveal contradictory strategies of agents[31], the tensions between the institutions themselves (e.g. between the departments of the Central Committee or of the SS), between generations, disciplines, groups of scientists ('mafias', 'paradigms') that entered into strange

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[28] I don't have in mind the standard mandatory critiques of archives – who compiled the document, for what purpose, in what context, for whom, on the basis of what 'editorial combinations' and imagined phantasmagorical causalities, with what kind of 'confabulations'. See Combe (1999); Kott (2002), 5-23; Dakowska, Beaupré (2003), 13-32.

[29] See Dakowska, Beaupré (2003); Th. Lindenberg deals especially with the 'contextualisations' and the archives of police

that were neglected in the connection that interests us. Lindenberg, 33-57.

[30] Genchev (2005), 235-236.

[31] See Mutafchieva (2005), 384. The SS archives obliterate the incommensurability between scientific centres (such as the University of Sofia and the Academy for Social Sciences and Social Governance) but do not the memories of 'totalitarian science' do just the same?

unions mobilizing heterogeneous 'capitals', including ones related to the party or international, in order to assume a dominant position in the respective scientific field or to provide shelters within it for themselves. But the varying of data from these 'archives of repression' and their critique is yet to come. Here I only tried to see what Arlette Farge says in *The Taste of Archives*[32]: "Provoke an absence where certainties found their place… re-identify nothing, mark the places where meaning is undone…"

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Francesco Zavatti

The Birth and Development of a Scholarly Topic: History-Writing and Political Power in Communist Romania, 1961-2015

Abstract

This article analyses the history of the scholarly studies dedicated to research on the relationship between historiography and political power in communist Romania. The historical account starts from the birth of the topic in USA and Western Europe during the cold war and analyses its development in Romania after 1989. The article contextualises the achievements and limits of the main works on the topic within the circumstances in which they have been written.

Keywords: Historiography, Communism, Post-communism, Romania, Politics

Introduction

The pages that follow aim to present the history of the scholarly research focused on the relationship between history-writing and politics in communist Romania. Scholarly monographs, essays, chapters in books, reports, and articles regarding this topic written since 1961 up to the present days will be taken into account for the present purpose. Often, this kind of historiography is confined in few lines in the initial pages of the studies here considered. Unfortunately, the descriptions of the 'previous research' sections do not usually spend more than few words for the studies mentioned, leaving no space for their historicising. On the contrary, this article revises critically the bibliography on history-writing and politics in communist Romania, contextualizing each study in the time of its writing. While all of the works here considered are in this way historicised,

monographs and reports receive deeper attention: their theoretical, methodological, and empirical innovations and limits are analysed in more detail. A historic contextualization of the times in which they have been written and of the reasons and circumstances that brought their authors to write them is provided, in order to trace a historical map of the topic.

The development of this scholarly topic is analysed by pointing out the practical obstacles and the conceptual limits that several generations of scholars from many different political, cultural, and disciplinary backgrounds had to face, in Romania and abroad, while analysing this relationship since the cold war-times up to the present days. Some of the oldest contributions are still nowadays present in recent bibliographies on the topic, some others are for the most part forgotten. Nevertheless, this article does not consider the novelty of works published decades ago for the present days: on the contrary,

it is aimed at presenting the theoretical achievements, the empirical discoveries, and the subsequent development of the topic and of its interpretative canon in the decades in which those works have been published, since the 1960s, in order to historicise this field of research. The article also briefly sketches, in the last pages, which avenues of research could be opened on this topic by considering other recent patterns of analysis on Romanian communism.

An Exiled Topic (1961-1983)

The cold war was disputed also by the discipline of history from the moment when, in 1948, the Soviet Information Bureau accused the US State Department of having falsified the history of the Nazi-Soviet relations[1]. Since the cold war had begun, history had become a sensitive matter for Soviet Union and for its East European satellites. After the communist take-over, history-writing in Romania has ceased to be an autonomous discipline. Since 1948, history had become a propaganda instrument of the communist regime[2]. For the whole communist period, any kind of opposition to the regime and to its plans for creating the new socialist Romania after the teachings of Marxism-Leninism was heavily repressed, or could simply cost one's position. Therefore, the historical profession under communism ceased to be autonomous and was obliged to enter in a mutually beneficial relationship with political power[3]. Due to the systemic divide between East and West, communication between blocks passed predominantly through official channels. During the Stalinist period,

Romanian foreign relations were in fact highly dependent from Moscow's will[4]. Consequently, the international informal networks that the Romanian historians had with the Western world had been severed and substituted by formal, party-supervised official delegations which represented Romania in international congresses and venues[5]. In addition, the ideological divide which characterized the Western world during the cold war made the denunciations of Eastern Europeans regimes' repression an appanage of the anti-communist camp[6], which received institutional support from the CIA-financed academic institutions in the USA[7] and from sympathetically anti-communist Western European universities[8].

Due to the political circumstances that Romania was facing, it is not surprising that the first individual who dedicated a critical work to the relationship between history-writing and political power in communist Romania in those years has not been a Romanian historian: Michael J. Rura, who published in 1961 his dissertation on the reinterpretation of history as a method adopted by the regime to further communism, was an American doctoral student in history based in Georgetown University, USA. Rura, in the end of the fifties, elaborated his work under the supervision of Polish-émigré Jan Karski and with the help of Jean Boutier from the Institute of Romanian Studies at the Sorbonne University and of Emil Turdeanu of the King Carol Foundation (Paris)[9]. In his dissertation, he has argued that the traditional Romanian

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[1] Soviet Information Bureau (1948), 5.

[2] Papacostea (1992).

[3] Iacob (2012); Zavatti (2016).

[4] Rădulescu (2011), 223.

[5] Stoica (2012), 152-154.

[6] Judt (2005), 197-210.

[7] Ross (1998), 475-476.

[8] Service (2007), 274.

[9] Rura (1961), VI.

historiography was seen as an obstacle to the aims of the communist regime, an obstacle that could be removed by obliterating the historical past and reinterpreting it with the help of Marxism-Leninism. More than a simple ideological reorientation, national historiography under Stalinism was revised structurally (periodization, main personalities, etc.), and altered in its contents.

Rura, at the beginning of his work, expresses his doubts that the Romanian communist historiography was as objective and factual as the Romanian communists claimed, since it was written to achieve 'prescribed political purposes'[10]. In order to prove his point, Rura compared the communist historiography with the one written in the first half of the twentieth century. This comparison allowed him to distinguish four modalities through which Romanian history had been reinterpreted by the communists: omission, substitution, emphasis, and corruption of historical narrative elements. With this methodology of analysis, Rura succeeded in demonstrating that his initial "doubt" was legitimate: Romanian communist historiography was neither factual nor objective. The analysis of the historical narratives of early communism made by Rura remains valid until today, even if his writing had some traits of anti-communist engagement, as he used U.S. State Department sources as evidence of violence in the communist regime. On the other hand, the closed borders did not allow Rura to retrieve more direct sources of information on the historians under Stalinism and his efforts, supported by the Georgetown University's librarians, were certainly exceptional for the times.

The second work on the topic has been written in Western Europe by a

member of the émigré community: in 1967, former-legionary and tireless anti-communist Dionise Ghermani published in Munich a monograph on the reinterpretation of medieval history in communist Romania[11]. The same as Rura, Ghermani analysed the political intents of the reinterpretation of history in Stalinist times. Nevertheless, the few years that separated Rura's from Ghermani's interpretation have been years of change for the Romanian regime. The distancing from Soviet Union in the early sixties and the effect of the April declaration in 1964, which made national communism an official policy of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's regime[12], had a strong impact also on Romanian historiography. Ghermani's monograph focuses on the international events that contributed to modifying the narrative canon, providing the first chronicle of historiography under national-communism. In the cold war years, the intense cultural activities of Ghermani among the émigré community in Germany and among the scholarly community made of him a respected scholar.

While the first monograph had been written by an American historian and the second one by a Romanian émigré political scientist, the third monograph on the topic is the first one written by a Romanian historian: Vlad Georgescu, who wrote in 1977 the first draft of *Politică şi istorie. Cazul comuniştilor români* (Politics and History. The Case of Romanian Communists)[13]. Georgescu analysed the redefinition of the historiographical field by the communist regime and the main trends and changes which had occurred

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[10] Rura (1961), XI.

[11] Ghermani (1967).

[12] Haupt (1968), 683.

[13] Georgescu (1981), which was republished in Romania in 1990 by Humanitas. See also Georgescu (1983).

between 1944 and 1977. His powerful narrative shows the aberrant means by which the history was falsified under Gheorghiu-Dej, and their grotesque continuation under Nicolae Ceauşescu. Continuing the topic inaugurated by Rura and Ghermani, Georgescu's book focuses on historiography and for the first time to history-writing, thanks to his direct experience of the condition facing historians under communism. In fact, Georgescu wrote this monograph under the nose of the dictator, while employed as researcher at the Institute for South-East European Studies in Bucharest, until the secret transmission of the manuscript abroad was discovered, costing him two months of prison. After his release from prison, he left the country and taught in several universities in the United States. In Munich, were he joined Radio Free Europe, the monograph was published in 1981[14]. Since he died of a mysterious brain cancer in 1988 after having been threatened by the Romanian regime, his high cultural capital allowed *Politică şi istorie* to become the starting point for the majority of the scholarly works in the field.

To these first scholarly and politically engaged efforts, the scholarly community responded with sporadic interest. In Germany, where Ghermani and Georgescu were based, two articles on the topic appeared in scholarly journals between 1975 and 1983 as part of a project on the interdependence of historiography and politics in Eastern Europe, conducted by Gunther Stökl[15]. One was the article of Manfred Stoy on the evolution of communist historiography from 1965 to 1980 as regards the period from the foundation of the Principalities in Moldova and Walachia until their

unification[16]. The second one was written by Klaus P. Beer, who analysed some traits of the interdependency between history and politics in Romania from 1945 to 1980, on the specific topic of the interwar period and war history[17]. Those contributions also focused exclusively on historiography.

These early contributions, with the notable exception of Georgescu's and in some cases of Ghermani's, have been almost completely forgotten in this field. As I will show in the next section, the aim of those who wrote on this topic after the early-1990s was not anymore to denounce the political use of history by the communist regime, which was a thing of the past and whose denouncement was done already in 1990-1992. The historians who intended to renovate the discipline chose to do so because of the difficulties of the present. Therefore, their main goal was to renovate the discipline of history at the theoretical and methodological level, providing it with a new meta-narrative canon for the interpretation of national history. The analysis of the relationship between historiography and the communist regime became one of the most sensitive programmatic points of this agenda, since the scholarly institutions were still hosting many powerful historians which refused any critical inquiry of the recent past.

Methodological and Theoretical Poverty: the 1990s

As Dragoș and Cristina Petrescu have been writing, post-1945 national history written in the 1990s was characterized by theoretical and methodological poverty, since during

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[14] Botez (1992), 7-8.
[15] Stöckl (1983).
[16] Stoy (1982).
[17] Beer (1984).

communism the subject had been colonised poorly-trained propagandists. Furthermore, the communist regime had left in place only the national-communist meta-narrative canon and no major work on contemporary history was exempt from it. Lastly, the archival sources for national history were still inaccessible for the researchers[18].

Despite the fact that the communist regime had been brought to an end in December 1989, most of the historians who bargained their professional autonomy for power and prosperity were still sitting in their institutional positions, and the new democratic government seemed to value positively their contributions for present Romania's cultural discourse. In the first years after the fall of the communist regime, French historian Catherine Durandin noted that the government of the National Salvation Front was still endorsing the official commemorations of the former regime, while the history articles published in the oppositions' newspapers focused on the interwar national heritage or on denouncing Stalinist crimes, aiming to criticize the government. At the same time, the temporal proximity was still a limit for the analysis of Ceausescu's regime, since society protected itself from the memory of a time when the social bounds and hierarchies were established[19].

In the years following the Revolution, contemporary history has been an extremely divisive subject. The 'traditional' or 'nationalist' canon was endorsed by the majority of the universities and research centres, guided by historians appointed by the communist regime. Nevertheless, a few historians challenged the old canon and its

proponents in order to renovate the discipline and open a serious discussion on the recent past. Those who choose to embark on such a difficult task requested help from foreign scholars with whom they had established durable relations since the sixties. In fact, the very modest cultural openings made by the Romanian regime to the Western hemisphere at the dawn of Romania's distancing from Soviet Union had succeeded in establishing international scholars exchange programs such as the Fulbright Program. With this opening, Romanian scholars could create still in communist times a wide multi-disciplinary and transnational network with the Western scholars who visited Romania. Furthermore, due to this opening, the scholarly interest for Romania in the West became active in a number of aforementioned research centres and departments (in Paris, but also in Amsterdam), and in trans-national scholarly societies such as the Society for Romanian Studies[20] (established in 1973).

After the fall of the regime, the contribution of international scholars had been seen as essential by part of the historians for providing Romania with a new interpretative canon for its recent past. Therefore, since 1990, foreign scholars have started to be invited to conferences and symposia and to publish, among other historical topics, analyses of the relationship between politics and historiography in communist Romania.

It is worth noting that among the Western pioneers in the historical study of Romanian communism, none was a contemporary historian *and* had contemporary Romanian history as their main research interest, but all of them had established strong scholarly contacts with Romania before 1989. For example, one of the earliest contributions on the topic has

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[18] Petrescu (2007), 353-355.
[19] Durandin (1991).

[20] Michelson (2013). See also Michelson (2015).

been written by Dennis Deletant, who had been interested until then mainly in the study of Romanian modern history. During the cold war, Deletant used to teach Romanian language and medieval history in London. He was not often requested to comment on the political situation in Romania, which he has visited often, but he entered into contact with many of the dissident camp[21]. Consequently, his interest for the relationship between power and history-writing brought him to analyse already in 1991 how Ilie Ceauşescu used the Dacians as a political tool in order to give legitimacy to the policies developed by Nicolae Ceauşescu[22]. Once the Wall had fallen, Deletant published the first interesting account on the regime's historiography. For the first time, the oral information on the development of the cultural politics that the foreign scholarly community in Romania had learned in the 1970s-1980s could be reported black on white, citing and corroborating the textual analysis of the regime's historiographical products. It is worth noting that, like many others interested in carrying out research on post-1945 Romania, he could not publish any historical account of Romania under communism before 1989, as that would have provoked the hostility of the regime against him and his Romanian-based network.

The same could be said for Katherine Verdery, an American cultural anthropologist who in 1991 published a major contribution to the understanding of the Romanian communist historiography: *National Ideology under Socialism*, an inquiry on the national ideology during the Ceauşescu times, and on different competing groups of intellectuals, aimed at redefining them in

a struggle for hegemony over the national discourse. The book was certainly one of the most innovative accounts on Romanian culture under communism and had a high impact on successive historiography[23]. The aim of the volume was also to bypass the direct and unidirectional link between political propaganda needs and culture as their consequence. Verdery presented the modalities of control that the Romanian regime, defined as weak and in search of consensus, needed to establish in order to foster its power: from control and repression during the Stalinist times, to control and co-option during national communism[24]. Once the intellectuals were co-opted into the construction of a national ideology, different competing groups struggled over the definition of the nation, described by Verdery as a discursive field[25]. She considered national ideology as a discourse used instrumentally by the Party, "forced […] under pressure from others, especially intellectuals", who "were drawing upon personal concerns and traditions of inquiry that made the Nation a continuing and urgent reality for them despite official interdictions"[26].

To the 'portion' of culture that concerns this study, namely historiography, one of the most important instruments for the construction of consensus, being almost entirely dedicated to national history and therefore "of interest chiefly to Romanians

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[21] Deletant (2013).

[22] Deletant (1991).

[23] Pavelescu (2009) follows Verdery's theoretical bases and makes use of historians' memoires.

[24] Verdery (1991), 83-86.

[25] "How was Romanian identity represented […] these images are largely discursive, offered in politically relevant public discourse". Verdery (1991), 8.

[26] Verdery (1991), 222.

and of maximum use to a Romanian state"[27], Verdery dedicated an entire chapter, analysing the modalities of history production in communist Romania[28]. Focusing on the conflict generated by the interpretation of the Horea revolt (a revolution, according to the regime, that sought to stress the national elements of the event and diminish the internationalist significance, in opposition to Hungary), she defined the actors of the struggle on the discursive field of the nation by political status and cultural/scientific authority, characteristics by which the national audience[29], including the intellectuals, could recognize the professional competence of the actors of this struggle over narratives. In this monograph the historiographical conflicts are seen in the context of the institutional competition for the attribution of resources by bureaucratized institutes and individual competitions among the historians seeking positions and attributions of competences.

This original paradigm was developed using mainly private conversations during Verdery's field trips to Romania in the communist period, which proved to be good occasions to understand the regime's functioning using

the traditional means of ethnology. The monograph had a wide recognition among scholars worldwide, since its theoretical framework brilliantly and originally encompassed several disciplines. Verdery's book was also the first important international publication addressing directly the system of cultural production in communist Romania. Verdery clearly pointed out that compromise and resistance were the only two choices that the intellectuals had during communism. The book was dedicated to one of those who had chosen to resist – namely David Prodan, a respected historian of the Romanian scholarly community – and to all those who had said 'no' to the regime. Since saying 'no' was a clear choice, Verdery herself chose to take the side of those who were oppressed (the book was sent to the publishers one month and a half before the fall of Ceauşescu). Verdery's book was translated into Romanian in 1994 by the newly-founded publishing house Humanitas, which had chosen to promote the values of the former dissidence.

In the same years, historians like Keith Hitchins took into consideration a multidisciplinary approach to the study of the history of historiography under communism. During the cold war, Hitchins contributed to the discipline by founding and editing since 1970 the first academic journal dedicated to Romanian studies, *Rumanian Studies*, working extensively on national identity in modern and early-modern Romania throughout the seventies and the eighties[30]. Concluding a survey on the historiography, written in 1992, Hitchins stated that the goal of historiographers after the end of the communist regime was still aimed at defining the national identity and the future direction of the

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[27] Verdery (1991), 222.

[28] Verdery (1991), 215-255.

[29] "Cognizant public, that is, building an audience (or maintaining one already in existence) that recognizes and supports the definitions of value upon which the cultural status of a given group of intellectuals rests. […] the democratizing objective […] should not be confused – especially in this case – with a deprofessionalization of the domain in question; rather, it would increase the chance that the public would know enough to acknowledge a given claim to professional competence, granting their attention to that claim in preference of some other". Verdery (1991), 294; see also 142-145.

[30] Tappe (1975).

development of Romania[31]. His writing suggested that a major understanding of the relationship between historiography and politics could be found by drawing attention to the role of the communist leadership[32]. In another volume, Hitchins addressed explicitly the main limitations for those researching on the communist party: "it does not exist a comprehensive bibliography on the Romanian workers' movement. […] It does not exist a biographic dictionary of the Romanian communists. […] It does not exist a general history of the Romanian Communist Party"[33].

To obviate these problems, Hitchins indicated a multidisciplinary approach for the study of Romanian historiography, by referring to several secondary works in the literature from disciplines other than history: the aforementioned masterpiece by Verdery and (among others) two monographs by political scientists Kenneth Jowitt and Michael Shafir, who during the cold war had worked on the Romanian communist regime[34].

During the '90s, the majority of prominent historians who had chosen to dedicate their efforts to this topic gave general interpretations which would have become also guidelines for the future researches of the younger generations. Two examples are Alexandru Zub and Şerban Papacostea. Medievalist Şerban Papacostea, at the beginning of 1990, became the director of the 'N. Iorga' Institute of History. Papacostea had experienced the repression and the confinement from the historians' milieu during Stalinism and the impostures and impositions of Ceauşescu's regime on history-writing later on. With the renovation of Romanian historiography as program, witnessed by the active international activities of the Iorga Institute after 1990, his early-nineties writings' are aimed at describing the harsh reality of history discipline under communism. In his 1992 article *Captive Clio*, he argues that the general functioning of history-writing was ancillary to political power, giving a general overview on the subject and insisting on the impact that the cult of Ceauşescu had for history as a discipline[35]. In 1994, he wrote another article on the topic, namely on the role of Andrei Oţetea, director of the Iorga Institute during the communist times[36]; already in this article, the complex role of the historians as divided between political loyalty towards the Party and professional boundaries emerge for the first time. This topic will be

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[31] Hitchins (1992), 1083.

[32] Ibidem, p. 1080.

[33] Hitchins (1997), 216-218. The volume collects a series of essays published by Hitchins between 1971 and 1997. Among the most relevant for this topic are the articles contained in the section *Idei de stânga* (*Leftist ideas*), among which there is a previously unpublished essay (*Mişcarea comunistă din România – The communist movement in Romania*), that address specifically the problems of writing a history of the Romanian Communist Party.

[34] Kenneth Jowitt, after having defended his doctorate on post-Stalinist Eastern Europe, resulting in Jowitt (1971), lived in Romania during the communist times and continued to direct his attention to the present times. Political scientist Michael Shafir was involved both scholarly and politically in analysing Ceauşescu's regime: he published several

essays on the regime's cultural policies and the dissidence, and at the same time he collaborated actively with the Romanian Unit Research of Radio Free Europe (as analyst in 1965-1967, since 1985 as deputy director, in 1988-1989 as chief, in 1991-1994 as senior analyst).

[35] Papacostea (1992); the article was translated into Romanian in 1998.

[36] Papacostea (1994).

developed by Alexandru Zub, who used in his analysis Verdery's legacy, and showed the tension between compromise and resistance of the historians in the relationship with the regime, focusing on the early Stalinist period and on the eighties, but leaving large temporal and analytical areas unscrutinised[37].

The creation of this field of study by few very well established Romanian scholars in history, with the help of international scholars which imported theoretical and methodological innovations, had created the preconditions for the domestic development of the subject. In the following years, monographs and articles on the topic have been written by Romanian historians, which furthered the revision of the discipline, opposed by a wide array of nationalist historians who considered their own legitimacy at risk.

Analysing 1948-1964 History-Writing in the 1990s-2000s

Once the field of enquiry had been defined by the aforementioned scholarly works, from the mid-nineties onwards, several historians dedicated their efforts to researching the early years of Romanian communism. In the mid-1990s, the researchers have focused on specific case studies on the role of Mihail Roller[38], leading Stalinizer of Romanian historiography, and its consequences for historians and history discipline[39]. A very short, but also very clear article that summarised the analytical achievements of the field in those years has been written towards the end of the nineties by Victor

Cojocaru[40]. According to Cojocaru, at the beginning of communist rule in Romania there have been institutional and theoretical aspects that permitted the instauration of Stalinist historiography: the closing of institutions and reviews, the opening of new pro-Soviet research institutes, the hyper-censorship, the breaking of the cultural contacts with the West. Furthermore, Cojocaru considered that the methodology of Stalinist history-research was uniquely based on dialectic and historical materialism, Soviet historiography was the unique theoretical reference, work was done collectively.

These first efforts were limited in results for a number of reasons, among which are the unavailability of archival sources but also the potential destructive fallouts for the historians who choose to analyse such a sensitive subject. Despite all of these, a whole new field of inquiry was more and more shaped and defined; this was also due to the great interest that both the scholarly community and the general public showed for Lucian Boia's deconstruction of the myths in national historiography[41]. The traditionalist historians, together with a wide array of nationalists, social-democratic politicians and army generals, criticised harshly Boia's works on national television, and reacted in the same way to the public denouncement made by scholars against personalities and institutions that made compromises with the communist regime and that were still in their positions.

The renewal of the field begun during the nineties gave its first massive results in the early 2000s. Within the general consolidation of the historiographical discourse on the Gheorghiu-Dej's regime, two general

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[37] Zub (2000).

[38] Dandarea (1998), Pentelescu (1998), Pleşa (2007).

[39] Şerban (1998), Bozgan (1990), Mândruţ (1998).

[40] Cojocaru (1998).

[41] Boia (1997a). See also Boia (1999); Niţescu (1995). Boia (1995). Boia (1997b).

histories on the relationship between politics and historiography during the period 1948-1964 appeared in the early 2000s: one written by Andi Mihalache[42], and the other by Florin Müller. Müller explains at the beginning of his work all the problems and limitations found while conducting his research, from the inaccessibility of archival documents to the absence of relevant bibliography: "the institutions […] are insufficiently analysed. Systematic studies on university life, of the publishing houses and of the party schools, of the scientific societies, on the social system in which the graduates were integrated, on the family relationships and on the transferring of symbolical power (prestige, influence, extra-professional motivations) do not exist"[43].

Müller's book provides, for the first time, information on the History Institute of the Romanian Academy, on the party institutions for history-writing (the Party History Institute/Institute for Historical and Socio-political Studies, the 'A. A. Zhdanov' School, and the 'Ştefan Gheorghiu' School), and on the interaction of these latter with their organ of reference, the Party's Agitation and Propaganda Department/Section. The focus of Müller's volume is on the tensions present between historians and politicians, and on the consequences that this struggle had on history discipline. Müller pays attention to the debates and reciprocal attacks that took place between historians by using, as sources, their publications in journals and reviews and making use of the few party documents available at that time.

Mihalache's work is instead an analysis of historical discourse as a modality of proximity to power and as a means of negotiating the symbolic capital between different actors. His main interest is to find an internal coherence in the dominating discourse elaborated within the history discipline, and a periodization of the ruptures and discontinuities that characterized it. Mihalache points out that the Romanian communist historiography was heavily influenced by a cultural model imported from the Soviet Union, the Zhdanovist historical discourse. The main contribution of this book is undoubtedly its theoretical approach to the topic. Applying discourse analysis to historiography and relevant party documents, the author has caught the communist period historians in the act of reordering the past in accordance with contemporary politics, while considering the historians as mediators between different collective memories and modes of national identity.

In the 2000s, history discipline was dragged straight into the political debate. In 2005, the then prime minister Călin Popescu Tăriceanu authorized the creation of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania under the presidency of Marius Oprea. The Institute was patronized by the government and not by the traditionalist Romanian Academy and, therefore, the two institutions were often in contrast. This led several intellectuals and historians that have been ostracized from public life in the nineties to join the activities of the Institute in order to promote their research and opinions[44]. The *Annales of the Institute*, established in 2006, have published several articles focused on national history as communist propaganda, and more specifically on the relationship between the history discipline

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[42] Mihalache (2003).

[43] Müller (2003), 10. Exceptions are Catalan (1998) and (2005).

[44] Bottoni (2008), 421.

and politics in communist Romania[45], due also to the partial opening of the archives which occurred in the mid-2000s.

State Commissions and History-Writing

Historiography and history-writing during communist times became once again part of the public debate when two history commissions were instituted in Romania: the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania and the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania. Both commissions, mainly aiming to institute a state-endorsed memory of the communist times, stressed among other topics (and once again) that the role of communist-times historians was to write a kind of history ancillary to the needs of the political power. Their main contribution for the topic has certainly been to attract general and scholarly attention and interest with an unprecedented media attention and national and international recognition.

Informally known as 'Wiesel Commission' since its head was Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel, the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was established by president Ion Iliescu in 2003 after the international clamour generated by his attempt to minimize the role of Romania in the Holocaust. The most significant result of this commission is the analysis of the national-communist historiographical narratives and of their modalities of exculpation when dealing with the Holocaust, edited for the Commission and republished shortly after in an article by

Adrian Cioflâncă[46]. The work of the Commission resulted in defining the Holocaust memory in Romania and in defending it from anti-Semitic and negationist attacks[47].

The Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania was established by president Traian Băsescu, who appointed as its chair Vladimir Tismăneanu, a Romanian-born political scientist whose research, carried out since the eighties at several universities from the United States, deals with the political history of the communist regime. Tismaneanu's research results indicated the presence in post-1989 Romanian politics of several power structures and high-ranking personalities of the former regime[48]. The volume of synthesis that resulted, written by young historians called in to collaborate with the Commission, analyses the political development and government-styles adopted by the communist party during the years with a special focus on its repressive dimension, providing a wide fresco of the consequences of totalitarianism for Romanian society, economy and culture[49]. The *Final Report* of the Commission generated a huge political and scholarly debate in Romania between 2006 and 2007. According to Michal Shafir, this report was necessary to "put an end of the subjectivity of memory" on the communist regime[50]. Even if its political opponents did not give up so easily, the *Final Report* and the scholars who wrote it had contributed to set authoritatively the interpretative canon

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[45] Bosomitu (2008), Pălăşan (2008), Catalan (2009), Pleşa (2009), Tomiţă (2009).

[46] Cioflâncă (2004).

[47] International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (2004).

[48] Tismăneanu (2003).

[49] Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania (2006).

[50] Quoted in Bottoni (2008), 421.

for the communist past, sowing a seed that in the forthcoming years would have matured in several other publications and research projects.

The two commissions had their influence also for the topic here considered, as they involved younger generations of historians. Few years after having collaborated with the Tismăneanu's commission, Cristian Bogdan Iacob defended his dissertation at the Central European University. As concerns recent studies that deal with the relationship between history, politics, and nationalism in communist Romania, Iacob's dissertation[51] is certainly among the most relevant and innovative ones. Iacob's work is innovative from a theoretical and methodological point of view. Attempting to bypass the classical contraposition 'Party vs. historians', Iacob considers that the rehabilitation of tradition and the co-option of the intellectuals which began in 1955 was a process that had cumulative effects on the political discourse of the Party, up to the point that the official discourse in the mid-sixties converged with the products of history-writing and the historians' image of the Romanian nation – originating the meta-narrative of the socialist nation. The creation of this historiographical paradigm that continued and expanded during the subsequent Ceausescu regime (a period unfortunately uncovered by his work), has been possible by the constant dialogue between historians and ideologues, and is better understandable once the historical narratives are considered in their academic context. According to Iacob, the Party needed to re-affirm an update Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy in order to have credibility and legitimacy in the times of changes of the position of Romania at international level.

For this reason, it started a cultural revolution that had the characteristics of a national scientific revolution: the Party's active role into institutionalization, mobilization for big projects, and purges in the scholarly community are evidence of that. The dismissal of Roller came as a consequence of this revolution. Bogdan's work is the only attempt that provides a better understanding of the multiple changes of canon in communist historiography and it clearly indicates that the 'epistemic community' of historians and party activists was not as monolithic as the party official propaganda presented it.

Equally worth mentioning are the volumes written by another collaborator of the Tismăneanu's commission, Cristian Vasile. Even if not directly addressing the politics-historiography relationship, the study of Vasile on the cultural politics in Gheorghiu-Dej's era[52] analyses some aspects of the regime's cultural propaganda that present interest for the understanding of the propagandist apparatus, such as its institutional changes, the financial and administrative aspects, and the role of the publishing houses and the distribution of books. In his 2015's book on the intellectual and cultural life under the Ceaușescu's regime[53], Vasile portrays the co-option of the professional historians in the sixties and their subordinate role in front of the megalomania of the president in the seventies. In practice, Vasile has indicated in which directions research should focus in the forthcoming years in order to open new perspectives on the communist regimes and on their cultural policies.

The interest in the topic by younger generations, not directly connected to the revision efforts of the

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[51] Iacob (2011).

[52] Vasile (2011).
[53] Vasile (2015).

previous decades, is also a sign that the historical revision is now established in Romanian universities and research centres. For example, Stan Stoica's monograph[54] assesses the existence of a link between the political activities of the regime and their fallout on the historians' community, establishing a clear and useful periodization that included the de-Stalinization after the death of Stalin and the reaction to it that ended in the new national course of historiography.

Another example of this successful generational 'handover' is the publication, in 2015, of the first general work on history and the historians under communism by Felician Velimirovici[55]. In Velimirovici's dissertation, the canon and the methodologies for the study of the relationship between political power and communism seem to be consolidated, twenty-five years after the fall of the communist regime: the author divides his study taking in account the periodization proposed by the aforementioned literature and undertakes his work on the basis of documents recently made available by the Arhivele Naționale ale României (Romanian National Archives); furthermore, besides the archival sources, he has chosen to interview the historians of the communist period – therefore, making use of the methodology of oral history.

Conclusions

Scholarly research on the relationship between historiography and politics in communist Romania began during the cold war with three monographs and two articles written between 1961 and 1983, all focused on the

historical narratives produced in communist Romania and, in Georgescu's case, on first-hand experiences of the regime's distortion of scholarly autonomy. Due to the political circumstances, the field has developed outside Romania, West of the Iron Curtain. Among those contributions, *Politică și istorie* has been the most successful one, since the communist regime has been accused of provoking Georgescu's death in 1988 and the book has consequently been the first monograph appeared on the topic in Romania after the end of the regime.

With the advent of the democratic regime, the analyses on the topic multiplied in number and made of the topic one of the most important subject of the disciplinary debate among the Romanian historians for the renovation of post-1945 history. In an unprecedented disciplinary self-reflection allowed by the democratic change, a few historians had started to revise critically their discipline. Conscious that the denouncement of the 'captivity of history' in communist times was not enough to renovate the discipline, those historians aimed to provide national history with a canon that could inspire and lead the young generations in the research on the national past. In order to do so, they relied on theories and methodologies developed by scholars coming from other disciplines and subjects. An important help in this task had come from the international scholars which had been in contact with their Romanian colleagues since the times of the cold war, and which started to be invited regularly in Romania after 1989.

Since 1990, history had been a very divisive subject in Romania, which polarized nationalist and traditionalist historians on one side, and critical historians which embraced revision as working paradigm on the other. It is in the 'revisionist camp' that the totality of the

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[54] Stoica (2012).
[55] Velimirovici (2015).

works here quoted had been written. Noteworthy, the traditionalist historians who had closely collaborated with the regime and had contributed to make history ancillary to political power (i.e., Titu Georgescu) replied to revision only by publishing biased and unverifiable memoirs aimed at 'normalizing' the totalitarian experience. But those memoirs were only the most polite kind of answers that the nationalists could offer, making instead slanders, public personal attacks, and innuendos their preferred instruments to vilify the critical analysis of the past and its proponents, as was in the case of Lucian Boia and in the subsequent decade of Vladimir Tismăneanu.

Since the 1990s, the work of revision has proceeded chronologically. The first specific case studies on the relationship between politics and historiography were aimed at analysing the Stalinist period, due a number of reasons: the excessive closeness of the Ceausescu era, the persistence of its personalities into the present (and often as heads of university departments and research centres) and the unavailability of archival sources. Despite the fact that historical revision has been opposed with all the possible means by the traditionalist historians and by a good part of the political sphere, the revisionist authors succeeded in establishing their interpretations in the public sphere and in a few research centres and university departments. At the beginning of the subsequent decade, two monographs on historiography and politics in the Gheorghiu-Dej era appeared.

In the 2000s, the historiography on the communist regime has also been revolutionized by the establishing of two historical commissions and new research centres. The major merits of these institutions have been on one hand to improve the conditions for historical research for those historians who have chosen not to dig into the classical national history paradigm, and on the other to bring theoretical and methodological innovations into historical studies from other social sciences and permitting then to build new historical narratives.

In recent years, historiography continued (and still continues) to be a minefield for its researchers[56]. Nevertheless, the gradual opening of the communist archives has permitted the verification of the patterns of research previously based exclusively on secondary sources, and has offered to the researchers and the broader intellectual community the opportunity to verify the general assumptions which have previously been verified in limited case studies. Finally, in 2015, the first general history on Romanian historiography under communism has been published.

Future research on the topic has a number of possibilities. One would be to deepen the understanding of the production of history-writing by analysing the interaction of party needs and networks' interests at organizational level: the institutions indicated as unstudied by Müller in 2003 are still left for the most part untouched. A contribution in this sense is my dissertation[57] which focuses on the struggle for power, resources and positions between mixed networks of historians, politicians from higher echelons and propagandists inside the Party History Institute (ISISP). In recent times, other monographs focusing on the history of cultural institutions during communism have paved the way for this

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[56] Zavatti (2013).
[57] Zavatti (2016).

first work[58], and more have the possibility to come on this or on other totally unexplored institutions.

Another possibility is to proceed by biographical method. Until now, only few short biographies of main protagonists of the Stalinization of Romanian historiography have been published on specialised reviews[59]. Since the 2000s, several biographies have been successful in shedding light on the complex relationship between cultural politics and totalitarian big and small Romanian dictators of culture[60]. By focusing on the biographies of historians and politicians, with a clear research question concerning history-writing and its relationship to political power, the same positive results will be obtained. Of the three avenues indicated, this is certainly the more consolidated.

A further step in the understanding of questions of autonomy and heteronomy of history-writing could potentially come from considering the transnational dimension of this phenomenon, looking at the internationalist intents that were embedded into party rhetoric and consequently into party-endorsed historiography, and proceeding to its Foucauldian genealogy. For example, the research project by Cristian Bogdan Iacob, Corina Doboş, Raluca Grosescu, Viviana Iacob and Vlad Paşca *Turning Global. Socialist Experts during the Cold War (1960s-1980s)*, despite not being focused on history-writing and political power, is a clear indication that the arguments of Michael David-Fox and György Péteri

could provide valid deep insights into the topic and that the investigation of the transnational and trans-systemic dimension of cold war-time scholarship is original, desirable, and feasible[61].

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[58] Macrea-Toma (2009), Corobca (2014), Kiss (2014).

[59] Plesa (2006), Vasile (2009), Vese (1998), Ţene (2013).

[60] Bosomitu (2015), Betea (2001), Levy (2001), Tismăneanu andVasile (2008).

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Barbara H. Vann

Velvet Memories: Looking back at 1989

Abstract

More than twenty-five years after the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia, the legacy of communism continues to be debated. Commemorations of the "Velvet Revolution" suggest a cultural memory of victory of the people over communism. Communicative memory, on the other hand, contains multiple strains and the picture it presents is far from unified. This dissonance between publically and privately expressed memories and their meaning is explored in interviews with Czechs about their memories of 1989.

Keywords: Communism, Czech Republic/Czechoslovakia, Velvet Revolution, Communicative Memory, Cultural Memory, Nostalgia

1. Introduction

Jan Assmann's seminal 1988 essay distinguished between what he calls 'communicative memory' and 'cultural memory'. Assmann's communicative memory is based on everyday interaction and communication, and consists of the historical experiences of contemporaries. Cultural memory is more institutionalized and rests on rituals and media; it is purposefully established and ceremonialized and takes place in what Assmann calls the "temporal dimension of the festival"[1]. Cultural memory is not the opposite of individual remembering; "Rather, it is the totality of the context within which such varied cultural phenomena originate"[2]. Adler and Leydesdorff[3] explain: "The memory of personal experience is … embedded in and voiced within the historical frames, genres, and grand narratives that enable individuals to make sense of their experiences and to have a credible voice in their societies." It is possible for many different strands of memory to take shape in a particular culture. In the Czechoslovakian case, there is a large degree of ambiguity in both individual and collective interpretations of the Velvet Revolution[4].

1.1 Background—November 17, 1989

This date is acknowledged as the catalyst that sparked the Velvet Revolution which brought communism to an end in Czechoslovakia. On this date, a student-organized commemoration of the 1939 execution of Czech students by the

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[1] Erll (2011), 28.
[2] Erll (2011), 7.
[3] Adler, Leydsdorff (2013), xviii.

[4] Lutherová (2010), 672.

Nazis, turned into a march of perhaps 50,000 which was intercepted by police who brutally beat a number of students. The rest of the story is history. The following days were marked by strikes and demonstrations which became larger and larger, culminating in an estimated 750,000 individuals gathered on Letná plain on 25th November. The communist government resigned; playwright-dissident Vaclav Havel became president. Concern with the preservation and disclosure of the 'velvet revolution' as a historical event was a major preoccupation of the government, the press, and the media in general[5]. As one author describes, "Yesterday's photographs played their part in today's events, as did the radio and television replays and the newspapers that, as they fought for their own independence, began to re-present the news"[6]. Lass continues: "Photographs of real people made public, they retain the faces but not the names. Yet, like all art […] they retain the specific while suggesting the general […] what was originally internalized and then recollected as 'mine' can be expressed and displayed as 'ours'"[7].

Media images from the time have become iconic; Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution is evidenced in photographs, monuments, books, films etc. that are widely available and well-entrenched in contemporary Czech culture. These embody Assmann's 'figures of memory', whose "memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)"[8]. Kubik and Bernhard use the term 'memory regime'[9] to refer to "cultural and institutional practices that are designed to publically commemorate and/or remember a single event, a relatively clearly delineated and interrelated set of events, or a distinguishable past process"[10]. The memory regime surrounding the Velvet Revolution is one that the government has played a major role in institutionalizing. After a long Parliamentary debate, a "law about the Institute of National Memory" (now The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes) was adopted in 2007 "to present a new and 'compact' interpretation of the most traumatic past that could be—in an institutionalized form and with the support of the state—presented as 'national' and understood as more or less official"[11]. This new 'national memory', focused on recognition and condemnation of the 'collective guilt of the clearly defined group of perpetrators', was supposed to "help the 'new' post-Communist Czech and Slovak nations to be recognized as exclusively positive"[12].

1.2 'Collected' Memories

Jeffrey Olick differentiates 'collected' and 'collective' memory, where collected memory refers to aggregated individual memories of members of a group and collective to "public discourses about the past as wholes or … narrative and images of the past that speak in the name of collectivities"[13]. As for the relationship between the two: "There is no doubt … that social frameworks shape what individuals remember, but ultimately it is only individuals who do

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[5] Lass (1994).

[6] Lass (1994), 98.

[7] Lass (1994), 101.

[8] Assmann (1995), 9.

[9] Kubik, Bernhard (2014).

[10] *Ibidem*, 16.

[11] Sniegon (2013), 122.

[12] *Ibidem*.

[13] Olick (1999), 345.

the remembering"[14]. Memories may be 'collected' in the form of narratives, which provide an empirical base for reconstructing not only social and political images of reality of memory-holders, but also make it possible to examine the social reality constructed by individuals[15]. Brockmeier[16] describes narrative as a 'memory practice' which plays a crucial role in meaning construction. Narrative enables us to think about our lives and ourselves in historical context[17], and consists of more than simply telling stories as it also involves understanding complex nets of actions and events[18]. The narrative is in fact "a site where the social is articulated and its contradictory implications are struggled over"[19].

Iconic images of the Velvet Revolution are readily available and firmly entrenched in the collective memory of November 1989. But what do *individuals* actually remember about 17 November? Or rather, how do they describe their 'remembering'? This paper examines a 'collection' of memory narratives of the Velvet Revolution.

2. The Study

2.1 The Sample

The sample of interviewees is the result of snowball sampling, following Shevchenko's 'theoretically modified sample' which involves drawing on "personal connections and referrals … but at the same time [striving] to include representatives of various social groups"[20]. An effort was made to interview family groups including several generations; some are blood-related, others are connected to each other but not related (e.g., individuals associated via their connection to the underground church). Effort was also made to include a sufficient number of Czechs living outside of Prague. The sample includes thirty-six respondents. Included are one former dissident, several former members of the communist party, some who can be considered 'intelligentsia' (professionals), blue collar workers, individuals associated with the underground church, agricultural workers, two *prababickas*, two individuals who were in their teens in 1989. Twenty-two live in Prague; 14 live in villages or towns elsewhere in the Czech Republic.

The oldest respondents range in age from late 70s to 94 (N=7). These individuals 'lived through it all'—as children under the Nazis and WWII, teens or young adults by the time of the Communist putsch in 1948, adults at the time of the 1968 Soviet invasion, age 53-69 in 1989. The next group ranges in age from 59 to 73 (N=15), born between1941 and 1955, who were age 15-27 in 1968; 38-48 in 1989. The 22 respondents in these two age groups lived under most or all of the 40 years of Czech Socialism.

The youngest group of respondents (N=14), born between 1950 and 1976 and currently age 38-53, belong to the generation referred to as 'Husak's children' (*Husákovy děti)* born during the baby boom beginning in 1969 under then Secretary General of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) Gustav Husak, who became President of Czechoslovakia in 1975. They grew up under 'normalization', the period following the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion during which Czech society was to be 'cleansed' of the

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[14] Olick (1999), 338.

[15] Berger and Luckmann (1991).

[16] Brockmeier (2002), 27.
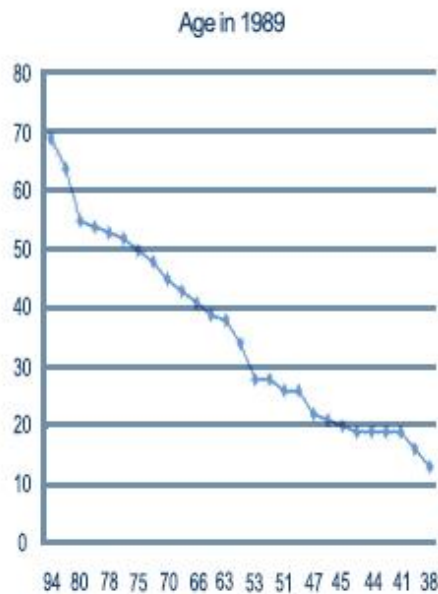
[17] Freeman (1993).

[18] Carrither (1992).

[19] Brockmeier (2002), 35.

[20] Shevchenko (2009), 180.

reforms of Prague Spring and Dubček's proposed 'socialism with a human face'—and returned to 'normal'; that is, conditions acceptable to the Soviets. This period is commonly referred to as 'the gray years', marked by widespread political apathy and acceptance of a modestly improved living standard and availability of consumer goods. The small number of dissidents (e.g., Vaclav Havel) were subject to harassment by secret police, loss of 'meaningful' employment and subsequent assignment to menial work, and sometimes arrest and prison. In 1989 these individuals were between age

Age in 1989

13 and 28.

Table 1. Age of Respondents by Age in 1989

2.3 The Interview

After initial questions to obtain demographic information, respondents were asked how old they were in 1989, where they were and what they were doing on 17 November, how they felt about what was happening, and what

they expected to happen. Other questions asked about the first thing they were able to do that they hadn't been able to do under Socialism, and whether their life changed, as well as whether they thought there is a lasting impact of socialism and what they see as the future of the Czech Republic. Approximately half of the interviews were conducted in Czech, approximately half in English. All interviews were recorded. English interviews were conducted by the author; Czech interviews were conducted by a native Czech speaker, who then translated them into English.

3. Findings

3.1 Remembering 1989

Nine respondents actively participated in the events surrounding 17 November: two were with the students who marched on 17 November, although neither were in the group who were met by the police. These two respondents and 7 others who found out what had happened to the students attended the demonstrations on subsequent days. Their accounts are quite strong and often emotional. As one individual describes: *I spent a whole week at Václavské náměstí. I saw all those flags, heard those speeches. It is similar to experiencing liberation or something like that*. (Jarmila, 70, 45)[21]. She is describing exactly what is depicted in the photographs from that week. On a few occasions the memory brought tears to the respondent's eyes. One respondent spontaneously quoted Havel's first speech to the crowd. All of these respondents are between ages 59 and 77. They directly

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[21] Interview quotes are in the form:
(pseudonym, current age, age in 1989)

experienced what has become part of the cultural memory—the photographs and video footage of the events in which they participated comprise the images universally associated with the Velvet Revolution.

These images allowed others to experience the events vicariously. As one 94 year old woman emotionally described, *I wasn't in the streets. I saw the students' demonstration (on television) and how they beat them. How the police went against them. I also remember happy people ringing the keys, Havel speaking from the balcony, Marta Kubišová singing…* (PB, 94, 69).

Most respondents found out what was happening through radio, television, discussion at work or elsewhere. At first they did not really know what was going on—most media remained under state control for several days. It was only Voice of America or other such sources that provided accurate information. Those living outside Prague did not feel connected to what was happening there, getting most of their information from television or radio. As one village resident stated flatly, *I don't remember anything. I saw something on TV* (Marta, 51, 27). She goes on to say that it was not until some years later, *when there were documentaries with people remembering the Velvet Revolution on TV that she found out what really happened. That it was so huge.* Another individual, who lived only 12 km from Prague said, *If we hadn't listened to the radio and watched TV or read the newspapers, we wouldn't have any idea. It had no effect on us here and people didn't know about it* (Marcela 64, 39).

The youngest respondents, who were in high school at the time, were not allowed by their parents to go to the demonstrations. Tereza (41, 16), although she wanted to go with the students, went with her family to their cottage for the weekend. When she returned she learned that some of her friends had gone and some were badly hurt and had to be hospitalized. They were then part of a recovery program for people who had been attacked. According to Tereza, *They were kind of stars.*

3.3 Was it a Good Thing?

Respondents' reactions included excitement, happiness, worry about what would happen, scepticism (*just another suppressed demonstration*), confusion, hope that things would change. Some were indifferent (*I didn't care*) or did not remember anything. Those with ties to the Communist Party expressed concern about the future. One older man worried: *I will not have a secure job, and I'll lose my security* (Franta, 68, 43). Another expressed uncertainty: *Suddenly there were different values* (Miroslav 68, 43). Overall, there were more positive than negative reactions. The reaction of one of the older respondents is particularly poignant: *We were waiting for the end of communism all the time. It was terrible when they took our farm from us. … Of course, I was happy that it had ended, that we can do what we want and that children can do what they want….Now, it is better, there is more freedom* (Iveta, 89, 64).

Memories regarding the effects of the Velvet Revolution differed drastically. A number of individuals responded that there were none, or at least no immediate effects. According to others, however, *Everything was suddenly completely new* (Zděnek, 64, 39); *It was freedom* (Eva, 78, 53). *For some the effects were monumental: For more than 20 years I felt nervous about finding the invitation for the interrogation to the StB when I came home. The biggest change is that I can work here* (Stefan, 77, 52).

Most people indicated that they expected things to be better, using remarkably similar language: *They*

promised and promised how great it would be" (Petr, 53, 28); "We were all looking forward to the better times…Because they promised (Denisa, 53, 28). Unfortunately, many people do not feel that this has been the case. A number of respondents expressed sentiments similar to the following: *They promised us we would be doing great and it is still not like that* (Jarda, 51, 27).

3.4 Memories of Life under Socialism

Not only did people remember the Velvet Revolution differently; there were significant differences in the way interviewees described life under socialism. A predominant theme in these recollections was that during socialism "things were better"—from the quality of food (*The basic things were higher quality products than today—meat, milk…it was much better* [Marta 51, 26]); to health care (*…during communism [someone] could see the doctor without paying anything and she would have very good care* [Radim 68, 43]); and especially social security (*Everybody had a job, social welfare was much better; today many things are for money* [Marcela 63, 39]).

Among individuals whose lives had been negatively affected by communism, a radically different theme is present. The sentiment that "things were worse" is clear in the responses of these interviewees. As one older woman stated: *I don't like it when people tell me that it used to be better under communism. The ones who didn't experience all the fears and horrors and friends in exile … Those who remember the worst times are dying and younger people can't imagine that they need to do something for freedom* (Eva 78, 53). Another respondent is very clear as to his position: *When I was ten years old, I first experienced a house search. I had no illusions about communism. I used to visit my relatives in*

prison and [saw] the conditions there and I also knew they were innocent … for me, communism was waiting for the possible arrest (Ivan 64, 39).

A third theme can be described as, "it was what it was," indicating resignation to the situation, although not necessarily dissatisfaction—a sort of middle ground. As one interviewee explained: *…you live somewhere—perhaps you need a bigger flat but you don't get it—and many things are difficult but if you are a modest person, if you do not want to travel anywhere, if you don't want to for instance read books that are not published here; if you don't want to see new films from abroad, or if you don't want to be active politically, you may live, well, you may be quite satisfied and live a quiet life* (Zdenek, 64, 39). Another's response included some of the most commonly mentioned deficiencies of communism: *I was a realist. We couldn't go to the West so I didn't go to the West. I didn't miss it. … Sometimes some goods were missing. But you got used to it* (Miroslav, 68, 43). Interviewer: "What was missing?" Miroslav: "*Toilet paper.*"

One respondent, in her 20s at the time of the revolution, voices a pragmatic view: *I could see that there were problems, that people were in prison, but I saw it as fact. We didn't know the alternative; they didn't inform us about how it really looked in the West. We were taught that in the West there were terrible people who exploited others and poor people were lying on the streets. And they were really poor and we were much better. But when somebody came back from the West, he or she told us how great it was there. So it was confusing. But I accepted it as fact. I didn't believe it completely, but I didn't know what to think.* (Zuzana 45, 20).

4. Analysis

4.1 Competing Narratives

There is no one unified story in the narratives of these respondents. The dissonance among the communicative memories of these respondents is immense, as is the dissonance between communicative memory and cultural memory in some cases. The memories of those who were directly involved in the events of the Velvet Revolution are based on lived experience of what has become cultural memory. These individuals witnessed first-hand the images and sounds that have been preserved as iconic representations of the Velvet Revolution. And these images allowed others to experience these events vicariously, aligning their communicative memory with cultural memory. The memories of others, however, do not resonate with cultural memory. Those (although not all) who were communists do not share the 'official' cultural memory of the Velvet Revolution; in fact, there is no favourable place in this cultural memory for them. However, it is not just communists who do not share this memory; for a sizeable number, the Velvet Revolution seems to have little meaning. They did not experience it directly, either because they were living in areas largely unaffected by events, or were involved in their personal lives and were not interested in politics. They are, of course, aware of the cultural memory of the Velvet Revolution, but it is not a memory that means much to them.

And then there are those who are somewhere in between. The sentiment that communism was not a big deal, and should just be forgotten, was expressed in a number of interviews. These individuals have no interest in the commemorations of the Velvet Revolution, see no danger in forgetting the communist past nor feel any obligation to 'come to terms' with it. In the words of one: *It was a long time ago. Nobody cares anymore* (Petr 53, 28). The cultural memory of the Velvet Revolution is one that should be forgotten.

For many, the Velvet Revolution was a seamless turnover of government having little to do with them, and seemingly not having that much impact on their lives. Socialism provided a secure existence, steady employment, enough money to have a decent standard of living, basic food, and as long as you went along with the system and kept out of trouble you were okay. Life was…normal. For most of the generation who grew up under socialism, this was the only life they knew, so how could they expect anything better? They didn't experience the 1950s, and if their parents or grandparents had bad experiences, they were not likely to share them with their children or grandchildren. So the end of socialism was not something they had wished for, although, by the time it occurred, many had seen it coming.

For them, the main benefit of democracy is freedom to travel abroad, but many are not able to do so because they can't afford it. A theme of disillusionment runs through their narratives.

Data from the Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM) reveals that about one-sixth of Czechs still long for a return to communism. I don't think that the individuals in my sample who expressed dissatisfaction with the present and nostalgia for the communist past actually want a return to communism. They are nostalgic toward the socialist past because it provided them with a structured and relatively easy life that fulfilled basic survival needs and more. They feel betrayed, disappointed that democracy and capitalism have not

resulted in the 'better life' they were promised. Nets-Zehngut observed that "Collective memory is powerfully influenced by the present via two main paths: first, culturally, through the inevitable impact of the culture on the way people view the past. Second, instrumentally, through the conscious deliberate manipulation of the past for the interests of the present"[22]. In the more than twenty-five years since the end of socialism, Czech culture has undergone many changes—economically, politically, socially. Some view these changes positively and are appreciative of the freedom to travel, pursue educational and vocational paths, and so on. Others have a more negative view, focusing on corruption, economic instability, loss of state support, etc. Nostalgia for what is remembered as a 'better' time under socialism can be seen "as a commentary on contemporary politics and market forces and as a form of resistance to Western hegemonies, rather than a mournful longing for the past"[23]. This is reflected over and over in the interviews I conducted. In the words of one respondent, *It is true [that there is more freedom now], but there weren't children who hadn't any money for lunch as it was on TV the other day. It wasn't like that under communism.* (Magda 74, 49)

In Brockmeier's terms, we are members of a variety of 'contexts of cultural participation'—families, classes, political parties etc. — and so we remember according to various social frames that emphasize different aspects of our experienced reality[24]. When it is a problematic or difficult past that is being remembered, different actors will often present multiple and competing versions of this past[25]. The most striking differences in this group of interviewees are between people who were personally negatively affected by communism—they lost jobs, were not allowed to attend university or study what they wanted to; or who were somehow acting against communism, as a dissident, through the underground church, or were politically aware for whatever reason—and those who were just trying to live a quiet life. During socialism, their everyday lives differed. Although everyone lived with the awareness of informers, those involved in dissident activities or with anti-communist sentiments lived with the very real likelihood that they could be 'invited' to an interview with the StB, could lose their job, could jeopardize their children's education. This was in fact the experience of a minority of these respondents. They view democracy as positive, despite problems. As one respondent, an ex-dissident explained: *Even today, when of course I am angry with a thousand things here—in certain ways I am quite disappointed—but juxtaposed with what was before…it's incomparable bliss. Now we can be angry with corrupt politicians, which Chartists—that's what we were fighting for, to be able to be angry about corrupt politicians without being afraid that tomorrow you will see much worse things. So this never left me. I mean, I really value what we have got, and I am extremely happy, even though I am angry.* (Viktor, 68, 43)

4.2 Memory Politics

More than twenty-five years have passed since the end of Czech communism. The question of how to deal with the communist past is complicated, and in the Czech case, remains unanswered.

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[22] Nets-Zehngut (2011), 236.
[23] Haukanes and Trnka (2013), 4.
[24] Brockmeier (2002), 23.

[25] Tomczuk (2016), 107, citing Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz (1991).

Clearly, the competing narratives in the communicative memories of these Czechs indicate that there is no single, unified story surrounding the Velvet Revolution. Perhaps enough time has now passed so that a more complete cultural memory of November 1989 can be acknowledged, in contrast to what one author has referred to as "rather a myth than an image of the event"[26]. According to Lutherová, at the very core of the "modern myth of the 1989 revolution there are ambivalent memories and interpretations of the revolution's events, which are associated with the change of social system and also with the course of the 'revolutionary' events themselves"[27].

It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore the relationship between communicative and cultural memory of the Velvet Revolution. A broader picture of the development of this cultural memory is needed, including the ways in which it has been commemorated in the ensuing years since 1989. A comparison of the Czech case to other post-socialist countries would no doubt aid in the understanding of Czech memory, as there is evidence of competing narratives elsewhere[28]. As one author observes, based on analysis of the situation in Romania: "There is an implicit tension between the elite formalization of recent history and the naturally occurring diversity of experiences, perspectives, and interpretations. Investigating the politics of memory and historical representation should not automatically presuppose a search for 'grand narratives' and ultimate truth but rather a closer engagement with the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of different life-worlds, the multitude of local voices, and the variety of means of expression and relations to the body politic"[29].

Tileagă argues that in addition to studying formal aspects of social memory, 'lived' experience, often containing "conflicting attitudinal and mnemonic stances and interpretative frameworks," should be studied as well, as it is "in the sometimes contradictory, paradoxical attitudes and meanings that members of society communicate, endorse, and debate" that the meaning of the social memory of communism can be found[30]. To understand the relationship of post-communist societies to their recent history, it is not only the question, "How does one tell the 'story' of communism?" that must be asked, but also, "How many stories of communism can one tell?"[31].

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[26] Lutherová (2015), 674.
[27] Lutherová (2015), 674.
[28] Grama (2009) on Romania; Piškurić (2014) on Slovenia.

[29] Tileagă (2012)a, 474.
[30] Tileagă (2012) b, 475.
[31] Tileagă (2012) b, 479.

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Dumitru-Alin SAVU

Nurturing Nostalgia: Memory, Food, Communism

Abstract

The aim of my article is to deconstruct the notion of 'nostalgia for communism' by undertaking ethnographical research on the nostalgia phenomenon related to the alimentation associated with the period in question. Focusing on food recall, I will try to demystify and clarify piece by piece the nostalgia for communism that has often been projected as an indicator of national political culture despite being researched or presented in a reductionist and superficial manner.

Keywords: Food, Nostalgia, Pseudo-nostalgia, Communism, Post-communism

Introduction

My research perspective is twofold: on the one hand, it is nurtured by a personal-subjective curiosity, and, on the other, by a scientific interest amplified by the recurrence of the idea of 'nostalgia for communism' both in mass-media and within academia. The public perspectives around this topic range from nationalist essentialism to critical analyses that try to shed some light on the political nature of the issue, and especially on the social – individual and collective – aspect of reckoning with the past. In this context, my paper revolves around a particular interrogation that aims at indirectly approaching the ideological and political problems raised by communist nostalgia, while accessing the memory of the communist past through alimentation. As food is an edible dynamic – a visceral, daily link between the personal and the political[1], the information one can extract through this endeavour can offer valuable clues regarding the way we see the political past and how we choose to remember it. To put it another way, in the following pages, I will try to find out what food and alimentation can tell us about the view point of the present towards the communist past.

The aim of my article is to deconstruct the notion of 'nostalgia for communism' by undertaking ethnographical research on the nostalgia phenomenon related to the alimentation associated with the period in question. Focusing on the recollections about food, I will try to demystify and clarify piece by piece the nostalgia for communism that has often been projected as an indicator of national political culture, despite it being researched or presented in a reductionist and superficial manner[2].

Before moving on with my research questions, I will clarify an essential aspect regarding the formulation of the main concepts. First of all, the focus of my paper is not on 'nostalgia for

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[1] Belasco (2005), 217-234.

[2] „Jumătate dintre români suspină după comunism – sondaj" (Half of Romanians sigh after Communism), *Ziare.com*, 10 December 2013. http://www.ziare.com/nicolae-ceausescu/comunism/jumatate-dintre-romani-suspina-dupa-comunism-sondaj-1272227 (Accessed 20 April 2015).

'communism', but on 'nostalgia for *the communist past*', a period in time corresponding to the socialist regime – an essential difference to point out that avoids the politicisation of the subject. Moreover, it is important to ask at what aspect of the communist past this nostalgia is directed. Is it a set of governmental policies, a more effective state or an ideal image of the self or household? What role did the development of material culture play in creating the image of this past? What kind of evaluations are made in relation to the alimentation during the communist period – are these evaluations aimed at quantity, quality, emotions, and personal values of general life-style?

Methodology

These are some of the questions I will try to answer in the following pages whose ethnographic material is based upon a relatively reduced sample of subjects, most of them being friends or relatives (therefore, a bias should be considered in this sense). The reason for selecting these subjects is on the one hand the convenience of the research process, but most importantly, it is represented by a mind for self-knowledge.

The main research instrument used was the in-depth interview, in most cases taking place in the homes of the subjects, being occasioned by informal discussions or the event of common meals. Regarding the interviews patterns, I have tried to follow five points I considered to be central to my research: a) the object of alimentary nostalgia (a dish, a cooking instrument, an ingredient, the cook etc.), b) the source(s) of food (the household, the store, friends etc.), c) special moments, special foods (including the moments of lacking food), d) the lost way of cooking…or not? (One of the questions

addressed in this case was: if you miss a certain dish, does it mean you cannot find it or cannot cook it anymore? Why?). Usually, this latter direction lead to narrations relating to the material culture associated with alimentation and more generally to the kitchen or the household, this being one of the essential aspects of the research which I have explored using both participative and direct observation. An interesting observation to add relating both to methodology and the potential of the topic addressed is the fact that most of the interviews unfolded under the incidence of a phenomenological approach that was induced in most part by the interviewees.

Data collection took place in January-February 2014, in Topoloveni and Călinești, two small urban, respectively rural localities in the Argeș county, Romania, on a sample of 11 persons, of which five are men and six are women aged between 36 and 86. In what regards the occupations of the subjects, the sample is quite heterogeneous spanning from unqualified workers in agriculture, a carpenter and a tailor, to an engineer, military cadre and a magistrate. However, it is relevant to note that among these subjects, there are a few who now live off a pension and some who have lost the jobs for which they had trained during communism – such as a lathe machinist, a horticulturist – and now either work as unqualified labour force or are unemployed. Most of the subjects still live in the same locality they were born in or moved from the commune to the small nearby city, thus reasonably close to the parents or relatives, with only two exceptions of persons currently living in Bucharest.

Understanding Nostalgia, Memory and the Senses

Without turning this essay into a debate regarding the meaning and theoretical placement of the concept of nostalgia, it is however of utmost importance to define the object of this research. How, then, can one define nostalgia? Setting aside the first medical references of the term and focusing more concretely on the phenomenon put forth both in mass media and academia, I adopt Svetlana Boym's definition of nostalgia as a longing for a different time, usually for an idealised childhood[3]. Boym also makes a very relevant distinction, although not exhaustive, between restorative and reflective nostalgia. The first one is rather an attempt at reconstructing the lost paradise, to patch the gaps in one's memory, while the latter proposes a critical vision, if not even ironic, of the 'absolute truth', comparing the past with the present and shedding everything in a light of doubt[4]. This latter direction seems to be taken by Gerald Creed when he talks about Romania, arguing that the lack of a clear break with the communist past as well as the continuity and reproduction of communist political elites leaves the impression that restoration is not necessarily needed, as not everything is lost. Thus, the nostalgia for the communist past, states Creed, is rather a form of a social critique of the present by comparing it to the past[5].

However, as Alan Watts observes, one cannot compare a present experience with another from the past, but with a memory of that past experience, memory that is part of the present experience[6]. This

observation enriches with two complementary aspects our conceptual context: first of all, looking from the present towards the past, one needs the lens of memory, which, adding to the fact that is selective and lacks unity, represents a process of permanent reconstructions of the past experiences around dominant frames, not just a repository of data[7]. Therefore, we are dealing with certain memories of the communist past and history as institutional memory, all of them in a continuous process of re-evaluation and reconstruction. Secondly, if memory depends on the experience of the present, then the communist past will inevitably be constructed and reconstructed differently each time one remembers it, depending on the present context.

Consequently, to understand communist nostalgia, one needs memories of repeated experiences, experiences which are repetitive by their ritual and functional nature, which can offer a coherent, particular measure of life during the socialist regime. By all means, food seems to satisfy these conditions, being a flexible register of society, evolving along with it, recording and materialising changes without losing connection to the past either. Thus, one could argue that food is one of the mnemonic substances essential in laying down the layers of memory that Paul Ricoeur talks about, layers that mark not only different sets of events in a life-time, but also their different period of socialisation[8]. Therefore, it is justified to approach the memory of the political past through the medium of alimentary nostalgia.

Moreover, David Sutton[9] argues that food and memory go hand in hand so

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[3] Boym (2001), 3-15.

[4] *Ibidem*, 16-20, 76-90.

[5] Creed (2010), 29-46.

[6] Watts (1979), 67.

[7] Halbwachs (2008), 141-151.

[8] Ricoeur (2009), 245-247.

[9] Sutton (2001).

well that they can form a very complex analytical structure for the experience of daily life and its narratives. Where does this strong connection between food and memory originate? Sutton provides two complementary answers: the first one rises from the anthropology of senses and of physical experiences, putting forward the fact that taste and smell, two of the most important sensorial attributes of food, do not have well defined verbal categories, as opposed to sight for example. For this reason, the evocative nature of food makes it easier to associate said food with varied remembered moments rather than with verbal forms. In other words, memory uses food as a channel of expressing taste and smell which are anchored in physical life, and can be easily associated with daily life and thus, effortlessly recognised by the interlocutor.

The second explanation focuses on structure and history, sustaining the fact that each meal encompasses a structure connected to a larger system of meaning made up of similar structures present in memories and stories created through food[10]. The two arguments converge in the idea that food and memory form together not only a system of communication through articulating senses, but also a critical system of reflecting on life, through framing those messages in a holistic landscape. This argument has also been approached by Mary Douglas who tried to 'decipher a meal', and thus to prove the fact that each meal is an ordered system of meaning that mirrors all systems associated with it, evoking a coherent whole, a structural repetition of interdependent domains[11].

Returning to the sensorial anthropology approach, it is again Sutton that completes the picture, consolidating

the idea that alimentary nostalgia is not a simple recurrent image of the past, but a process – reconstruction, remembrance, rethinking of the communist period through food. Detailing on the prevalence of senses in shaping memory and identity, Sutton emphasizes the synaesthetic capacity of food which, by combining senses, obtains a considerable evocative force[12]. To put it other way, the remembered experience of food will not be a flat one, but multidimensional, bringing to the spotlight details that can rebuild an entire new world, from a dominantly subjective perspective. Based on these theoretical perspectives, I will try, in the following pages, not just to listen or see/read the past, but also to smell it, taste it or touch it, searching to rediscover and understand this rather strange past world.

How the Present sees the Past through Food

Taking all these theoretical arguments into consideration, I shall ask a crucial question for this study: what is, at the end of the day, the object of this alimentary nostalgia? Or put it in other words: What does this remembered food evoke? Examining the interviews within the coherent picture of nostalgia for the communist past, I will try to provide interpretations on four dimensions of this whole: one related to senses and synaesthesia, a second one regarding aspects of material culture, a third one focused on connotations of family and community that find their expression through this kind of nostalgia and last, but not least, a part regarding well-being understood especially in qualitative terms, from an ecological perspective and related

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[10] *Ibidem*, 8-18.
[11] Douglas (1997), 36-54.

[12] Sutton (2001), 120-125.

to the notion of life-style. The result of this analysis will provide a series of clues concerning the answer to the question in the title of this chapter.

To begin with, I introduce the first convergence of the interviews: depicting alimentary nostalgia as a longing for 'the tastes, the flavours of back then', the smells and vivid colours that seem impossible to recreate – *that vinegar was so…pinkish, with white onion, we would dip it in there and ate it with polenta"*– or graphic images of food being cooked – *"it would formicate there for a whole day – fol, fol, fol – on a small fire!*. Talking about the food his father sometimes prepared, Mr. V. recalls the image of a small wooden puppet his father had made for him. Observing his gestures and the affection transmitted with this story, there is no wonder in this change of topic as the joy of the gift of food was lived at the same intensity when receiving the toy. These common points usually came as an answer to opening questions such as 'Which food comes up into your mind when you think about your life in communism?', a question which most of the times occasioned a life-story narration.

On a slightly different note, I might add that food grants to these personal, affective memories a degree of generality, connecting them to the perception of political and social context of the period: *The baloney [parizerul]! This was the food of the worker who left to work!* or *Oranges, bananas – always green, wrapped in paper, on the wardrobe – and Pepsi, […] this kind of products __were rare__*, or *[…]I knew my way around, as I had connections and I got almost anything I needed on the bend. I had connections at the slaughter house […] I'd always get fillet.*

Moreover, the baloney and especially the similar meat products like sausages or salami are a recurrent item mostly among the male respondents. The preferences for these products were not necessarily related to the political, but to a certain quality of them – the sausages *were juicier*, and the 'Trandafir' ones were *made out of meat minced by hand, with a knife, not with a machine* and the baloney… *what a baloney we had then! Not the cheap painted plastic of today!* Still, it is relevant to point out that baloney is associated with the statute of the working class citizen, one of the defining elements of the new man's conduct. Work is also one of the main topics that dominates the latest surveys regarding nostalgia for the communist past – the work place is regretted as part of the long and short-term social security measures of the socialist political regime[13], being considered as one of the major losses in the present (mostly because of the economic crisis and its bad management) and used as a term of comparison between the two periods symbolically divided by the 1989 moment.

Regarding women, what prevails in their remembrance of the communist food is the image of the corn and wheat or even bran bread – *there was even a poem: I am the puffy corn-bread, gathered from the flour chest…* Unlike men, and in the context of the same traditional cultural code, what recurs in women's narrations is the cooked food, the stress being more on the process of cooking than on eating or tasting. In this sense, there is an abundance of details – the narrative of baking bread in a *pumpkin shell* and its setting *on nut tree leaves* reconstructs an image of the past that does not just bring back tactile and olfactory sensations (*a thicker pulp […] Oh, how nice it smelled when*

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[13]A poll by IRES, *Românii și nostalgia comunismului* (Romanians and the Communist Nostalgia) 21-13 July 2010. http://www.ires.com.ro/articol/93/romanii--i-nostalgia-comunismului (Accessed 20 April 2015.

we'd put it in the oven!), but also an entire inventory of ingredients and material culture which, on the one hand, offers clues about the status of women in the communist period, and, on the other, marks a reference in the social history and evolution of the Romanian household.

At this point, the stories gradually build around omnipresent instruments of past times like the cast iron kettle or cooker. The metallic material is an essential detail as in the respective period, *I don't think there was a household not to have such a cast iron kettle. Now they're all made of aluminium,* tells me a 73 year old 'heroine of the socialist society' showing a downright despise. The discontent is generally related to the replacing of some materials such as the ceramics or burned clay with pots made of metal or plastic, *because they seemed modern, better.* Moreover, the evolution of the institutions related to the kitchen (but also to the household in general) seem to have lost connection with food – *The mill doesn't ground the same either […] instead of the polenta to hold together, I get a pulp that hangs in there,* confesses a women in her 50s, whose disappointment is poignant especially in her repulsing way of pronouncing the word *'pulp'.*

Another example of evolving material culture negatively perceived nowadays, and in a nostalgic light of the past, is the equipment of the kitchen with a cooking stove which burns gas instead of wood (at least in the case of the rural households) which produced a major change not just with regards to the taste or the recipe, but also in the practice and time spent by the cook in the kitchen. Ms. C. S., for example, reckons that she used to spend more time with the iron cast kettle on the wood stove – *the food comes out differently on a wooden fire* – and the preparation of some usual foods on the gas stove has become a drudgery, *have me*

make a polenta on this gas stove! I struggle to mix in, to turn it and it still doesn't come out right! Certainly, in the case of the urban areas, the gas stove produced in the communist period represented an irreplaceable instrument in the kitchen, even if sometimes it broke. One of the female respondents tells me that she fixed the old gas stove several times not because there were no money, but *for fear I would not find such a good oven.*

In the same register of alimentary material culture, the nostalgic images of intra- and extra-community relations burst out, some of them almost ritualistic through their repetition. For example, the metal spoons, narrates Ms. P.C., *were given once a year to be tinned. Some would come on the road and would shout and we would follow them momentarily - <Come, everyone, the tinsmiths are here!> - and where they made fire, that is where everybody gathered.*

In a strong bond with these material culture elements, as remarked in the latter example, there is the source of energy that turns ingredients into food – *the fire.* However, fire is not just a thermal agent, but a binder for the group, the community, preparing not only the food, but creating also connections, relations, inter-human experiences developed around the table. Fire opened the way for narration, for transmitting knowledge (maybe even recipes), practices and norms. Ms. C. S. sets the wood-fire above the gas stove flame, thus underlining the very idea mentioned above: *On the fire, outside, on the noose…it's something else! I liked sitting around the fire when they made țuica. We would gather in big crowds and sit around for stories.*

In the nostalgic flow of stories about food, family members or loved ones appear often, either *stealing the cream from the milk set to curdle in clay pots covered with paper,* or *eating small fleas* [warmed greaves covered in polenta] *and enticing us:*

<Mmmm, this is really good!> while we were wallowing in the warmth of the bed. Inevitably, food is about *us*, not just about the person telling the story. Ms. M. R. recalls that *at the sacrificing of the pig one would meet all the relatives*, the food transforming itself in a special event and an occasion for communion, which seems to have lost its meaning now. This aspect of alimentary nostalgia is not haphazard if we are to consider the result of several researchers concluding that by transforming food in a simple commodity available anytime, practically reduces it to the nutrient function and unbalances the routine of the common cooked meal; in other words, the meal is not an event anymore, it has become a biological process, therefore we eat more alone than 'before'[14].

Concerning the idea of well-being mentioned above, its recurrence in nostalgic remembrances of the kitchen in communism is materialised in varied forms. As stressed out along this paper, food, by combining stimuli and senses, can evoke a whole world. In this sense, the memories unravelled by the respondents unveil integration not only of the food, but especially of the human in the ecosystem that they are part of. The lack of standard ingredients, the penury is remembered recurrently, but most often in a brief manner and conjunction with (re)discovering specific recipes, particular through their flavours:

R. – Can you remember any recipes you used?

A.P. – Beans soup![…]We didn't even have oil, it was hard to find – in beans soup we would use nuts, we'd crush them so the oil came out and then throw them in the boiling pot. God, how good it was!

What seems to be evoked here is a certain harmony between human and

nature which offers unlimited opportunities as long as people are perceptive. Moreover, it also suggests that penury is not necessarily the focus, but rather the ability to substitute what was missing and make food taste just as good or even better. Leaving aside the romanticising of this period, one can notice an important stress on the sustainability of resources: *we'd eat onion with plum vinegar […] we'd make this vinegar from the water that remained from scalding the plums and then dried them for the winter, fat plums, the last to go ripe. We'd scald them, sometimes even with pears, then we'd let this juice somewhere outside in the sun, in the heat, to ferment, and when we'd take it, it was sour. We'd even use it to rinse our hair when washing.*

The individual works with the environment and inevitably the relation becomes coherent and reciprocal: *We'd clean in front of the gate every Saturday […] Oh, how many leaves would fall from Aunt Ioana's tree! We'd take mushrooms from under it sometimes.*

Moreover, even the products bought from stores are seen as being superior in quality to those of today (remember the baloney!), especially the sweets. Once again, the commerce itself seems inscribed in this circle of the natural pace of things *now we eat the same things all the year round! Yesterday I saw at Prima* [supermarket] *a casserole of strawberries…in February!* Complementing this 'normality' of stores and markets from back then, there is an emphasis on the importance of the home – *we'd eat what we made **at home**. What we had in our **home**, that's what we ate!* – tells me Ms. P., very serious and categorical. All these stories converge to a conclusion that is quite intuitive – good health: *we didn't use to hear about all these illnesses […] maybe one would be sick from eating too much.* While it is natural to link this idea to the biases of nostalgia towards

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[14] Pollan (2008), 188-191.

one's one youth and ability, it is also worth noticing its intimate connection to the above-mentioned collaboration between the human and the environment. This approach raises an issue underlined both by Michael Pollan and Claude Fischler, but picturesquely expressed by Ms. C.S.:

R. – *What do you mean that it was simpler?*

C.S. – *I don't seem to remember caring that much about food. I mean, you know that saying: you eat in order to live, not live in order to eat. I don't know, we had some rules, simple customs, we'd fast sometimes and that was it.*

Consumption just for the sake of it, or for the profit, an almost infinite offer but very homogenous of the global market, the lack of connection with the natural cycles, all lead to what Fischler calls gastro-anomy, a disintegration of the socio-cultural patterns that used to guide alimentation[15]. Furthermore, Pollan emphasises the fact that a process so natural and almost instinctual as eating has become so complicated and maze-like that it completely mesmerises us[16]. The same arguments seem to be extracted from my respondents' conclusions – the natural, the healthy, the tasty are not even by far traits of the socialist regime, but characteristics of a simpler life-style (simplified and essentialised at time through the filter of memory), more coherent and more integrated in the environment.

Although most of the times nostalgia is synonymous with the irreversible, in the case presented up to this point, there seem to be solutions for the reconstruction of that past food patterns – one can choose to eat/cook/buy at least a part of the nostalgia menu, but

the problem arises in the same quality of food that helps us to remind another time, space, a certain sense of community and family – that quality of being rooted, totally integrated in the landscape it evokes. In other words, the food from back then is not compatible with the world of the present. Ms. C.S. tells us why:

R. – *What's different now for you in the kitchen?*

C.S. – *[…] I haven't got time anymore to sit around all day long waiting for a pot of beans to boil […] it is about being used to more comfort, but also about the fact that I work now. Back then, this was the only thing I would do: I'd sit at home cook food starting in the morning, all day long.*

Another interviewee draws attention to the fact that tastes and personal preferences evolve along with age and thus with the continuous process of socialisation (through consumption):

R. – *Think about a taste that you miss from that period.*

I.S. – *When I was a child I'd eat lard spread on bread, I'd steal it from the pantry, but if you give me some now, I think I'd vomit on the spot.*

We discover thus a paradox of alimentary nostalgia which evokes moments that were savoured with love, passion, appetite that however do not find their place in present life, but as memories at once extolled and criticised.

Conclusions

What have we found out unravelling alimentary nostalgias from the Romanian communist past? Can we speak about a kind of nostalgia for communism expressed through food? We can rather notice several varied nostalgias that inevitably refer to the socialist political regime, considering the potential of food to rebuild an entire world from

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[15] Fischler (1980), 937-53.
[16] Pollan (2008), 1-15.

memories, as well as the degree of permeation the political had over even the most intimate details of private life. In other words, to exemplify this idea, it is not the penury brought about by the last years of communism that is dearly remembered, but the alternatives, the solutions found to this structural problem. On the other side, the baloney, an industrially processed product, exterior to the household, is strongly associated with the statute of the worker, harking back to the socialist policies regarding social protection that are mostly missed during the present context of 'market flexibility'.

However, the most poignant conclusion of my study is the feeling of a lost balance both at individual level, and in the social interactions, and with the environment. These aspects are not described as being linked to the socialist regime, but on the contrary, to a vision about the self and the world that should resist any exterior offence or obstacle. In fact, it happens often that my respondents talk about communism with the immediate mention of resilience. The attempt of de-structuring intimate life and remodelling it to fit the 'ethics and equity of the socialist society' is a strong reason for the said resilience – *I knew my way around, as I had connection and I got almost anything I needed on the bend.* – tells me Mr. D.C. In other words, nostalgia is not for the socialist regime, but for the courage and the power of the younger self to resist to such transformations while remaining human, attributes that seem to have been given up in the post-1989 period – *the age of consumption and commodity*, as described by Ms. C.S. – most like the way old pots were traded up for the new plastic ones, *because they seemed modern, better.*

I conclude that my respondents look from the present at the past being disoriented (gastro-anomy) by daily choices that, even though elementary,

they consume too much energy and unbalance the economy of time. In fact, their nostalgic glance does not even stress out the past, but rather it arises as a kind of critique for an undefined, uncertain, and unpromising present. This critical approach to what we called nostalgia for the communist past seems to be driven by a search for an answer regarding the future.

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Jolanta Jonaszko

Katyń 1940: National Trauma, Memory, and Reconciliation in Polish-Russian Relations

Abstract

The Memory of Katyń, which became a Polish national memory of trauma, developed in opposition to the official Communist discourse in Poland. This was neither a linear nor a unitary process, but it was a process which embedded the Katyń crime in the Polish memorial culture and thus blended it with narratives of fight for independence, national identity and victimhood.

Keywords: Cultural Trauma, Polish National Memory, Katyń, Polish-Russian Relations

Introduction

On April 10, 2010, the airplane Tupolev 154 carrying the Polish president, his wife, numerous important politicians and public personalities fell in the vicinity of the Katyń forest. None of the ninety six passengers survived.

The Polish delegation flew to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyń massacre of 1940 and perished in the same place in which seventy years ago Polish officers were murdered by the NKVD. The irony of this coincidence was clear to everyone. What was unclear, however, was the effect that this catastrophe would have on Polish-Russian relations, and on the Polish memory culture.

The Memory of Katyń, which became a Polish national memory of trauma, developed in opposition to the official Communist discourse in Poland. This was neither a linear nor a unitary process, but it was a process which embedded the Katyń crime in the Polish

memorial culture and thus blended it with narratives of fight for independence, national identity and victimhood.

Furthermore, the study of the memory of Katyń helps us to reflect upon the more general questions regarding the relationship between history, memory and politics, and the formulation of historical policy on Katyń, in Poland and Russia, in the past and at present. Furthermore, in the case of such atrocious acts as the Katyń massacre, it is impossible to evade the questions of morality, legality and responsibility.

Polish-Russian Relations before Katyń

Katyń is a village located in the Smoleńsk region in Russia, but hardly anyone knows about it. Katyń features in history and international relations not as a place, but as a symbol. It stands for one of the most atrocious crimes committed in the history of mankind. In the spring of 1940, around 14 500 Polish officers, held in three NKVD camps in Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobelsk, were secretly murdered

and buried in the Katyń forest in the Smoleńsk region. Additionally, around 7000 prisoners from Ukrainian and Belorussian prisons were executed. In 1943 the Germans announced the discovery of a mass grave of around 5000 military officers near Katyń. Since then, up until the year 1990, the Soviet authorities have denied the responsibility for this crime.

However, the Katyń crime was not a beginning and a primary cause of tension in Polish-Russian relations, but it was rather a continuation and a tragic complication of these relations. The diplomatic history between the two countries since the Polish-Muscovite Wars in the 17th century can broadly be described as a story of conflict. In the introduction to a path-breaking study and document collection, *Katyń: A Crime without Punishment*, Anna M. Cienciala writes: "The roots of the Katyń massacre lie in the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 23 August 1939, which led to the German-Soviet partition of Poland. Katyń must also be viewed, however, in the broad context of Russo-Polish relations – the past was very much in the minds of Poles and Russians in 1939, though mainly in the shape of mutually negative stereotypes"[1].

Without analysing the 'negative charge' that builds up in stereotypes that nations have of each other, the murders committed by one nation on another cannot be fully understood. Moreover, without taking account of the history prior to the murders committed, the chances of overcoming the past, in the sense of the German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, cannot be fully evaluated. This is because stereotypes are generalized notions of another person or nation that persist even if the reality in which they were formed

has changed. The stereotypes defining the Russian-Polish relations leading up to Katyń can be attributed to the opposing views of territory, national sovereignty, socio-political order and ideology predominant in Russian and Polish societies[2]. This clash of perceptions is also seen in the naming of the territories that were fought over: Catherine the Great referred to the provinces detached from Poland during the first partition as 'Western Region', of 'the Recovered Territories'. What for Russians was a 'recovery', was for Poles "an assault on the Polish state"[3].

These long-held conflicts and stereotypes existing in the relations between the two nations came to the forefront after the end of the First World War. "On June 1918 the Inter-Allied Conference of Versailles described the creation of a united, independent Poland with free access to the sea as one of the conditions of a just and lasting peace"[4]. After more than a hundred years of dependency and subjugation, the Polish nation was granted its own state and territory – the 11th November 1918 has been chosen, somewhat arbitrarily, as the

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[1]Cienciala, Lebedeva, Materski (2007), 2.

[2] The dates 1772, 1793 and 1795 are central to Polish historical identity. They mark the three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, when the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire divided among themselves the immense territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which in the 17th century was the largest country in Europe. For Poles, these three dates mark the gradual disappearance of their state from the map of Europe, while for Russians they mean the gradual expansion of their empire. For Poles, the partitions are equivalent to an unlawful breach of their sovereignty, while Russians regarded this domination as 'natural'. *Ibidem*.

[3] Davies (1981).

[4] Wandycz (1969), 365.

Independence Day in Poland, commemorated up to this day. However, the Poland that re-emerged in 1918 was very different from pre-partition Poland.

Despite the official acknowledgement of Poland as a state in the Versailles Treaty, the creation of Poland was not uniformly welcome by the international community.[5] On paper, Russia seemed to have accepted the new arrangement; in Art. 3 of the 'Decree of the Council of People's Commissars' we read: "All agreements and acts concluded by the Government of the former Russian Empire with the Government of the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire referring to the partitions of Poland are irrevocably annulled by the present decrees, since they are contrary to the principle of self-determination of people and to the revolutionary-legal conception of the Russian people, which recognizes the inalienable right of the Polish nation to independence and unity"[6].

The 'inalienable right' avowed in the decree was contested straightaway: "In 1918-1922, six wars were fought concurrently"[7]. The intentions and stakes of both parties in this war were very different. The Lenin Government intended to pursue its project of a World Revolution and the invasion of the Borderlands was merely the first step in the execution of this ideological plan[8].

Poland, led be Marshall Józef Pilsudski, fought the war to defend the non-Russian areas in the East and to prevent Russia from absorbing them. The decisive battle of the campaign, the Battle of Warsaw in August 1920, witnessed a stunning Polish victory over the Bolshevik forces. The alternative Polish name of the battle, 'Cud nad Wislą' (the Miracle at the Vistula) conveys both the surprise at this unexpected victory and the symbolic significance that Poles attach to this battle. Wojciech Materski refers to Poland of that time in the title of his book 'Tarcza Europy'[9] [The Shield of Europe] which expresses the belief, wide-spread in Poland, that in the year 1920 the Poles acted as defenders of the whole Europe, preventing the 'spill' of Communism over the continent.

The Soviet-Polish War concluded with the Treaty of Riga, signed in March 1921, which despite Polish military victory revealed the internal weaknesses of the young Polish state. Even though the Treaty contained a mention of the 'right of self-determination', (this time both for Poland and Ukraine) and set the borders between the three countries[10], the situation after 1920 was volatile and Poland was by no means 'self-determined'.

The awareness of the volatility of the post-Versailles situation in Europe has an impact on both Polish and Russian foreign policy in the interwar period. From the Polish point of view, the interwar period was, in terms of international diplomacy, a time of failed treaties, negotiations and unsustainable equilibrium. For Poland, these two

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[5] Norman Davies describes the various negative reactions of the politicians in Russia, Germany and England to the creation of Polish state in *God's Playground: A History of Poland,* (1981), 393.

[6] 'Extract from the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars"', in *Documents* (1961), 1.

[7] *Ibid*, 394.

[8] "In Bolshevik policy, it was just a small part of a greater design. At its beginning, it was seen as a mere interruption in the future Soviet development of the Borders; at its height, it

was seen as an embarrassment to be liquidated as swiftly as possible". Davis (1972), 273.

[9] Materski (1994).

[10] 'Treaty of Peace between Poland, Russia and the Ukraine, Riga, March 18, 1921', *Documents* (1961), 3.

decades passed under the sign of survival and struggle to maintain the post-Versailles status quo. Russia, on the other hand, never gave up the idea of expansion and domination, thus aiming at contesting the post-Versailles *status quo*.

On the 23rd of August 1939 Russia and Germany signed the "Treaty of Non-Aggression", the infamous "Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact" which sealed and anticipated Poland's fourth partition. What this document meant for Poland in practice is masterfully visualized in the opening scenes of Wajda's film *Katyń*. Polish families, with children and the elderly, are fleeing in two opposite directions, one group escaping from the Germans and another from the Russians. Ultimately they all clash on a bridge somewhere in the middle of Poland. The scene is both vividly realistic, illustrating chaos and despair of an invaded people, and symbolic, demonstrating the predicament of a nation attacked from both sides, cut in half.

Germany invaded Poland on the 1st of September 1939 and the Soviet Union seventeen days later. The Soviet invasion was preceded by the note of the Soviet Government to the Polish Embassy in Moscow saying that the Polish state had ceased to exist. It stated that since the Polish government had left the country, all previous agreements had lost their validity[11]. The Polish Ambassador in Moscow refused to accept the note. The content of this note was contrary to the norms of international law "as even the complete occupation of the country does not rule out the existence of a country as the subject to international law"[12]. This is why the victims of the Katyń massacre are often called "the prisoners of an

undeclared war"[13] [my emphasis]. Referring to Russia's invasion of Poland, Oleg Khlebnikov in *Novaia Gazeta* says: "This was the first crime, the crime against the Polish-Soviet pact of non-aggression"[14], implying that Katyń was the second one. Indeed, if the first crime had not occurred, the second would not have been possible, either. Katyń is therefore not 'just' a murder of 22 000 prisoners of war, but also a result of a war that breached the Polish-Russian legal treaties that preceded it.

The word Katyń conjures associations that can only be understood by looking both at facts and at perceptions in Russia and Poland. These perceptions have often coalesced to produce long-lasting stereotypes and prejudices based on the historical narrative of conflict. Katyń is one of the most sensitive issues in this narrative, not only because of its atrocious nature, but also because of the history of propaganda that followed its discovery.

Katyń: Half a Century of Propaganda and Silence

On the 13th of April 1943, the German Radio Berlin issued a sensational communiqué about the discovery of the Katyń graves: "The German authorities

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[11]*Documents* (1961), 46.
[12]*Rosja* (1994), 14.

[13]For example the first volume of the collection of documents on Katyń, compiled in 1997 by Polish and Russian archivists, is entitled: *Katyń. Dokumentyzbrodni*, t. 1, *Jeńcy niewypowiedzianej wojny VIII 1939 – III 1940* (Katyń. Documents. Vol. 1, Prisoners of an Undeclared War), edited by A. Gieysztor, R. G. Pichoja, Warsaw, 1995; also the first chapter of *Katyń: Crime without Punishment* has a title 'Prisoners of an undeclared war'.

[14] Khlebnikov, O., 'Prestuplenie Katyń' (Murders from Katyn), *Novaia Gazeta*, April 12, 2010.

inspected the place called Kosogory, which is a Soviet summer resting place, situated 12 kilometres from Smoleńsk, and made the most horrific discovery. A great pit was found, 28 meters long and 16 meters wide, filled with 12 layers of bodies of Polish officers, numbering 3000"[15].

After the first shocking news, even more atrocious details followed: "Seven of the mass graves have been opened and from them 982 corpses were recovered and examined. An inquest was held on part of the bodies, 70 per cent of which were identified. The cause of the death was shooting in the nape of the head"[16]. The Berlin Radio reported that a special Committee, "composed of leading representatives of the judiciary, medical and criminal boards from European universities and other famous medical men"[17], appointed by the Germans, would investigate the crime.

Despite claims of objectivity, seen in the rapid establishment of the Committee, the primary aim of J. Goebbels was to use his discovery for political aims. *Herald Tribune* quotes passages from the Radio communiqué, such as "Europe's disgust at the frightful massacre has evoked indignation in Italy," "tragic perspective for the Anglo-American plan to accept Bolshevik rule of Eastern Europe" and "it is a blessing for Europe that the heroic fight of German and her allies makes similar Bolshevik atrocities impossible"[18].

Two days after the discovery, the Soviet Information Bureau 'counterattacked' German propaganda with its own propaganda: "In the past two or three days Goebbels' slanderers have been spreading vile fabrications alleging that Soviet authorities effected a mass shooting of Polish officers in the spring 1940, in the Smoleńsk area. In launching this monstrous invention the German-Fascist scoundrels do not hesitate at the most unscrupulous and base lies…"[19].

On the 26th of April, the Soviet government cut all diplomatic relations with the Polish government in London, despite the pledges not to do so coming from both the British and the Americans[20]. The Soviet government set up its own Committee called 'The Burdenko Commission' whose report on the Katyń graves "focused on rejecting the conclusions and evidence cited in the 1943 report of the IMC"[21].

The German and Soviet committees were clearly set up one against another, in the bipolar context of the war. The issue at stake was not finding the culprits and doing justice, but rather using the discovery for political and ideological purposes of both Russia and Germany.

The timing of the announcement of the discovery is crucial to understand the intricate game of interests behind the propagandistic altercations between the Germans and the Soviets. The Battle of Stalingrad, which marked a breakthrough on the Eastern front, finished on the 2nd of February 1943. Nazi Germany lost to Soviet Russia and started to retreat from the East. This brought the 'Polish

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[15] *Documents* (1961), 523.

[16] Referring to the broadcast recorded by the Associate Press in: 'Death of Poles Laid to Russians by Nazi Board', *Herald Tribune*, May 1943.

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] 'Poles fall for Nazi Propaganda', *Herald Tribune*, April 1943.

[19] *Documents* (1961), 3.

[20] As demonstrated for example in the telegram from W. Churchill to J. Stalin from April 25th, 1943. *Documents* (1961), 534.

[21] Cienciala, Lebedeva, Materski (2007), 228.

question' back to the forefront of international politics. The victory at Stalingrad put Stalin in a position to consider taking over Poland as a real possibility, while before, since the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Poland had been Russia's ally.

In this context, both German and Soviet authorities had their own tactics regarding the discovery of the Katyń graves. "The Germans soon decided to exploit the propaganda value of the Katyń graves, at first to secure the support of Poles in German Poland against the Soviets, and then to split the Allies"[22], comments A. Cienciala. The Germans also aimed to improve German reputation while disproving the Soviet (and the Allies') image in the world.

Russians, on the other hand, had two aims in pursuing their propagandistic 'counter-offensive' and the 'policy of lie'. They wanted to preserve their good reputation and to discredit the Polish government in London. Allen Paul argues that the Soviet government "cleverly manipulated the circumstance in which Katyń murders were finally discovered in 1943 to deal the legitimate government of Poland a lethal blow"[23]. The Katyń discovery proved useful to the Soviet authorities as it could serve as a pretext to halt diplomatic relations between Russia and Poland.

The word 'policy' implies a strategic approach. The Katyń murder did not matter for Germany and Russia as a crime against the Polish nation, against humanity and a question of justice. Rather, Katyń immediately turned into a subject of a propagandistic exchange, in the hands of and at the mercy of power politics.

In 1943, the United States and the UK adopted a 'policy of silence' on the Katyń massacre. A military alliance with Russia, "a most advantageous and effective alliance"[24], prevented the Americans and the British from taking up Katyń's investigations up until 1949. Eleven days after the German discovery, Winston Churchill issued a telegram to Joseph Stalin saying: "We shall certainly oppose vigorously any 'investigation' by the international Red Cross or any other body in any territory under German authority. Such investigation would be a fraud and its conclusion reached by terrorism"[25].

In 1949, a group of American intellectuals organized themselves to inquire about Katyń and bring the results of the inquiry to the American public. In an introductory address, the chair of the American Committee for Investigation of the Katyń Massacre, Arthur Bliss Lane said: "The American people which are so closely tied to the people of Poland through devotion to the same democratic ideals had a moral obligation to insist that the truth regarding Katyń should be made known and that the guilty be judged by public opinion"[26].

However, bringing this statement to the public was not an easy task. Voice of America did not broadcast Mr. Lane's Speech and the Department of State said that it considered any investigation of the Katyń massacre by the American Committee for the Investigation of the

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[22] Cienciala, Lebedeva, Materski (2007), 228.
[23] Paul (1991), 316.

[24] 'Fate of 15 000 Polish Prisoners of Russia Remains Mystery', *Albany New York Times Union*, May 1943.
[25] 'Telegram from Mr. Churchill to M. Stalin', April 24, 1943. *Documents* (1961), 532.
[26] 'Introductory Statement to the Press by Arthur Bliss Lane, November 21, 1949'. Arthur Bliss Lane Collection, Yale University Archives.

Katyń Massacre as a matter outside the Department's jurisdiction[27]. Only two years later, in 1951, Voice of America completely reversed its policy of suppressing the truth about Katyń"[28].

Moreover, in 1951 the Ideological Advisory Section on Katyń was set up and began to issue long speeches concerning Katyń – speeches of heightened tone and moral condemnation. Interestingly, they were never just about Katyń and the establishment of truth, but about a new geopolitical context.

Such official contextualization of Katyń allowed it to become the central element in the new geopolitical and ideological division of the world, the Cold War. While condemning America's policy of silence, in a radio interview of 1952, Lane vociferously confirmed the view that the Katyń massacre had shown the true face of totalitarian Russia and had demonstrated the essence of the Cold War split[29]. As a proof of this division, he pointed to the case of Korea and drew parallels between the way the Soviets treated their Korean prisoners-of-war and the Katyń murders. This comparison was also drawn in numerous articles written at this time[30]. The telling title 'Katyń, Korea Mass Killings to be Probed' shows that the Katyń investigations were at that point a useful US policy, aimed to bring out the evil war tactics of America's enemy and put them in the broader ideological and moral context.

In the Cold War discourse, Katyń became a symbol, an epitome of the atrocities that the Soviet Regime was capable of committing. The investigation of the Katyń crimes was for the American government primarily a battle for the reputation of the US and for its own security[31]. It is possible to presume that had these motives not existed, the Katyń investigations would not have been undertaken at all, or would not have received such a vibrant echo in the American and international press.

For Poles, Katyń also came to symbolize the evils of Stalinism. However, the way in which this symbol was constructed was different from the process described above. In the US, the symbolic charge of Katyń resulted from conscious policies, first of silence and suppression and later of truth, adopted depending on the interests of the American state. In Poland, on the other hand, the symbolic charge of Katyń developed in opposition to state policies, in the atmosphere of political oppression which, paradoxically, made the role of Katyń in Polish national memory all the more prominent.

After the war, the Soviet government and the Polish Workers Party (PPR), appointed by Moscow, maintained the version established by the Burdenko Commission, claiming that the Germans committed the crime. Officially, the Katyń question became a taboo. On the 20th Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, Nikita S. Khrushchev famously denounced Stalin's crimes, but said nothing about Katyń[32]. Even though Khrushchev was willing to acknowledge the truth about Katyń, the Polish

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[27] On the activities of the American Committee for the investigation of the Katyń Massacre, Inc. Sept 1st, 1951. Arthur Bliss Lane Collection, Yale University Archives, 5.

[28] *Ibid*, 18.

[29] Interview with Arthur Bliss Lane by F. Knight and B. Huey, Longiness Chronoscope, 1952. Phonograph Records, Yale Historical Sound Recordings.

[30] For example in: 'Katyń, Korea Mass Killings to be probed', *Time Herald*, 5 January, 1952.

[31] Arthur Bliss Lane in an interview in 1952 quoted above says: "It [truth about Katyń] concerns not just Poland, but the security of the US!"

[32] Kadell (1991), 248.

Communist Party leader W. Gomulka convinced him otherwise, because he feared that after such a confession the Germans could exploit Katyń to set free anti-Soviet feelings in Poles[33]. N.S. Khrushchev's presidency was the only moment, according to A. Przewoznik, when the truth about Katyń had the chance to be revealed. This chance was, however, not seized, and the truth had to wait for another half a century to be officially acknowledged by political authorities in Poland and Russia[34].

Up until then, for almost half a century, the story of conflict between the two countries continued. The Soviet and the Polish authorities attempted to suppress knowledge and memory of Katyń while the Polish nation insisted on keeping both. One of the most egregious cases of the Soviet 'policy of lie' toward Katyń took place in the year 1969. On the 5th of July, the Russian authorities inaugurated the opening of a huge monument in a village called 'Khatyn' located 60 kilometres from Minsk. It is not clear why this village was chosen out of numerous Belorussian villages destroyed by the Germans except for the phonetic similarity between the words 'Khatyn' and 'Katyń'. In July 1974, President Nixon visited the Khatyn memorial. Interestingly, "sensing that the Soviets were exploiting the visit for propaganda purposes, *The New York Times* headlined its coverage of the tour: 'Nixon Sees Khatyn, a Soviet Memorial, Not Katyń Forest.' (The *Times* probably got it right. During the Vietnam war, the Soviets frequently took visiting US peace activists to Khatyn.)"[35].

Despite such efforts to obscure the truth about Katyń outside and inside of Poland, neither of these attempts, especially the latter, was very successful. W. Materski, a renowned Polish historian and an expert on Katyń, writes: "In the People's Republic of Poland the very mentioning of the word Katyń was treated as an assault on the political system. This was guaranteed by a specific directive in the book of instructions for the censorship. Even lighting of a candle by the cross of the Katyń Military Cemetery on Warsaw Powiazki could become a pretext for repressions. But in the historical consciousness of the nation the memory of the victims of this crime could never be erased"[36].

A. Przewoznik makes a similar point emphasizing that apart from the 'official' memory, there was also an 'unofficial' memory in the Communist Poland: "the plates to commemorate the victims of Katyń were put in churches, the surnames of the murdered ones were written on family tombstones"[37]. In A. Wajda's film *Katyń* [2007], the sister of an army officer Andrzej, killed in Katyń, commissions a tombstone with the year 1940 engraved on it as the date of his death. In doing so, she risks her life. Like Sophocles' Antigone, she wants to preserve the honour and the memory of her brother by insisting on keeping the truth about his death, contrary to the official propaganda and despite the danger it involves. Similarly, Andrzej's son, despite his mother's pledges to 'be reasonable', refuses to take his high school exam (matura) if it means lying about Katyń. Wajda's film illustrated the struggle of people in post-war Poland,

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[33] *Ibid*, 250.

[34] Przewoznik, Adamska (2010), 406.

[35] Fischer (1999).

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[36] Materski (2008), 93.

[37] A similar distinction but using different terms is made by Benjamin Fischer who says: "While Katyń was erased from Poland's official history, it could not be erased from its historical memory."

cast between their recent painful memories and the presence of foreign occupation. By focusing on the perspective of women, Wajda endows the war and post-war drama with an intimate, emotional dimension and shows what the denial of truth about Katyń meant in everyday life of the relatives of the officers.

The film masterfully recreates the atmosphere of fear, suppression and the underground passing on of diaries and documents. While the search for truth about Katyń within Poland was limited due to the political situation, many publications about Katyń came out abroad, which had a huge impact on the Poles living in Poland.

Thus, we can see two parallel developments – the search for truth abroad and the policy of silence in Poland, broken by Poles' insistence to preserve memory and truth about Katyń. Looking back on the policy of suppression on Katyń within Poland, D. Bartmanski and R. Eyerman in their recent publication, *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective Suffering*, emphasize the symbolic dimension of Katyń: "From the perspective of cultural sociological theory the very fact of the memory of painful experience being suppressed, not only the murders themselves, contributed to the emergence of collective anxiety and enabled victims to construct yet another dimension of collective injury"[38].

The authors argue that the feelings of anxiety and injury after Katyń could not, however, turn into a collectively felt national trauma due to the suppression of the public sphere discourse in the Communist Poland: "The potential symbolic power associated with private suffering can only be fully actualized in the broad public sphere. Cultural trauma

became possible only when the directly affected individuals and communities were able to express themselves, verbally and visually, in a sustained way and project their personal tragedies onto the larger moral screen of the nation"[39].

Even though the authors point to the year 1990 as the point at which the verbalization of collective anxiety finally became possible, the birth of the Solidarity in the year 1980 marked the birth of a collective movement for revealing the truth about Katyń. The year 1980 was declared 'the year of Katyń' by the oppositional press as well as by the Poles abroad. "The country was flooded by leaflets with articles on Katyń, books from abroad were smuggled in"[40].

Additionally to importing foreign publications, the fight for the truth about the Katyń crime was also underway in the realm of symbols. The most infamous case was that of a long, politicized battle to erect an obelisk in London in 1971. Kadell underscores that the activity of the Katyń Committee in London and the construction of the obelisk were so important because of the effect they had on the Poles in Poland. "Polish underground movement was in contact with their friends in London. In national manifestations, Katyń plays an immense role. The symbolic importance of Katyń for the Solidarity Movement is often underestimated in Poland"[41].

In May 1981, an illegal Citizenship Committee for the Construction of the Katyń Monument was created. Solidarity erected a stone cross of 4.5 meters and a date 1940 as well as a plate with the inscription 'Katyń', letters 'WP' and a crowned eagle. The police confiscated it on the very same night that it was

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[38] Bartmanski, Eyermann (2011), 5.

[39] *Ibid*, 5.

[40] Przewoznik, Adamska (2010), 420.

[41] Kadell (1991), 269.

erected[42]. As a response, in March 1985, the Polish government erected another monument devoted to 'Polish soldiers, the victims of Hitlerite fascism buried in the Katyń Soil', which sparked off a heated debate not just in Poland, but also in German Bundestag. On the 1st of August 1985, huge manifestations took place in front of the Katyń monument in Warsaw. A white-red banner saying, 'The truth will come out victorious', could be seen[43]. These events demonstrate how deeply interrelated the struggle for the uncovering of Katyń truth was with Poles' fight for national sovereignty, freedom and democracy.

Both for the American and for the Polish public opinion, Katyń became a symbol standing for the murderousness and hypocrisy of the Soviet regime. However, as I mentioned above, while for the Americans the symbol was merely a matter of reputation and geopolitical ideologies, for the Poles the symbol of Katyń was and is deeply entrenched in collective national memory and consciousness developed across centuries in opposition to the Soviet Russia. This is why, when discussing Katyń, one cannot just speak about the event, but also about the silence and falsifications of truth that came after it.

In 1987, Mikhail Gorbatchov came to power under the banner of *glasnost* and together with W. Jaruzelski set up a commission to investigate 'blank spots' in the history of both countries. Even though Katyń was not included in this committee, in the wake of *glasnost* Polish and Russian historians started to cooperate on disclosing the truth about it. In 1988, in an article entitled 'Blank spots – from emotions to facts'[44], Russian historian W. Abarinov described a meeting of Russian and Polish historians at which the Katyń massacre was discussed. In 1989, the organization 'Memorial', set up to research and document the lives and deaths of people living under repression, organized the first exhibition featuring photos from Katyń. An interview with Natalia S. Lebedeva, published in March 1990 in *Moskovskie Novosti* without the permission of the authorities, contributed to the official stance taken by Gorbatchev[45].

On the 13th April 1990, Gorbachev officially handed over to W. Jaruzelski several of the documents on Katyń[46]. The meeting of the two presidents was followed by the communiqué of the TASS news agency, which named Merkulov and Beria as officially responsible for the crime and called the Katyń massacre the most heinous of crimes.

In 1995, presidents Lech Wałęsa and Boris Yeltsin attended a ceremony of the opening of a Polish cemetery in Katyń. The ceremony raised high expectations; However, the speech of the Russian president at the ceremony led to disappointment on the Polish side, especially his words "totalitarian terror affected not only Polish citizens, but in the first place, the citizens of the Soviet Union"[47]. For many Poles these words undermined the importance and tragic

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[42] Przewoznik, Adamska (2010), 421.

[43] *Ibid*, 425.

[44] Wladimir Abarinov 'Belye piatna: ot emocyj k faktam' (White spots: from Emotions to Facts), *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 11th May, 1988. The article finishes with the words: "We should not have blank spots, we need to study them on the basis of documents and archives, not emotions."

[45] Cienciala, Lebedeva, Materski (2007), 252.

[46] Dispatch lists of the prisoners who were executed in 1940 in Cienciala, Lebedeva. Materski (2007), 252.

[47] Fischer (1999).

uniqueness of Katyń. This was definitely not the apology that the Polish side desired.

In September of 1998, Yuri Chayka, a Prosecutor General in Russia, issued a letter to the Polish Minister of Justice, asking for an official inquiry into the deaths of Russian prisoners-of-war detained in 1919-1921. "The information we have allows us to conclude that genocide was applied to Red Army POWs"[48]. Poland rejected the allegations. In the Russian press, the juxtaposition of the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1920) and the Katyń massacre has been common since the beginning of the 1990s.

For W. Materski, the juxtaposition of the two events is an example of a phenomenon that he calls 'Anti-Katyń'. He argues that comparing the Katyń massacre with the fate of the Russian POWs detained during the Polish-Soviet War constitutes "a cold-blooded attempt to provide equilibrium to a truth about Katyń genocide, unable to be covered any longer, by creating an appropriate Polish 'counterbalance' which would be able to hush it to some extent through propaganda"[49].

Despite hopes that the symbolic gestures of the 1990s would create a basis for a consensus about the Katyń case, the discontinuation of investigations sparked off outrage in Poland. Cienciala discussed the incongruence between Russia's symbolic and legal policies on Katyń: "Neither the change in Russian leadership nor the opening of Polish war cemeteries at Katyń, Kharkov and Mednoe in summer 2000 produced any progress toward meeting the demands of the Polish Katyń Families Association for a Russian

admission of genocide, an apology, and compensation"[50].

These events illustrate that despite the official acknowledgement of Katyń, the truth is by no means widely known and the relations between the two countries since the 1990s have been neither simple nor friendly.

However, since 2009, a certain warming up of relations between Russia and Poland in general and the progress in Katyń's case could be observed. This can be attributed to the Polish prime minister's less principled Eastern policy and a more open approach to Russia. In February 2010, Vladimir Putin invited Donald Tusk to jointly celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Katyń massacre. "I realize that Katyń holds a very important place in the memory of Poles. We should endow the celebrations with a moral-ethical character"[51], said Putin.

The meeting of the prime ministers sparked off a debate in the Polish press. On the one hand, a change in Russia's approach to Poland was evident. When the late president Kaczynski invited president Medvedev to celebrate the 65th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, neither the Russian president, nor the Russian prime minister agreed to take part in the celebrations. This time, the initiative came from the Russian side and it was the first time that a Russian official took part in the commemorations of a crime committed by

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[48] The letter was given to the press. See: Wojciech Duda and Czary Chmyz, 'Back to the Past', *Zycie*, September 1998, 1.

[49] Materski (2008), 134.

[50] Cienciala, Lebedeva, Materski (2007), 261.

[51] 'Putin zaprosil Donalda Tuska na 70. Rocznice Katyńia' (Putin invited Donald Tusk to the 70th Anniversary of Katyn), *Gazeta Prawna*, March 2nd, 2010, http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/Wiadomosci/1,807 08,7524545,Putin_zaprosil_Donalda_Tuska_na _70_rocznice_Katyńia.html. (Accessed May 2017).

the Soviet regime after the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939.

The change in Russian policy toward Poland could be attributed to Poland's growing political and economic role in Europe in the recent years. In July 2009 Jerzy Buzek was elected President of the European Parliament, "becoming a first from former communist nation"[52]. Moreover, Poland has coped very well with the financial crisis, being the only country that did not experience a recession in 2009 and had the best real growth performance in this year[53]. These and other developments made Poland into an increasingly important political player on the European political stage.

While the stance of the Russian leadership toward Katyń was definitely changing, the motives for the change were in the Polish press largely seen as part of a political game. Several articles pointed out that Putin's invitation had been a 'reward' for Tusk for his more pragmatic policy toward Russia as opposed to L. Kaczynski's harder stance both in his Eastern and Russian policies.

Smoleńsk– a catalyst in the breakthrough in the Polish-Russian relations

On the 10th of April 2010, a few minutes before 9 AM, the airplane Tupolev 154 carrying Polish president, his wife and numerous famous Polish politicians and public personas on board, fell two kilometres from the runway in Smoleńsk airport. It is difficult to describe the shock that the news produced in the Polish society. The contemporary Polish elite was flying to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyń massacre and died tragically in the exact same location where the Polish officers had been murdered in 1940.

On the Russian side, the first comments after the crash were cautious and fearful that the catastrophe would introduce new misunderstandings and increase conflicts between the two nations. The Smoleńsk catastrophe produced a wave of spontaneous, positive feelings in the Russian population and enhanced the rapprochement between the Polish and the Russian people. Ordinary Russians did not wait until the official mourning day on Monday to show their solidarity with the Polish nation. The atmosphere of sympathy and friendship was also remarked during many personal encounters of Russians and Poles in both Poland and Russia[54]. On the social level of Polish-Russian relations, it was clear that the immediate consequences of the Smoleńsk crash were very positive.

This brings up a question of the role of emotions and collective moods in politics, especially in international relations, and their potential for contributing to reconciliation between nations. Solidarity on the level of ordinary people, even if short-lived, is half a year after the Smoleńsk crash still in

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[52] 'Jerzy Buzek elected President becoming a first from a former communist nation', *Huffington post World,* July 2009.

[53] 'Why was Poland the only EU country to avoid recession?'. Blog by John B. Taylor, 24 June 2010 https://economicsone.com/2010/06/24/why-was-poland-the-only-eu-country-to-avoid-recession/ (Accessed 17 May 2017).

[54] For example Viktor Erofiejew writes that the Poles have noticed 'real human faces' of the Russians and quotes several personal encounters on the streets, in: 'Nie ma jużmoralnychpodstaw, aby wracać do polityki konfrontacji' (There is no moral necessity to return to political confrontation), *Gazeta Prawna,* April 19.

many headlines, speeches and mutual memories. "We cannot say that any major Polish-Russian projects were undertaken. But what did change – was the atmosphere between our states. And a positive attitude toward change in our relations", comments K. Stalin, a Russian MP[55]. Former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, R. Sikorski said in TOK FM: "I do not know if it will be a political break-through, because the interests of our countries in many cases do not coincide. But the fact is that what we observe is an emotional breakthrough and this is already something – after all, it is the people that take decisions on the future of international relations."

The reactions of the Russian authorities to the crash were from the very beginning exemplary. An hour after the catastrophe a special governmental committee was set up, headed by W. Putin, to investigate the circumstances of the tragedy. At 12:36 PM, D. Medvedev and W. Putin sent their condolences to Poland. At 15:48 PM, Medvedev announced that the 12th of April would be the day of the national mourning in Russia. At 6:33 PM, he pronounced an appeal to the Polish nation: "I promise that all the circumstances of this tragedy will be explained in close cooperation with the Polish side"[56].

Following these early gestures of sympathy and willingness to cooperate, the theme of Smoleńsk dominated Russian press for three days. The leit-motif was that of common grief and solidarity, predominant both in independent and pro-governmental Russian newspapers. The tone of many articles verged on mystical, sentimental and grand, which corresponded to Poles' experience of grief and the tragedy of the situation.

In Poland, during the mourning mass in Cracow, Bronislaw Komorowski, before being elected president, said that "the sacrifice of Smoleńsk cannot be in vain and should lead us to reconciliation"[57]. He spoke both of Polish-Polish and Polish-Russian reconciliation. On the same day, the 19th of April, Polish intellectuals, such as professors Karol Modzelewski, Stanisław Mossakowski, Henryk Samsonowicz and others, wrote a letter to the Russians asking for reconciliation. The authors of the letter explained that what they aimed for was not only reconciliation between Poles and Russians, but rather the founding of institutions in Poland and Russia assembling intellectuals who would work on problems of the common history of both nations[58].

The Polish representatives of the Church also spoke of the need for reconciliation with Russia. During the holy mass in the Mariacka Basilica in Cracow, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz said: "70 years ago, Katyń put our nations apart, and the hiding of the truth about the bloodshed without guilt did not allow these painful wounds to heal. The tragedy that happened eight days ago set free huge resources of goodness in both people

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[55] Olga Trofimova, 'Polsha swoimi glazami' (Poland with my own eyes), August 2010, http://www.t-i.ru/article/15704/, (Accessed May 2017).

[56] 'Katastrofa w Smoleńsku, minuta po minucie' (Smolensk Catastrophe, Minute after Minute), *Wpolczesna.pl,* April 10, 2010.

[57] 'Komorowski: Ofiara ze Smoleńska powinna wzywac do pojednania' (Komorowski: The Smolensk victims should call for reconciliation), *Gazeta Krakowska*, April 19, 2010.

[58] Artur Grabek, 'Polscy intelektualiści piszą list do Rosjan z prośbą o pojednanie' (Polish intellectuals write a letter to the Russians asking for reconciliation), *Gazeta Prawna*, April 19, 2010.

and nations"[59]. At the end of the homily, he expressed his hope for the beginning of real reconciliation of the Polish and Russian nations.

Eight days after the Smoleńsk crash, the Polish Archbishop Józef Życiński came up with an initiative aimed at reconciliation not merely through words but also through actions: "It would be a beautiful sign sent to the Russians if on the anniversary of the end of the Second World War, Polish youth took care of the Russian graves on our territory"[60].

The Effect of Smoleńsk on Spreading Knowledge about Katyń

It was clear to everyone, however, that the establishment of 'mutual trust' and thus the breakthrough in Polish-Russian relations would not be possible without resolving the drastic asymmetry in knowledge in Poland and Russia about the Katyń massacre. On the Polish side, despite decades of falsification and communist censorship, people knew about Katyń before the Smoleńsk crash, but this was not the case in Russia.

According to a survey conducted by the centre Levada, an independent non-governmental research organization in Russia, before the Smoleńsk crash 53% of Russians could not tell who was responsible for the Katyń massacre, 28% pointed to Germany and 19% to Stalin[61].

These statistics need to be seen in the broader context of the role and the position of Stalin in Russian society and political discourse. In the infamous survey from the year 2009 asking 'Who is the greatest Russian of all times?' Joseph Stalin came third. Anne Applebaum attributes this result to a year-long Russian policy to rehabilitate Stalin[62]. She pointed out that during the public celebrations, the kind of image that was created of the Stalinist period was: "There were deviations, errors were committed, but great things were achieved. All in all, it was worth it"[63]. From the perspective of such official interpretation, the case of Katyń is particularly inconvenient for the authorities, as it demonstrates the evil side of Stalinism and the necessity to apologize and compensate, which undermines the imperialistic image of contemporary Russia. The Smoleńsk catastrophe created a chance to bring the historical truth about Katyń to the Russian public, and more generally, to question the political interpretation of Stalinism in Russia, predominant in the recent years.

During the wave of solidarity following the crash, negative emotions and prejudices on both sides were largely eliminated, or at least suspended. However, despite A. Talag's comparison, politics is not business. Ideologies and political affiliations in both countries play

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[59] *Ibid*.

[60] 'Arcybiskup Józef Życiński: Odwdzięczmy się Rosjanom' (Archbishop Jozef Zycinski: Let's repay the Russians), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 18, 2010. http://wyborcza.pl/1,75248,7784993,Arcybiskup_Jozef_Zycinski__Odwdzieczmy_sie_Rosjanom.html (Accessed May 2017).

[61] Alexei Levinson, 'After the plan crash: Russian attitudes to Katyń', *ODRussia*, April

28, 2010. http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/alexei-levinson/after-plane-crash-russian-attitudes-to-Katyń (Accessed May 2017).

[62] "Terror, which made that people were afraid to voice their opinions, that children denounced their parents, that families and friendships broke, is completely absent in the majority of today's [history] books." Anne Applebaum, 'Groźne Zmartwychwstanie Stalina' (Stalin Terrible Resurrection), *Dziennik*, January 7, 2009.

[63] *Ibid*.

a significant role in shaping historical policies and these persist longer than the mood of elation. This is also the case with the effect of the Smoleńsk crash on Polish-Russian relations.

Living History and Historical Policy

By 'living history' I mean a history that is not consolidated as it is in ideological interpretations, but rather that is 'reacting' to the present and has a potential of being re-evaluated. The word 're-evaluation' should not be mistaken with the use for propagandistic purposes or manipulation by authorities. The Smoleńsk catastrophe and its effect on spreading knowledge about the Katyń massacre and on fighting mutual national preconceptions on the Russian and the Polish side exemplifies the existence of such 'living history' and the potential it has to improve relations between states and peoples.

After the Smoleńsk crash, both Russians and Poles looked at each other and at each other's histories with different eyes. Almost four million Russians watched Wajda's film 'Katyń', an unprecedented number if we take into account how little Katyń mattered to Russians before. Polish youth lit up candles on the graves of Russian soldiers on the 9th of May 2010, an unprecedented event considering the history of conflict that divided both nations for such a long time. Of course some may argue that these are mere gestures that have nothing to do with Russian or Polish long-term policy. I believe, however, that precisely such gestures are milestones in the long process of re-evaluating history, of creating a common history of suffering out of individual histories of conflict.

While Smoleńsk was a catalyst in the re-evaluation of Polish and Russian perceptions of history and of each other, in the long run it is not possible to rely on such re-evaluation through shock to bring about reconciliation between nations. What is needed is a responsible long-term historical policy that will not depend on tragic events and ironic twists of fate, as some commentators have called the Smoleńsk crash. As I have emphasized in this article, the Russian post-Smoleńsk policy toward Poland has been exemplary and has contributed to the positive effect that the tragedy has had on the relations between the two nations. However, after half a year had elapsed, it became evident that this policy was not a long-term one and experienced many set-backs, such as the polarization of the Polish society and the inconsistency between Russia's internal and external historical policies.

It is too early to say if the policy on Katyń following the Smoleńsk crash will once be evaluated in such positive terms as 'responsible historical policy' or 'statesmanship'. However, since April 2010, several important steps have been taken in the direction of the common good and reconciliation of the Polish and Russian nations. The passing over of Katyń documents from the Russian to the Polish side, even though at this point in time incomplete, will hopefully result in declassifying all sources of information on the Katyń massacre. The reinvigoration of work within the Group for Difficult Issues, which even though set up in 2002 was largely inactive until 2008, is another major political initiative aimed at finding compromises about history of the two nations. The mission of the group corresponds to a pacifist approach to history and pragmatic approach to international relations, aimed at consensus rather than conflict.

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Sevim Tahir

Prisoners of Image: The Representation of Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) during the Communist Regime and its Legacy

Abstract

The goal of my article is to argue that the image of Bulgarian Muslims built during the Communist regime that depicts the group members as backward and fanatical religious individuals who have betrayed their homeland, had not only negative effects at the time but still shapes the attitudes and dispositions of individuals in the Bulgarian contemporary society. This representation, widely communicated in the society, functions as a justification of the violent measures applied by the Communist state apparatus. The imposed discourse not only presents a distorted image of Bulgarian Muslims but also blurs the responsibility for the crimes of the Communist regime. Furthermore, my analysis provides arguments that the rejection of Bulgarian Muslim to be categorized in a negative way was defined as sabotage and enemy activity against the regime. The community's strategies of resistance were misunderstood and interpreted in a negative light so as to justify the applied violence.

**Keywords*:* Bulgarian Muslims, Pomaks, Communist Regime, Representation, Revival Process

The noisy operation of the Bulgarian Agency for National Security carried out in 2010 during which religious literature written in Arabic language has been confiscated by Muslim religious leaders who later were accused and sentenced for spreading non democratic beliefs and 'radical Islam', catalyzed again active 'debate' about Pomaks. The attempts to explain the meaning inscribed in the actions of the religious leaders revealed widely communicated beliefs concerning the members of the group. The dominant discourse constructed around particular concepts and prescribed characteristics such as traditional, unsociable, backward, uneducated, religious fanatics etc. was activated with greater impetus. This development raised the question when and how Pomaks have become 'symbol' with negative connotations.

It turns out that the image of the Bulgarian Muslims is a topic of several articles which investigate the representation of the Muslim community members in administrative and non-administrative documents (including religious and apocryphal texts, chronicles, Shari'a court documents and autobiographical texts) from the 15th to the 18th century and in the literature after the Liberation of Bulgaria (1878)[1]. Documents inform us that Ottoman Turks were described as 'barbarians', 'devils' and 'unbelievers' as early as the 14th-15th centuries. In the literature after the Liberation, i.e. from the 19th century, the image of the Turks follows the same lines, although sometimes positive elements are also included in the image.

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[1]See articles by Marie Vrinat-Nikolova (2012) and Gradeva (1996).

The aim of my article is to draw attention to the justification of the 'system of representation' imposed during the Communist regime, which describes Muslims almost as 'people who escape the reality of civilization' and its effects on the attitudes of different groups towards each other. Although this system of representation was gradually built and imposed before the Communist regime, its negative features were justified and communicated through ideological propaganda during this period of time. This image turned to be the perfect excuse for the oppressive actions of the communist state and the intervention in the private sphere of the individual. I further argue that the counteractions and resistance of the group members was misunderstood, which determines the marginalization of their voice raised against the imposed image.

In order to provide a detailed analysis, I will focus on documents related to the work of the State Security and Intelligence Services and studies on the policy toward minority groups. I will use also empirical data collected through in-depth interviews conducted in Smolyan province in the period 2014-2017[2].

Historical Context

Pomaks[3] are Muslim community which lives in some parts of Bulgaria, western Turkey, Republic of Macedonia, Greece (province of Thrace), Kosovo and Albania. They are known as a borderline community that declares variety of identities among which Bulgarian, Greek, Pomak or Muslim identity. According to official documents, they are considered to be descendants of Bulgarians (evidenced by the fact that their native language is Bulgarian) who converted to Islam during the Ottoman ruling and on account of this they were named Bulgarian Muslims. Their number could not be precisely defined, because there is no statistical data but according to the researchers they accounted for 220 thousand people in Bulgaria[4].

In order to get a deeper insight into the period in question, it is important to analyze the events in the wider context. Since the history of the relations in our case could not escape the period of the Ottoman Empire, we cannot go forth without stressing the fact that after the Liberation of Bulgaria (1878), the negative feelings associated with the Ottomans were transferred upon the groups that confessed Islam and remained on the territory of the country. Afterwards, the relations between Bulgaria and Turkey were determined by the fact that they were part of two opposing blocks - Warsaw Pact and NATO - which were constantly competing against each other. It was believed that in case of a conflict, Turkey would have used Muslim minorities to achieve its national objectives. Moreover, in this situation the minority groups would have defended the interests of Turkey and betrayed their homeland. This is the reason why the Muslim communities were named 'the fifth column'. Under these circumstances,

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[2] The field work is conducted in the framework of the project "The role of the communication in the integration process of Bulgarian Muslims" supported by the **Program for career development of young scientists, BAS.**

[3] The formal term accepted by the scholars in Bulgaria is Bulgarian Muslims but in the paper the preference is given to the name Pomaks because it is the name mostly used by the group members.

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[4] Karagianis (2012).

the relations between both sides were strained and full of mistrust.

As far as the interior situation is concerned, it is important to note that until 1948, there is little to indicate a separate policy toward Pomaks, as Ulrich Buchsenstein[5] indicates in his work. The period before 1944 is marked by the work of the organization 'Rodina'. The organization was managed by Pomaks and its main goal was to modernize the group members through education. First, they organized campaigns in order to eliminate the visible signs of group affiliation such as clothing and religious symbols, but later they started a violent name changing campaign. After the Bulgarian Communist Party's rise to power in 1944, Rodina was declared a fascist organization and banned.

According to records from 1938, more than 80% of the Pomaks were uneducated and lived in disastrous economic situation[6]. The poor economic conditions were among the main reasons for the low level of literacy. In addition, till that time, the education among the working people was restricted and it was ineffective. Moreover, trained teachers were insufficient after the dismissal of many who had been identified as fascist. In 1948, the Communist regime started an educational reform driven by the belief that the modernization of this part of the population could be achieved through education. So the ideas that were defined as fascist were later adopted and guided the reform in the educational field.

There were several reasons for this undertaking. First of all, the government considered as a main problem the Turkish influence and the spread of Pan-Turkism among Pomaks. That was possible as a result of the activity of certain Muslim religious leaders, who also sabotaged the collectivization work. Generally, the main concern was about religious 'fanaticism', which could be eliminated by education and ideological work. Thus, the government planned to solve the problem with the Turkish influence exerted on the Pomaks. Besides the educational reform, most of the mosques were closed and religious rituals were banned and replaced by civil ones. All these measures were intended to minimize the influence of religion among the group members and to eliminate the visible signs of Islamic identity.

In order to fulfil this mission, the government instructed academics to find and prove that Pomaks were Bulgarians. Thus focusing on the Bulgarian origin, the government hoped to counteract the Turkish influence and to remove any grounds for the development of Turkish self-identification. Since the Pomaks speak Bulgarian, it was decreed that what defines somebody as a member of a nation is the language, not the religion. Following this line of reasoning, Pomaks were defined as Bulgarians who were forcefully Islamized during the Ottoman rule. In this manner what became salient is the Bulgarian language while the conversion to Islam implied a kind of apostasy and disloyalty.

The efforts of the Party leaders were focused on the task of bringing arguments in support of this thesis, which would have benefited the ideological work of local organizations. As a result, the notion 'violently Islamized' was widely communicated in the society and imposed as the main narrative. Hence the Pomaks were depicted as that part of the society that betrayed the homeland and their true religion since they did not resist the violence of the Ottoman enslaver. They are the "branch cut off from the

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[5] Büchsenschütz (2000).

[6] *Ibidem*, 50.

society"[7] and their alienation made the negative influences possible[8]. It was assumed that Pomaks had suffered the unfavourable impact of Islam that somehow determined their undeveloped, archaic state of existence.

On the other hand, the ideal state of the developed socialist society was associated with the economic development, the scientific progress and the uniformity of the society. From this standpoint, what the developed socialist society assigned as its main objective was in opposition to the realities of the Pomaks. They were constructed as an example of what should be transformed, mentored and controlled since they were a 'Trojan horse' in the country and an obstacle to the realization of the socialist ideals and the desired progress. This representation of the group paved the way for the real forced intervention, since it was constructed in accordance with the objectives of the policy, tailored to be applied to the groups with 'non-Bulgarian consciousness'. In this line of reasoning, it is obvious that what the Communist regime aimed by imposing its version of reality was to justify its actions.

Ideology and Propaganda

Stuart Hall[9] argues that the systems of representation say much more about the one who represents than about the represented. In the case of Pomaks, the representation reveals much more about the fears of the political elite then the features of the represented group. It is without any doubt that incorporated fear strengthens the feeling of belonging to a group and solidarity among people. That

is the reason why it is an important part of the ideological toolbox. The question is: what is the price and who pays it. In this case, the Pomaks become prisoners of the image imposed by the ideological work of the communist regime.

In order to provide further analysis focusing on the ideological work carried out by the regime, I will make use of the L. Althusser's approach, since it provides critical insight about the ideology and its functioning[10].

In his article 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-structuralism Debate', S. Hall cites a definition of ideology provided by L. Althusser before writing his essay 'Ideology and Ideological state apparatuses'. According to this definition, ideology is not only a system of beliefs but a system of representations, composed of concepts, ideas, images in which "men and woman live their imaginary relations to the real conditions of existence". In other words, ideology can be defined as 'systems of meaning' through which we explain the world to ourselves. We are 'ideological animals' since we share ideologies that somehow explain the relations we experience with others. It seems that we need this kind of system in order to build our own interpretation of the world and this is closely related to our desire to control and dominate through the imposition of one particular version of reality. Therefore, ideology imposed through the ideological state apparatuses functioned as an instrument to apply the framework of one particular system of beliefs which serves the process of the reproduction of the already established social relations i.e. the relations of subordination and domination. In other

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[7] Ardenski (1985).

[8] *State Security* (2013), Doc. 171, 786.

[9] Hall (1985), 91-114.

[10] Althusser (1971), 170-86.

words, the ideology is related to the imposition of one particular version of interpretation of signs that serves specific interests and lays the grounds for the reproduction of particular power relations.

Although the ideology is something imaginary, it has its 'material existence', as L. Althusser argues in his essay, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses"[11]. This is because the system of beliefs that constructed the ideology is inscribed in actions. On the one hand, the ideas are mental events but, on the other hand, their material registration is possible through language and actions.

Ideology is a system of representations but how should representation itself be defined? I refer to the definition given by S. Hall: "Representation is the production of meaning through language. Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. […] To represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description or portrayal or imagination; to place a likeness of it before us in our mind or in the senses. To represent also means to symbolize, stand for, to be a specimen of, or to substitute for. […]There are two processes, two systems of representation, involved. First, there is the 'system' by which all sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or mental representations which we carry around in our heads. […]"[12].

In order to exemplify the role of ideology in Pomaks representations, I will draw attention to the way in which Pomaks were described in official documents from 1950. The first one is a

short historical review concerning Pomaks and the second document is a report, prepared by official working for the Security Agency.

Document № 7 Pomaks - short historical review from 1950[13]: *[…] The Pomak bares the destiny of a denationalized man, but he is not absolutely so. Historically, his nationality is defined, but if we look at him we will see that he always had felt and still feels like a man with uncertain nationality. Concerning his religion, he is attached to Islam fanatically. Because of his ignorance, he does not make any difference between nationality and religion and considers himself Turk, but the Turks do not accept them as such and call them 'dinkardes'[14]. […] Concerning his personal features, the Pomak is unwilling to build and maintain relationships with people outside his own group, he always agrees with the collocutor but he never shares his thoughts. […] In his everyday conduct he follows the old traditions. Pomaks have acquired a slavery psychology to a higher degree than the Bulgarians. They are used to be slaves of the Turks and at the same time of the Bulgarians and that is why today they could not benefit from the freedom they have received. They continue to worship the power and the powerful. […] From the short review of the history of the Pomaks, it is clear why they are so apathetic toward life. Bearing in mind the bad economic conditions and the fact that they live in constant privation […].*

Document № 6, Report on Bulgarian Muslims 1950[15]: *[…] The notion of 'Pomaks' has not been studied enough till now. The members of the group are called also "ahryani" which means unbeliever. […] Some of them think that Pomak means 'somebody*

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[11] Althusser (1971), 170-86.

[12] Hall (1997), 15-30.

[13] *State Security* (2013), 133.

[14] 'Dinkardes' is a Turkish word which means 'brothers in faith'.

[15] *State Security* (2013), 122.

who is oppressed in order to convert to another religion'. This notion was loaded with negative connotations. […] The Pomak is an introvert. […] He always agrees with the opponent, but actually he doesn't give any expression of his thoughts. He is religious, even fanatically attached to his religion. The Pomak is hardworking and honest. In his everyday conduct, he is following old traditions. […] He is very discreet. He is always promising, but not keeping his promises. The fact that he is on the crossroad between Turks and Bulgarians makes him dejected. Until 1926, their schools were treated as private schools, where the training was held in Turkish, since they were considered a Turkish minority. In some cases, Bulgarian teachers were sent to the region to introduce Bulgarian language to the pupils.

As can be inferred from the documents, the representation of Pomaks is correlated to concepts such as backwardness, slave psychology, fanatically religious, unwilling to build and maintain relationships with people outside their own group, apathetic to life, following old traditions and unable to make a difference between nationality and religion. Pomaks were described as people who were not aware of their own identity. Therefore, the group that possessed the competency (i.e. knew their origins better) should help them to realize what their nationality was by explaining to them who they were. This situation enabled the intervention of the state into the private sphere of the individuals. This is how the private issues became part of the public discourse, monopolized by the majority group. Every attempt of the minority to raise its voice was silenced by the suggestion that the group lacked the competence to argue about identity issues, since they misunderstood nationality and religious affinity. Consequently, the state explained to them who they were, what their identity was and how they needed to behave in accordance with the implied

identity, how to talk, what kind of practice to perform in case of holidays or other events related to death, birth, or marriage. In this manner, the household was not a private realm anymore, since man was not the subject of his own will, but the subject of the state[16].

The Act of Resistance

The name changing campaigns could be separated into two different stages. The first one was carried out between 1962 and 1964. This campaign was not well structured and organized. Initially, there was no resistance because the operation had no mass character but subsequently the discontent became strong and massive. The second wave of the name changing campaign started in 1970 and was named the 'Revival Process'.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party took the decision to 'clarify the consciousness and to provide patriotic education to Pomaks'. The operation started from the western part of the country. Together with the name changing campaign, the government planned to eliminate the traditional clothing of the Muslim women and to ban the performance of religious practices in the framework of the so called 'Revival Process'. Although it was ordered to avoid violence and coercion, in many places officials applied a brutal approach in order to implement the requirements of the government, as evidenced by the following documents:

Document № 46, 'Report concerning the attitudes of Pomaks toward the measures applied by the government: *[…] A small part of Pomaks demonstrated a negative attitude toward the*

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[16] Arendt (1998).

implemented measures, mainly because of their religious fanaticism and insufficient education […]. In order to implement the measures as soon as possible, some of the women were forced to leave the doctor's cabinet because they wore traditional Muslim clothing, others were not allowed to enter their workplaces […][17].

Document № 115, 'Report': *[…] Many people in Velingrad were forced to change their names. As a reaction of disagreement, a group of citizens decided to come to Sofia and address the issue to T. Zhivkov. They insisted to take their names back, but they were told that this problem could be resolved only by T. Zhivkov and that would take at least two months. They were advised not to come any more […]*[18].

Another example of the violent approach applied upon people is the case in Kornitsa. In the middle of March 1973, citizens of Kornitsa prepared and sent a petition where they explain that their children did not attend school anymore because they were instigated systematically to change their names. The officers applied violence in order to force people to conform to the decision made by the Party. To avoid the pressure and conflict, whole families slept at the square in the middle of the town and later they were fined because their children did not attend school[19].

Many reports informed that the campaigns did not bring the expected results. Pomaks denied changing their names and clothes because it was interpreted as an act of dishonesty[20]. What is more, the strict religious adherence was an already tested tool meant to make them resist and escape the destructive influences. Their visible devotion was

seen as a sign of the preserved features and a way to escape marginalization. Therefore, it was important to demonstrate this type of attachment, although in many cases this behaviour followed more the principles of mimesis than a real religious adherence.

It should be stressed that during the Communist regime, the performance of religious practices was considered as a sign that the member of the marginalized group had escaped the influence of the regime. It follows that what was considered from one part of the society as fanatically religious and backward was interpreted at the same time as a sign of resistance from another part of society. This is how the same category obtains different meanings in the systems of representation. Although dominant codes function to determine the preferred interpretation of reality, the parallel alternative interpretations of signs are normal. Since they did not correspond to the goals of the communist policy that aimed to clarify the consciousness of the Pomaks, they remained peripheral, 'subjugated knowledge'[21].

In my opinion, the resistance of the Pomaks was in itself a collection of actions that lacked their proper definition. Pomaks, together with other Muslim minority groups, were known as a problematic 'element' that threatened the stability of the society. The implied discourse defined the horizon of the interpretations and the limits of the vocabulary used in documents. They were filled with notions such as correction, revival, clarifying the consciousness, betrayal, enemy, hostile, backwardness,

[17]*State Security* (2013), 257.

[18] *Ibidem*, 482.

[19]*Ibidem*, Document № 147, 609.

[20]*Ibidem*, Document № 114, 475.

[21] M. Foucault determines the 'subjugated knowledge' as a knowledge which is opposed to the established way of thinking or is outside the mainstream.

religious fanaticism, fifth column, etc. All these ideas are correlated, and help construct the image of disloyal citizens who had to make more efforts on their way to modernization. Therefore, I argue that the protests and the rallies against the ban on religious practices and the name changing campaigns were not only a form of resistance to the policy implied, but an attempt to change the imposed representation that made all these interventions possible. The resistance itself was an effort to transform the meaning inscribed in the notion 'Pomak' and to gain recognition that provides conditions under which subjects "feel secure on the knowledge that the society stays behind their orientation"[22].

Final Remarks: The Effects of Propaganda

Even after the fall of the Communist regime, issues related to the group of Pomaks are approached by using the same vocabulary, the same system of representations and arguments provided by the former regime. Today, we can still hear statements along the line of: 'The idea to unify the nation was a good one, but the methods used weren't the right ones'. In this manner, we ignore the fact that the ideology i.e. the system of beliefs justified the political actions.

Bearing in mind the fact that we still use the concepts and system of representations related to the period of the Communist regime, associated with violence, it becomes more or less clear why most of the researchers define different groups in our contemporary society as closed to each other in terms of the communication process.

The transmission of information coded in stories (narratives) is possible when there are a speaker, a hearer, and the right infrastructure, which will enable the process. Individuals in their capacity of hearers receive and interpret the information in accordance with their system of beliefs. In this particular situation, the system of beliefs is influenced by the ideological work undertaken during the time of Communist regime. Despite all the efforts, which are expressed in the motivation to produce narratives about the origin, religion and everyday life of the Pomaks, the notion itself is still a symbol with negative connotations.

In conclusion, even nowadays relations between the dominant group and the Pomaks are characterized by mistrust and mutual rejection. On the one hand, Pomaks place the responsibility for the state of affairs on the majority, which violently wanted to impose its interpretation of the history, identity and the future of the Pomaks and on the other hand, the imposed discourse represents the group of Pomaks as a community which needs to pay the price in order to be recognized and appreciated for its qualities.

These beliefs are widely spread and communicated in the society to the degree that they are taken for granted. The attempt to criticize the stereotypical representation of the group fails not because there are no examples and arguments, but because the hearer in the communication process is deaf to the voice of the Pomaks. Quoting Francis Ponge's statement: 'I speak, therefore I am, I speak and you hear me, therefore we are'[23], I may suggest that in order to have

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[22] Honneth (2002), 43-55.

[23] Moi (1986), 45.

'we are', we need to hear more and to speak less.

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Adrian Stoicescu

Remembering the Republic's Day – the Adhocracy of Recollection. An Internet Based Case Study on Remembering August 23rd

The less memory is experienced collectively,
the more it will require individuals
to undertake to become themselves memory-individuals…
(Pierre Nora (1989), p. 16)

[…] we must in principle be open to many different possibilities of
representing the real and its memories. This is not to say that anything goes.
(Andreas Huyssen (2000), p. 29)

Abstract:

This paper aims at seeing how the memory of a recent event is reactivated in the digital space looking both at what kind of events are recalled, how people feel about such events and what weight they carry when it comes to judge the present times. On the other hand, memory represents only a pretext for the much wider space of remembering. The digital medium hosting the recollection may function as digital place of memory in sense that not only does it enable a special type of communication between the exhibit and the viewer, but at the same time since it enables the interaction among the participant to the process of memory in the making. Furthermore, the digital site of memory co-hosts two conjoint types of profane rituals, that is the ritual of remembering and that of digitally displaying such memories.

Keywords: Digital Sites of Memory, Past vs. Present Trauma, Remembrance, Digital as Memory Agent

Scope of Research and the Research 'Field'

The initial intention of this chapter was to see to what extent people group together or spread apart when they interact on the Internet, keeping in mind the more deeply rooted idea of doubling the community of practice with a community of remembering. In order to do so, the main purpose was to read in context the uploaded comments on the media websites and to see whether these are more or less sharing the same system of relating to the theme of the articles. Thus, the aim was to understand whether the commentaries are forming a community of thinking or, on the contrary, they are so divergent that the online community of commentators becomes more a discontinuous arena of randomly expressed views.

To verify my working hypothesis, the selection of web pages was made taking into account a few factors. First, the media channel has to belong to the mainstream press (doubled by a webpage)

so that the access to it is rather national and not region limited. The second idea was related to the numbers of hits that online version of the media channel has, and, moreover, the selection of the theme the article was centred on, which is an *invented tradition*[1] of the recent past, the celebration of the August 23rd, The Republic's Day, the former national communist Romanian state holiday. Finally, the subjectivity and intentionality of both the way the articles are written and the choice of interviewees and, above and beyond, the very sharp contrast between these two aspects were the last factors guiding the selection I have made.

Having all this in mind, but especially after going through the pages of commentaries, the focus of the chapter reoriented towards the content of them, leaving aside the initial idea placed under scrutiny which was the associative nature of the debate over the recent past enabled by the digitally mediated communication.

The purpose of my paper will be unfolding over three dimensions: how the commentators' relate to the content of the articles and the way they are put together, secondly, how the Republic's Day[2] still

echoes in the commentators' present way of thinking and last, how the recent past events remembered here may influence the critical discourse people have on the current socio-political context as shaped by recent past reference.

A Google search done on the 24th of August 2014 using the keywords *ziua republicii* (the day of the republic) returned scores of websites on the theme. Of the many search results, the ones ending up as research material for this chapter were the links to the digital editions of national newspapers and TV broadcasting channels.

According to the criteria listed above, out of a plethora of websites my attention was drawn to a news agency website www.hotnews.ro, two TV broadcasting channels www.stirileprotv.ro and www.realitatea.net (the latter of which is a news channel) and two national newspapers having online editions, *Evenimentul Zilei* (www.evz.ro) and *Gândul* (www.gandul.info).

These five websites hosting articles on remembering the 23rd of August state celebration were not chosen for the information disclosed in the articles, although this plays an important part in the way people relate to recent past, but rather for the comments people uploaded at the end of these and the extent to which these comments actually relate to the theme of the articles. At the same time, it's worth mentioning that the number of such comments differs a lot from one webpage to another, and this is probably

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[1] Hobsbawm, Ranger (2000) [1986].

[2] It is important here to clarify the reasons which determined the choice this particular event from the recent history as a subject for my research on digital remembrance. The 23rd of August 1944 was the moment when the former head of the Romanian Government, Marshall Ion Antonescu, was arrested by the Romanian monarch Mihai I, and so creating the turn in the war strategy Romania ceasing to fight alongside with the Axis Powers. The communist regime appropriated this event and made this date the national day of the Romanian state. It ceased to exist as such after 1989, the year of the Romanian Revolution. Its relevance is furthermore meaningful since the celebrations organised by the communist state apparatus were real displays of public

adoration for the head of state featuring an opulence sharply contrasting the social living condition of the Romanians. Its grandeur hardly diminished towards the end of the regime, this day of August marking a sort of a peak in visibility for the head of state.

determined by a sort of response-worthiness the readers perceive.

From this point of view, a set of three articles[3] appears to stand out due to the number of comments and views, all three belonging, coincidently or not, to the same author and to the same publication and, furthermore, all being uploaded on the same date seven hours apart. These articles are, in the order of their web appearance *Cum am căutat ziua de 23 August: (making-)OF-ul unui reportaj muncitoresc*[4] (How I searched the day of August, 23rd: the 'making-of'[5] of a working class reportage), reaching a number of 5528 views and 38 comments[6]; *23 August – români la defilare: „Înainte sărbătoream. Acuma comemorăm"*[7] (The 23rd of August – Romanians parading: `Before we used to celebrate, now we are commemorating`), with 1005 views and 9 comments and last,

but not least *Ce părere au românii despre mareșalul Ion Antonescu: „A fost un comunist, legionar, un om bun, avea statuie la Muncii"*[8] (What the Romanians feel about marshal Ion Antonescu: 'He was a communist, a legionary, a good man, he used to have a statue in the Muncii Square') totalling a number of 6373 views and 42 comments.

Media as 'Agent of Memory'

It must be said from the very beginning that this choice of articles has quite a lot to do with the assessment of media as an *agent of memory*. It is a rather large debate around this matter, and, additionally, around the authoritarianism media might have when it enacts this agency feature.

To be more precise, it might have been the author's intention to a certain degree to be a collective memory *shaper-cum-discloser* since his pieces of news resemble more a documentary, in the shape of people recalling past events in the oral history recording format rather than news specific interviews. What the author does in all of his three short movies it is to simply let some randomly picked people to recount what they used to do before 1989 on this particular day. Commenting on how he decided what people to interview or on what drove him in the *copy and paste* process having as result the final shape and size of the movies not to mention the fact that the question(s) the people answer to is (are) not disclosed represent yet other points of

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[3] With a view to enabling an easier citation tracking, (1), (2), (3) after a comment marked as a quotation refers to the first article (see footnote 5), the second one (see footnote 8), and the third (see footnote 9) in this particular order. Both the article and the comment may be located by accessing the URLs given. The identification words appearing by this number are the identity taken by the commenter when posting.

[4] http://www.gandul.info/reportaj/cum-am-cautat-ziua-de-23-august-making-of-ul-unui-reportaj-muncitoresc-13133393, accessed on the 27th of August 2014, 18:11 and 29th of April 2015, 9:50.

[5] The Romanian wording and spelling plays upon the homonymy between the English preposition *of* and the Romanian imitative word *of* converted into a noun meaning a sigh of grief, bitterness or loss of hope.

[6] Both the number of views and that of the comments are displayed by the article heading

[7] http://www.gandul.info/reportaj/23-august-romani-la-defilare-inainte-sarbatoream-acuma-comemoram-13133430, accessed on the 27th of August 2014, 18:11 and 29th of April 2015, 9:50.

[8] http://www.gandul.info/reportaj/ce-parere-au-romanii-despre-maresalul-ion-antonescu-a-fost-un-comunist-legionar-un-om-bun-avea-statuie-la-muncii-13133633, accessed on the 27th of August 2014, 18:11 and 29th of April 2015, 9:50.

discussion and would be placed more on a realm of fictional presuppositions rather than sharp and objective professional discourse.

But there is a reason for these notes on how the movies were made and on how the text accompanying them was written. Letting aside the real intention, one can read between the lines of the author's undertaking, this highly subjective choice of remembering the past being the cornerstone of the purposes of this chapter since this offers a crucial twofold key for reading the uploaded comments.

The first one is simply derived from the issue of agency the media channels posit when it comes to presenting, the (re)shaping and creation of a sense of a collective memory or, in order words, who is entitled to narrate – directly, by means of authored discourses, or indirectly, using the recorded words of the others. Stemming from the idea that *the right to narrate the past is no longer reserved to the academics*[9], media – in all of its older or newer forms – dispute over a rather privileged place it may hold in the stream of disquieted voices that may be entitled to evoke past. Media, to this extent, resembles *a vessel for shared recollections, their distributors and the 'place'- virtual or concrete, in the public arena or in the private domain, where the social rituals of remembering are performed*[10].

The second one moves from the simple agent status to a rather more complicated process of hierarchizing the multiplicity of collective memory agents which, in their turn, are the commentators. This leads inevitably to a questions of which of so many agents have the utmost right to hurl into the fight for the voice supremacy of recent past

events. The answer might appear as simple as the question itself: media which *perceive themselves as authoritative social story tellers of the past*[11], and to which we may very easily add the commentators.

Furthermore, the memory agent role the media play is only half of the bigger picture the stream of memories actually represents. Bringing forth facets of the past events inevitably doubles the opposite process of passing others into oblivion. Thus media converts from an agent of (collective) memory to one of (collective) forgetting. Their role in forgetting becomes increasingly important in case of information overflow. Paradoxically, by choosing what must be remembered, they deem what must be forgotten.

Paul Connerton, among the seven types of forgetting enlisted, includes a particular instance allowing amnesia, dubbed as *annulment* and defined *as a reaction to the information overload*, […] *both the individuals and groups of various sizes (for example, families as large corporations) and society and cultures as a whole*[12]. It is thus second to none to mention media among such agents and that not the memory agent function nor the forgetting agent one is what leads to the authoritative posture they take, but rather the constant negotiation between those two, eventually deciding what must or should[13] be remembered and what not.

Resulting from such an intricate undertaking, the particular status of media in collective memory shaping is the already mentioned issue of authoritative voice. Since this process of inclusion and

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[9] Motti (2011), 10.

[10] *Ibidem*, 13.

[11] *Ibidem*, 7.

[12] Connerton (2011), 49.

[13] The impossibility of choosing only one verb here depends a lot on the choice of the media agent to build up its discourse, be it in words, sounds or images.

elimination is mainly based on a highly subjective choice, the matter of media as authoritarian past preservation voice falls under strong debate if not directly denial. And displacing such media from their previous channels of reaching its target audience and their repositioning on the newer digital environment adds up to possibility of actually seeing the debate over the authoritarian voice it might have. The digital media converts nevertheless into the arena where the true process of negotiating remembrance actually unfolds before the readers' eyes.

From 'Traditional' to Digital Media: Crowdsourced Historiography

The change of focus the remembering processes display was, on the other hand, subject to analysis from the view point of the multiplication of the media channels involved in preserving and making available the memory of recent (traumatic) historical events. As Andreas Huyssen posits it, the constant threat of oblivion engenders a series of compensation methods of 'public and private memorialisation'[14] shaped many times in the form of commodified or spectacularised material forms.

Among such, the emergence of digitally made material holds an increasingly central role in the practice of remembrance, be it in the form of the trivial forms of memory the sites uploaded content displays. The survival strategies Huyssen hints at are far and away incorporated in the conjunct form of presentation the particular type of website discussed here allow. Not only do the journalistic approach to recent past historical events is brought forth but,

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[14] Huyssen (2000), 28.

equally important, such displays of views on recent past compel the reader to understand that such past might as well incorporate opinions stemming from people with no historiographic training background. This type of remembrance functions thus as a tool in disquieting an interpretative framework which offers an alternative to the main stream historiography taught in schools or read on various sources of printed materials.

But accepting such a wide variety of opinion and reshaping of fact into, sometimes, fiction may very well be claimed as a futile undertaking since, as quoted in the second motto from the above, not all representations all equally acceptable. True as this as this may be for a historian, if the methodology is changed to the field of ethnography things take a rather crucial turn. Not only the main stream views of academia are worth keeping in mind, but rather the trivial perception stemming from mass understanding of events may prove an invaluable resource to be looked at. Irrespective of whether the recent past was lived or indirectly accessed by a sort of second-hand referentiality, the way this past echoes in the thoughts of the mass id crucially significant in painting clearer picture of what happened and how this past affects the present context. Furthermore, the analysis of such complex digital site of history opens a new possibility which is to see memory of recent events as a place for debate only among the users but between the initial posting and the subsequent reactions to it.

An analysis on how such an alterative medium for fostering individual ideas on recent global historical event and those affected humankind is hardly a new approach. Tessa Morris-Suzuki approached such a digital sites of history in connection to the remembrance of the event of the atomic bombing of the

Japanese cities at the end of World War II understating the process of requesting personal views on the events as a 'gladiatorial debate over contentious issues'[15]. This debate, as she perceives it, functions rather as to embroil views by the fragmentation the hypertext leads to. Metaphorically, the reader of the information from such web pages will be 'navigating this sea of ideas and opinions' in the utter disorientation caused by 'its winds and waves'[16].

Similar to Huyssen's opinions, Morris-Suzuki understands the historiography from the side of the main stream views and tends perceive some threads the popular beliefs may pose. But as said before, from an ethnographic perspective, the fragmented samples of views on the main historical events as well as the interpretations stemming forms mass opinion are crucially meaningful and the Internet as medium is a real asset which hosts such diverse approaches.

Analysing the comments people upload on the websites hosting the news offers a rather clarifying view on what people actually feel about this implicit feature media takes for granted, on one hand, and about the commentators' views, on the other. This possibility results from the interactive characteristic the digital media have which, unlike in the traditional media channels, allow the highest degree of opinions, thoughts or feeling sharing and interaction.

Participative Event of Remembrance

While reading the comments made on the three articles mentioned above, the question of authoritative voice the media

have is from the very beginning split unevenly into two large categories of reference: the first are author-related commentaries, while the second being text/movie related.

The Views on Authority

One question that might come natural at this point is why the comments related to the author, article or, as it can be seen later on, to other commentators are included in an analysis of the collective memory of the recent past. To answer this, one must contextualize such comments. Read out of the context, these comments may be seen as ways of bullying or samples of frustration related to the present events or the present social and political profile of the group one individual commenter belongs to. But included in the wider picture of the article as a whole[17], each individual comment tied very strongly to the type of collective memory displayed in the article, even though, in some cases, such memory functions only as a stimulus for uttering the personal views on the present. Keeping this in mind, a fist general classification of the comments can be past-oriented and present-oriented (the second with a strong anchorage in the past events).

The first group of opinions asses the ability of the author of these three articles, to create a newsworthy material. Few comments praise his achievement, *Hello, Gândul!!! If you had each day an article equalling this one you would multiply by thousands the number of views. Congratulations to you, Mr. Sultanoiu.* (3, HatruHatru[18]), while the vast majority is

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[15] Moris-Suzuki (2005), 218.

[16] *Ibidem*, 221.

[17] By these ones should read the article and all the commentaries related to it.

[18] Some of the commentaries are doubled by a name, in the case of those uploaded using the

contesting the author's authoritarianism. A few examples will enable us to determine the way the commentators feel when it comes to be introduced to the realities not so far away in the past, realties they had lived: *everybody are* [sic!] *stupid, but you, Sultanoiu, are incredibly smart*[19](1, I.F-Nadlag, Arad). Others become more violent, displaying a clearer attitude in the sense of denying the author's status of authoritarian past recollection voice: *I promise a spit in the face when we see each other* […] *you anti-Romanian bitch* (1, Cititor) or, highlighting the same type of attitude, changing the registry in milder words: *to make fun of the simple people, what can be more rude. Your superiority display, Mr. Sultanoiu, is ungraceful* (2, mariuta) or, within the same comment, sanctioning *the lack of culture, the arrogance, to make it short, the stupidity driving Mr. Sultanoiu when making his interviews* (2, mariuta).

The above comments relate directly to the matter of righteousness and legitimacy of the media channel to remember or *concretise* memory in a form of *narration*[20]. Additionally, since the traditional forms of press have moved towards the Internet as a medium of reaching wider audiences, one might approach the way the communication flow becomes bidirectional. The internet features enable a form of dialogue which replaces the monologue of the traditional media channels.

Facebook account, others by a pseudonym which mimics a certain degree of alias.

[19]These comments are characterised both by grammar mistakes – plural subject with a singular verb functioning as predicate – and spelling mistakes – *e*, the short form of to be 3rd person singular spelled as *ie*, putting in writing the way it is pronounced, probably as a mockery directed to the author.

[20]Motti (2011), 5.

The Views on Events

Such dialogues not only allow a vivid and timely feedback on the information the media display, but, at the same time, allow the different members of both intended audience and the *ad hoc* one to engage in disputes over the information they are presented with. To this end, the comments analysed here embody two totally distinct forms, namely direct reply comments (comments that are cantered on the facts the article communicates both as text and as attitudes) and cross-referenced ones (those addressing the issues raised by another person's comment).

What's more, the format the digital environment has as constituent feature relates smoothly to the behaviour of recent past events recollection which pictures memory not only as a finished product, but rather as a ritual of remembering. This ritual basically enables the one observing the process of making information into memory to notice how its agents build up a rather coherent image of the past events as a response to vigorous external stimuli. To this end, the Internet sites not only present its viewers with the end product of recollection, but, at the same time, it encloses and, eventually, discloses the sometimes forgotten process of the way in which the images of the past are incorporated into openly shared discourses.

The next question springing to mind as a result of the collective memory in the making process the Internet enables, is closely linked the way the comments are shared as either directly targeting the article or cross-referenced to other comments uploaded by other users. They may appear as *crystallising* and *secreting* themselves into a digital *lieux de mémoire*[21], in which either snippets of information

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[21]Nora (1989), 7.

from various sources or samples of individual memory are re-contextualised filling in a certain gap in the natural flow of time the commentators feel discontinued.

These three web pages hosting the news on the former national day together with the comments uploaded there by some of its readers are, in fact, pretty much similar to the sites of memory that *serve different agents as grounds on which they build their idea and versions of the past that are mediated to wider audiences*[22]. Not geographical, in the sense of being hosted by a tangible environment, but digital, offering the possibility of being remotely accessed from virtually anywhere. To this end, the almost religious, ritual in nature, process of visiting such geographical sites of memory Nora talks about, is lost but replaced by another type of profane rituality accompanying the digital environment visits. Furthermore, another critically important difference setting these two apart is the actual process of building them up. If for the geographical sites of memory the relation between those creating the sites and the audience is a one way communication channel, for the digital *lieux de mémoire* based entirely on interaction, this process becomes possible both ways. This feature alters significantly the digital site of memory in the sense that it is both a mediated showcase of past events and a process of giving them another shape.

Form this point further, the comments analysed have to be read in their binary functionality as *exhibits* in a digitally mediated type of museum (after all, the comments are written and displayed to be seen) facing both past and present and, at the same time, as *agents* contributing to creating items inside such a museum, as memory is displayed in the making.

To begin with, one of the commentaries uploaded on these websites actually represents an example of recollection of the past events. It stands out not only because it is the only one of this kind, but most importantly because it displays what Nora defines as the *decisive shift from the historical to the psychological, from the social to the individual, from the objective message to the subjective reception*[23]. Such comment is placed on the side of individual trauma and adds up to the substance of the collective memory as an encapsulation of subjective experience: *for my family, this is the date when my father was taken in the care of the glorious red army, taken to a camp and then to the coal mines in Dombas from where he returned home towards the end of 1947… fortunately: one of his brothers has never returned home, leaving behind two orphan children.* (1, 23 august 1944)

For such a commenter, the recent communist past appears to revolve exclusively on the personal family trauma and the process of remembrance cannot go beyond this event.

Staying on the same subjective path, but distancing from trauma and remaining within the subject of the articles are those comments directly related to the theme. The comments addressing strictly this theme are, on the other hand, far from homogenous: some are purely evocative in nature, others weigh it against the new national day or the present times, whilst a last category, a rather strongly represented one, evokes it in terms of historical meaning and events: *For the day of August 23rd we used to prepare two weeks in advance on the central stadium from Craiova, having placards with us. We started at 9 and kept on until 2 or 3 P.M., on a*

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[22] Motti (2011), 5-6.

[23] Nora (1989), 15.

scorching heat and those responsible with the propaganda argued with us, asking to be better. And, on the 23rd of August, Ceausescu never came and the manifestation didn't take place anymore. But we went parading, carrying big or small tricolour flags and having the sickle and the hammer painted on. I was young, but my father used to take us with him. We stood on the streets from 7 or 8 in morning and we had to march in front of the official tribune around 1 P.M. This was placed in front of the city hall where all the propaganda involved people stayed and where we cheered in front of […] (1, Alin).

For this commenter, talking about this day is remembering what the preparations were. It's not a matter of the day itself, but more what made the day look as it used to. The preparation for Ceausescu's potential visit, which should have been close to perfection, appeared to be in vain since the president failed to come. The ceremonies went on irrespective of the participants, while the ritualisation of the events seemed to carry a similar weight as those for which the preparations were made. He goes on remembering how the official ritual was doubled by a personal family ritual with equal importance: […] *afterwards (the parade), the crowd went for a bier and some mici. But we were so many that those were not enough for everybody. And I and my father went home, where my mother was waiting for us with the lunch ready and we ate better than at their funeral feast.* (1, Alin)

For another commenter, to a certain degree making the same type of event selection in order to be recollected, 23rd of August is a good enough moment to utter his strong feelings about the symbolic meaning depletion of the present national day: *A while ago, the Romanians knew they had a national day, the 23rd of August. Today, after the country has been plundered, the sense of national belonging has vanished into thin air. And the 1st of*

December, the drunkards go for some mulled plum brandy and some stewed beans. (2, Nelu)

Nevertheless, 23rd of August in not just a simply day worth to remember. This day is set against the backdrop of political ritualisation and the pretext for family gathering is a trigger for some reflexive thinking the commenter engages in: *What does this day mean for me? The death of the Romanian people. Where are the countries that fought with Germany now? Austria, Italy, Japan? By August 23 we helped the Soviet bolshevism to conquer Hungary, The Czech Republic, Slovakia. Question – who should me upset now? The Romanian on the Hungarian for what they did or the Hungarian on the Romanian for what we did? We are even and let's not allow history to repeat itself. But taking into account that the humankind never learns from its own past mistakes, World War III knocks on our door and it will be atrocious.* (1, Alin)

This particular comment can be seen as embodying basically all three types of attitudes possible in terms of remembrance: recalling what happened (personally witnessing an event both on the major scene of political representations or on the much smaller one of family gatherings), projecting such recollections on a larger background of intricate mentality disclosing processes and, last but not least, imagining a future event that at this moment is seen as anticipated, justified or prepared by the present moment.

On the other hand, this comment opens the discussion related to what we select as being relevant when it comes to remembering past events. Talking about what people forget and not about what they remember, Connerton places one of the seven identified types of forgetting in close vicinity to the way the aboriginal societies related to the ancestors the name of which they tend to forget, and thus

silently involving in a pattern of *shallow genealogies*[24].

Shifting away the attention from what is forgotten to what is remembered, but keeping in mind that particular comparison to how the genealogies work, the question coming to mind is whether this system is applicable to memory too. Basically, a family tree consists of a vertical lineage relating the present to the past family, but, at the same time, horizontal relationships bounding together under the same family the contemporary people belonging to it.

Memory operates pretty much the same as genealogy does, and just to continue this system of similes, one can identify two types of memory. On one hand, there is the vertical one, bringing forth images of past events that are showcased in no apparent connections to the present day, which were identified with the evocative memory. On the other hand, there is a horizontal memory that is the type of memory to which the current state of events, facts and feelings are closely tied, and which again was previously identified with the memory being weighed against the present. There is yet a type of memory that is neither vertical not horizontal, so thus falling out of the pattern of genealogy. It is a type memory placed more on the realm of strongly fictionalizing the past event in the sense of hypothesising about what would have happened if one of the events had been different or how should the past events be interpreted according to the personal views and choices. This last type of memory might be named a *what if memory*. It is rather difficult to deal with this type of memory since much part of it, if not all, is build up as intentionally fictionalised history offering a subjective scenario on how present life would have

looked like in case the past had had a different course. The only reason for still keeping it within the memory frame is exterior to the memory itself and is substantiated by the form these narrations about the past are shaped in. They are samples of the lost fight of memory in the face the history, which, again in Nora's words[25], are *besieged*, *deformed* and *transformed.* These samples are not a form of post-memory[26] since they are not accounts of survivals of the traumatic past next generation. These pure historical accounts recast into the personal discourse by simple individuals who find the digital places of memory as a sort of an agora where they can utter the personal view on the recent past.

The strong context dependence and the possibility to reinterpret past events or to explain the current state of things is, in fact, something that even one of the commentators is aware of. Reading his intervention offers a key for interpreting the diversity of opinions expressed on the websites in the form of the digital memory*: You must understand one thing, the history of a country changes at the same time with its system. If the system changed, the history changed too.* (1, Kostas)

The system this commenter talks about, one can identify it as the context of memory, incorporating in this case the contemporary political, social, cultural and, as we will see further, the ethnic profile of our contemporary society.

A rather solid consistent block of commentaries for which remembered past is a path to assess the present coagulates around forms of subjectively judged actions from the recent past which would have led to a better present had they followed a different course. To this end, some commentators interpret the past-

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[24] Connerton (2011), 44.

[25] Nora (1989), 12.

[26] Hirsch(1999), 9.

driven present in an ethnically shaped discourse centred upon a strong anti-Roma feeling: *We were free of any gipsies today if only the marshal were still alive.* […] (3, Ady Koko, commentary posted using the Facebook account).

A great patriot. He wanted to get rid of the gipsies and that's why he deserves but respect. (3, Laur)

[…] *but if Antonescu had still remained* [in his capacity as the head of the army and the state] *and had sent al the gypsies in a local Asia, we would not have seen today such Mandruta-like masquerades, the manele sung by Minute, Guta, Salam and others, Ciuhandu would not have ended up as mayor to give his kind houses. Much more can be said.* (1, un roman – a Romanian)

In the same tone of ethnically centred discontent, there are the anti-Jewish ones, strongly contextualized to the early Romanian communist movement where the Jewish played an important role:@*alin – Kid, they* [the people being interviewed in the movie] *don't vote, they work for tomorrow so that to provide the means for your generation growing up. We are the one to go to vote as ones that lived both the communism Jewishness and that after December '89* […] (1, el condor)

This last, apparently too long citation used as an example for the ethnic shades of the commentary is on the other hand relevant for another discourse development. Not only do the ethnical minorities share the fault for the troubled present, but also for the electoral outcomes as they are considered the rather distinct pool of voters for the presidential elections which took place last fall.

They vote too! (1, de groaza – (horrific))

Absolutely… they are Mickey Mouse's voters! :)))))). Let's see how they can read where to stamp… […] (1, shark)

It is not clear whether the remarks are made about the people interviewed in the movies or about the other commentators having posted before, but what strikes as obvious here is that this digital site of memory is the best place to practice the alterity gaze. Translated in a very district way of detaching from the expressed views, these two last commentaries can be read as an exercise of superiority the commentators display in a sense of either distancing from the whatever outcome the elections might have or, in a rather oriented manner, hinting directly at one of the candidates. The *ad hoc* superiority that can be identified here is more obvious in the second comment which ironically identifies one of the candidates to the presidential election using a rather generalised label the candidate used to share both within and outside the digital environment.

The views on those running for president shift from an opaque metaphorical identification to a rather transparent utterance of discontent for the alleged voters pictured as a mass of undistinguished people united in their utmost incapacity of shaping beliefs against the backdrop of blind conformity: *Mr. Sultanoiu, after the pictures with PSD voters from Craiova you make us have a worse bee on out bonnet, lifting the soiled but tricolour curtain that covered the real face of the Romanian voters. We are aware of who makes the group of 3.4 million of yokels and senile old women whom veve Ponta-Naum and Antena 3 address to, but we don't want to believe that we are contemporaries with such inept ragtag groups. This is the optimistic Romanian who sticks his head in the sand and dreams of a beach in Capri. PSD preserves Lenin in a stupidity fridge just to use him as a puppet. If the elections end in a bad way, you shall see them jumping down your throats*

while being cheered by the glorious red army. (1, 23 ingust, 23 narrow-minded)

On the hand, it is hardly far-fetched to say that the commenter enrols in the rather widely spread idea that the contemporary social democrats inherit the legacy of the former communists and recast it in a new, apparently democratic political view. Such an overview becomes increasingly coherent since talking about present in such contexts almost axiomatically reverts to the collective traumatic events recollection either directly, as seen in the commentary opening the example batch, or indirectly, as this last one does.

In fact, this last comment opens a new door to the recollection of past. Between memory and amnesia, *the head in the sand* mentioned above is more a way to mimic amnesia and suppress memory but always allowing a feeling of fear that bygone is in fact still present under a rather shallow representation of alteration.

To partly conclude, based on the examples presented so far, subsumed to what I previously singled out as horizontal memory, these comments put together the imagined causes for the way in which the country is shaped today. Such causes may be either a sort of ethnical intervention or the commentators' inability to clearly understand the present.

Moving towards the vertical memory, unlike the brief account of oral history mentioned above, much of the commentaries recast the recalled events in a sort of *what if* history. They can hardly be considered as samples of memory since much of the information disclosed in such commentaries appears to be mediated by the history books or to stem from a pool of general historical knowledge whose traces are impossible to identify. Another group of commentaries more interpretative and less descriptive tend to offer an interpretative framework of historical figures, with the former head of State during the World War II, Ion Antonescu, playing a rather significant role mainly due to the theme of the article. The marshal's figure in not a pretext for disquieting feelings and ideas about the present as previously seen, but more a theme of discussing the past events, some of which are read in the same manner of potential outcomes in cases of different courses of action.

A part of the comments are written to depict the marshal historical figure: *He was the greatest Romanian patriot. Dignified, courageous, full of honour. Before being executed, marshal Antonescu spoke in front of that rotten court full of Bolsheviks, not wailing over but dignifying saying 'I deserve to be sentenced to death for the wellbeing of the Romanian people'. Antonescu really was a political prisoner after a war he lost.* (3, Eugen Pan)

or:

Marshal Antonescu was good man in the same way Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin and Hitler were good people. He was a man pursuing the interests of the country he was leading. As for Ion Antonescu's morality, he was a politician, so he already started at a disadvantage. He committed the same crimes all the political leader from the alliance committed, that is he brought to power the fascist political organisation and he organised the holocaust, of course under extent of that organised in Germany. To say that Antonescu is a bad person because he did atrocities and Roosevelt good because he launched two atomic bombs on two cities packed with civilians is ridiculous. It is true that during The World Was II there weren't any good or bad people, but only cynical politicians following their own interests be it national, political, military or ideological. (2, un pic de istorie - A little bit of history).

But Antonescu's portrait is not simply built up by means of character

features enlisting. Other commentators prefer to recall the marshal's acts in the context of the political relations and as responses to the political profile of the era: *Antonescu was a man of his time or a true military man with a sense of honour, a patriot but at the same time a victim of the history. Antonescu was the leader of the government and the military head of the Romania in a context where his only two choices were or an alliance with Germany or the complete destruction of Romania. He chose the first option, and good it was. As for his opposing the king on August 23rd this was the moment when for honour he decided to become a victim of the history. Antonescu must not be either cherished or despised. Antonescu has to be respected for his patriotism and hid power to sacrifice himself in the name of the Romanian people.* (2, Mokada).

or:

Antonescu's mistake was he failed to stop at Dniepr. For this, both he and we paid. He should have done similar to Mennerhein who stopped at the Finnish border.(2, Omicron)

Depicting Antonescu's acts on similar base, another commenter connects his deeds to the king's: *It came as natural that in those times Romania was close to Germany taking into account the royal family origin. King Mihai was too young to understand the realities of his time. The toughness of all calls fell on Antonescu; it is very hard to make decisions all by yourself. Italy was on the same wavelength as we were, the difference being that they remained under the wing of the West and us under the East. Where are they now and where are we? I am not talking about geography but about economy, civilization, etc.* (2, Tudor).

On the other hand, recent past cannot and will not find its place in any type of remembering discourse exclusively focused around people, as one can see from the above commentaries on Antonescu's role, but also around events

and, furthermore, on their dates and places, too. These events, with their dates and places, remembered from whatever source, constitute a complementary part of these narrations, offering a clear way into seeing the peoples' relation to earlier times.

1. *'The liberation day of Romania from by the Red Army' – was forced as a national day by the USSR during the period Romania was occupied by the Red Army subsequent to the Peace Treaty from Paris. Be careful: the country's occupation was for an undetermined period of time.*

2. *After the Red Army's withdrawal (the first state belonging to the communist block left by the army while in others it remained until 1989), the role of the Red Army was gradually diminished.*

3. *Ceausescu renamed it as 'The day of freeing Romania from the fascist occupation' afterwards*

4. *he renamed it 'the freedom revolution day' but noted that the Red Army entered the already free Bucharest – which is in fact true – when the Red Army reached Bucharest (including the oilfields from Ploiesti) the German Army had already been defeated in fight by the Romanian Army […]* (2, berbeculmioritei)

For others, the mediated past, when talking about it, is placed on the realm of confusion, a fact that is immediately sanctioned by other commentators.

August 23rd is really a day that is worth celebrating and praised by all Romanians. Unfortunately, during the great rebellion from December 89, many people understood liberty as a moment of anarchy, be those people intellectuals or simple people. All entered without any judgment a competition to pull down statues and to abolish symbols of Romania's history. I was astonished to see how they pulled down general Dobrogeanu Gherea's statue, one of the artisans of 1848 revolution. Without discrimination, they

pulled down statues of communist ideologists and of Romanian heroes. For the Romanians, August 23rdis the day when we simply washed away our sins against the allayed forces for our lack of judgement when we kept on fighting beyond the Denipr. (1, Mokada)

As it might have been very easily anticipated, such a confusion of dates and characters could not have been left unsanctioned.

Pardon my lack of culture, but I only knew a writer having this name Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (born in today's Ukraine, and named Solomon Katz, belonging to an ethnic group that makes your blood pressure increase, as far as I have recently noticed). If he is one and the same person, maybe you can explain to me how could he participate in the 1848 Revolution since he was born seven years after, i.e. 1895. […] (1, ola)

Using the system of cross-referenced reply-comments, history appears to be corrected and the confusion excused, as the next commentary reads, due to an assumed caught in the fever of posting frenzy: *Mea culpa. I got carried away and mixed characters. In any case, the statue should have not been pulled down since this character was an important doctrine maker of social-democracy form between the wars. Let's not mistake Dobrogeanu Gherea's doctrine for Stefan Gheorghiu's.* (1, Mokada)

Conclusions

Be it a process of construction, as identified by Maurice Halbwachs, or of selection, in the theories of Barry Schwartz, or as it can be seen from the previous of approximation one might say, *reading* memory in the digital places of memory unravels itself pretty much different from other context disclosing environments, in an alteration of both content and form.

As far as the content is concerned, the comments enlisted above hint both at recollections and historical truth, both of which being mediated by the use of the technological tools. To this end, in terms of the intricate rapport to the recent past memorial display, the comments can be both read as exhibits in a digital site of memory and as a process of this site's coming into being. What's more, not only the past events are relevant when it comes to scrutinise the (collective) memory, but also, to a greater extent, the explanation of the present events as a direct consequence of the recent past happenings. Nevertheless, what shapes almost all types of comments is a certain degree of conformity to an individually held form of *historical* authenticity of events. Both those being in the thick of the action and those who appear to have *witnessed the* past only from the history books' perspective tend to sanction the opinions others might have, especially when these opinions appear to short circuit the meaning or the sequence of past events.

On the other hand, such sanctions lead inevitably to questions about the formal aspects this digital sites of memory hold as intrinsic, the most significant of which being the cross referentiality of interventions. Maybe because the commentators' identity is hidden behind the anonymity of the digital personae, the views disclosed here turn more vivid than in other contexts and reveal a very dense sense of arguing against or correcting in a sort of search for the authenticity of the recent past.

Putting these two sides together, recalling the recent past becomes here a very clear display of digital remembrance which converts the web into a digital *liéux de memorie* serving as a mnemonic entity.

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Review

Sorin Radu, Cosmin Budeancă (eds.), *Countryside and Communism in Eastern Europe. Perceptions, Attitudes, Propaganda*, Zürich, Lit Verlag, 2016, 798 p.

Sorin Radu, Cosmin Budeancă (Eds.)

Countryside and Communism in Eastern Europe

Perceptions, Attitudes, Propaganda

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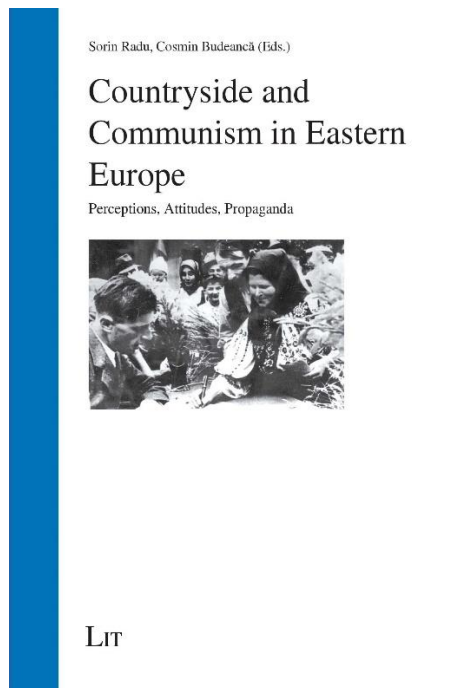
For a long period of time, communism has been studied almost exclusively from a political perspective. The various studies remained confined to a range of topics which were taboo during communism, such as the repression against democratic elites, or the resistance of the population against the newly enforced order. Studies focusing on the cultural and social transformations, the dynamics of the relationship between individuals and the State, the affirmation of new identities, determined by propaganda and ideology, all represent fields of research as of yet insufficiently explored.

The volume *'Countryside and Communism in Eastern Europe. Perceptions, Attitudes, Propaganda'*, coordinated by Sorin Radu and Cosmin Budeancă, tackles

this very topic so little researched by historians. It approaches the recent past from the perspective of social and cultural history, focusing on various topics, from propaganda and ideology to the implementation of social engineering and the reaction of individuals and communities to these imposed measures. The volume enriches not only the field of social history, but also that of anthropology, giving extra attention to concrete cases, observable at the level of communities and/or individuals.

Among the studies from the perspective of the social factor, we would like to point out those undertaken by Thomas Lindenberger, Michel Christian, Sandrine Kott and Jay Rowell focusing on the former German Democratic Republic, which has demonstrated that communist societies are neither amorphous, nor opposed to the state at any cost, as both individuals and compact groups try to adapt, resist, survive and even successfully join the system[1].

Authors such as János Kornai analyse communism from the perspective of the shortage economy, generated by the tendency of the state to accumulate the means of production[2]. The socialist state is centralistic, bureaucratic, and ultimately generates informal relations and

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[1] Kott, 2001, Christian 2002, Lindenberger, 2003, Rowell, 2005 a, b, Christian & Kott, 2009
[2] Kornai, 1992.

secondary economy[3]. The tendency of the socialist system is to increase its own capacity to allocate resources, investing primordially in the production of material goods – in particular means of production – and to a far lesser extent in services or goods destined for consumption. The shortages of goods and the queues represent the visible aspect of the failure of this type of state and society.

Among the studies focusing on the rural areas in communism, the contributions of Mihai Cernea (1974), Dan Cătănuș, Octavian Roske (2000, 2004), A. Roger (2002), Constantin Iordachi, Dorin Dobrincu (2009), Gail Kligman, Katherine Verdery (2012) about the situation in Romania are quite remarkable.

In *Peasant under Siege. The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949 – 1962*, Gail Kligman and Katherin Verdery observe how the collectivisation of agriculture has generated a real war in the Romanian countryside, as villages were subjected to a continuous siege by the authorities. Transformations were unprecedented, over and beyond strictly political or economic questions. Social engineering measures have affected not only the peasant household, but also the way in which the new structures of the State-Party were created. The image of a monolithic state is far from true. In the rural areas of Romania, political and administrative structures were created at the same time as the implementation of collective agriculture and the transfer of private property to collective property[4].

In comparison with these contributions, the volume coordinated by Sorin Radu and Cosmin Budeancă is remarkable for the comparative perspective it offers, as it includes articles which cover the transformation of rural areas in almost every country which gravitated around the Soviet sphere of influence. Specifically, it consists of a considerable number of studies, initially delivered as papers at a conference reuniting researchers from Romania, Estonia, The Republic of Moldova, Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The reader has, therefore, the extraordinary opportunity to compare at a glance, the ways in which villages went through the process of collectivisation in all aforementioned countries.

It is primarily the merit of the two coordinators, who have shown a constant interest for the study of communism, from the perspective of both political transformations and of the social processes created by the measures imposed by this regime.

Sorin Radu, a Professor of History at the George Barițiu University from Sibiu, has published numerous studies about political parties in Romania in the modern and contemporary ages, giving particular attention to the transition from the democratic multi-party system to the one-party system upon the arrival of communism. He has shown a particular interest in the role played by the Ploughmen's Front in the dynamic of transformations, as this organisation was created by Communists to draw the rural population on their side. Setting out from this particular case, Sorin Radu has authored studies and articles about the measures implemented in rural areas at the beginning of the communist regime[5].

Cosmin Budeancă is a researcher at the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of Romanian Exiles (IICCMER) and has written numerous studies and volumes

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[3] Kornai, 1992, Humphrey, 1998, Lampland, 1995, Berdahl, 1999.

[4] G. Kligman, K. Verdery, 2012: 6.

[5] S. Radu (2011) (2013).

regarding various aspects of the history and memory of communism in Romania, which successfully combine the study of archives with oral history.After all, Budeancă has begun his career as a researcher at the Institute for Oral History in Cluj, focusing on the process of collectivisation of agriculture[6].

The present volume is divided into several thematic sections, while also taking into account the chronology of historical events: the creation of party structures in rural areas, the agrarian reform, the collectivisation of agriculture and its political, social and cultural consequences. Both the mechanisms of power as well as the perceptions of peasants about communism, persuasion methods and local reactions to propaganda clichés are taken into account. The volume includes the following sections: (1) Organization and political practices in rural areas within the Eastern bloc; (2) Agrarian reforms and collectivization of agriculture in the Eastern bloc; (3) Political instruments of the communist regimes for transforming the village: between coercion and resistance; (4) Social change and rural mentality; (5) Communist propaganda and representations of the countryside in the official discourse in the Eastern Bloc[7].

As is apparent from the first section of the volume, in every country of the Soviet bloc, the new authorities have met with great difficulties in penetrating the world of peasants, which was reticent and even hostile to transformations, all the more so as the measures to change the regime of property were implemented at the same time as party structures were created in villages. A serious difficulty

was the poor capacity of European communist regimes to recruit new elites in rural areas. (Budeancă). As demonstrated by Olev Liivik in his article, in the Baltic states, including in Estonia, where the soviet model of transformation of agriculture is first implemented immediately after the occupation of the country in 1940 by the Soviet Union, the core of the central organisational structure is made up of individuals brought in from outside the rural areas. As a result of the shortage of faithful cadres, the old administration is preserved until 1950. Between 1944 and 1950, of the 44 Communist First Secretaries, 35 are Estonian and 9 Russians, while the Party had an obvious preference for locals, who were able to speak Estonian (Olev Liivik). The average age was between 31 and 37, and most individuals had, at best, only rudimentary education.

In the Republic of Moldova, the Soviet model was implemented by introducing Soviet education in schools, removing Romanian teachers and replacing the Latin alphabet with the Cyrillic one. Party structures were also created by importing cadres into the rural areas, while the Party supported both the propaganda drive to attract new members and their political education (Marius Tărîță).

The monolithic image of the Party-State is far remote from reality, particularly when discussing rural areas, which were a true *no man's land*, lacking stable party structures (Bogdan Ivașco). In Transylvania, the creation of party structures is directly influenced by the multi-ethnic character of this province (Bogdan Ivașco). While villages are inhabited mostly by Romanians, cities were populated by minorities. Among the workers, on which the Party relied to a great extent in the recruitment of its cadres, there were few Romanians. For

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[6] Budeancă (2001)a; Budeancă (2001)b.

[7] This book review does not refer to each article included in the volume, but only to a selection of these, chosen at random.

example, in the area of Oradea, the party structure consisted mostly of Hungarians and was concentrated in the city proper. The number of Romanians would increase later, as party structures gradually appeared in rural areas as well.

The new legislation allowed for rapid creation of organisational structures. In Poland, for example, only three members were sufficient to create a new branch of the Worker's Party and later, from 1959, only five (Stanislaw Stepka). Despite the fact that, under the circumstances, party structures were extremely easy to create, most party secretaries in rural areas actually came from the cities. In 1953, 40% of these were aged 30 and below, 60% were part of the working class, most active for one year or less (Stanislaw Stepka). Most are poorly educated and, as in all other countries under communist regimes, lack elementary knowledge of agriculture.

It is obvious that these local branches of the party functioned in the beginning mostly as propaganda vectors and means of recruiting new members in order to implement the measures decided upon at the higher echelons of the Party-State. Things changed gradually, particularly after the completion of the collectivisation process, when peasants, turned from land owners into salaried workers decided to join the party for very practical reasons.

In order to successfully implement the soviet model of society, local leaders in each of the aforementioned countries tried to lure the population in rural areas to their side, despite it being traditionally reticent, even hostile to any change coming from the state. As we learn from the second section of the volume, they attempted to do so by means of agrarian reforms, which are applied in every country where 'regimes of popular democracy' took hold. An interesting case is the creation in Romania of the Ploughmen's Front, subordinated to the Communist Party (Sorin Radu). The publicly stated objective of this organisation, which would in time number as many as 15 million members, in almost every rural community, was precisely the agrarian reform. Although contrary to Marxist-Leninist ideology, the idea of the agrarian reform was propagated in order to convince rural population of the Communist Party's 'good intentions'.

Peasants received land following the expropriation of large estates and of the goods owned by the German minority (who were thought to have collaborated with the Nazi regime). The limit imposed on individual property differed slightly from one country to another. In Romania and Poland, for example, all property exceeding 50 hectares was expropriated, while in Slovenia properties above 45 hectares were targeted (Sorin Radu, in the Introduction to the volume, p. 24-25). Overall, in Central and South-Eastern Europe, most expropriated land had belonged to 'collaborating Germans', around 10 million hectares, from a total of 16.7 million hectares (Sorin Radu, in the Introduction to the volume, p. 26). The plots of land granted to peasants were usually extremely small, given the total number of peasants. Even so, some of the confiscated land would remain in the property of the State.

In Poland, for example, starting as early as 1944, Collective Properties (SCOCLP) were created, and these were administered jointly by owners and State. Labour on these properties was mostly provided by the German ethnics. In 1949, mass arrests were conducted among those who ran the SCOCLPs, and as a result these were transformed into 'model state farms', meant to provide supplementary food to nearby cities and foreshadowed

the social-economic changes that the State had in mind (Margarzata Machalek). It would later become evident that these state farms were badly ran, at least in part because of the centralised system, decisions were dictated from above, sometimes with no regards for realities in the field. After 1989, attempts were made to reform these farms in accordance to the requirements of the free market, but without much success and most ended up in bankruptcy.

Measures aimed to collectivise agriculture (an issue which is also covered in the second section of the volume) have impacted more than half of the population of Central and Eastern Europe, while in Romania and Bulgaria the proportion is even higher, touching two thirds of the population.

The origin of the measures to transform the villages was a purely ideological one, stemming from the Marxist idea, later adopted by the Bolshevik Party in Russia, that peasantry was a retrograde class, a fossil of the past which ought to be completely eradicated. During the Bolshevik revolution, peasants represented a dangerous element for the Soviet power. They would become the victims of a war which was meant to eliminate all differences of class and mentality and generate a new, Soviet man. This vision was first implemented in Russia, and later the model was applied in every country where Communism took power, with slight differences from one state to another.

Only the Communist leaders in Yugoslavia have a slightly different perception of peasantry, following its participation in the Antifascist Front led by Tito (Sorin Radu, in the Introduction to the volume, p. 20). Moreover, in the former Yugoslavia, Collective Production Cooperatives amounted to only 3% of all farms (Zarko Lazarević). Although one of

the bloodiest repression against kulaks takes place, collectivisation was officially halted in 1953 by Tito himself. Peasants left the cooperatives in mass, and these evolved into socialist enterprises, providing services to peasants on a contract basis, from machines and input to consultancy and specialised management.

Another particular case is Czechoslovakia, where the Czech part was heavily industrialised, while Slovakia was almost completely agrarian. In 1930, only 25% of the Czech population worked in the agricultural sector, outperforming in terms of industrialisation index countries such as Germany, Sweden or France (Sorin Radu, in the Introduction to the volume, p. 21). This statistical peculiarity would also result in a particular type of implementation of the Soviet model in agriculture.

Unlike the Czech side, Slovakia overall took the same steps as Romania, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary, countries where the majority of the population was made up of peasants. In these 'peasant societies', as named by Samuel Franklin, in the modern age, peasantry is perceived by the intelligentsia as an essential component of national identity, a defining virtue for the Romanian nation (Sorin Radu, in the Introduction to the volume, p. 21). This vision was abandoned as soon as the communist regime took power and took effective measures to collectivise and industrialise agriculture, while transforming peasants from land owners into salaried workers.

In Hungary, collectivisation met with extreme difficulties. There were no fewer than three successive waves of collectivisation followed by de-collectivisation (Zsuzsanna Varge). Studying different letters and petitions, as well as diaries and anthologies, Csaba Kovács touches on several very interesting aspects regarding both the personal

dimension of the collective organisation in Hungarian rural areas, as well as the overall view on the Socialist transformation of agriculture, the various methods of labour and interaction within collective cooperatives.

The third section of the volume refers to the coercive measures used to implement the collectivisation programme and the resistance mounted by the peasants against these abuses. Only active resistance – sometimes by force of arms – is taken into account, and not the 'passive resistance', which may easily be extrapolated to the whole of the population, inducing the idea that everyone was an opponent, including those who in reality adhered and fully contributed to the construction of the new structures (particularly worthy of interest are Sorin Radu's observations in the introduction to the volume). The attitude of Polish peasants, Dariusz Jaroszclaims, cannot be described in terms of victims and oppressors. Given the system of peasant values, based on pragmatism, most likely the dominant behaviour model was that of adaptation, accommodation and even cooperation with authorities.

This does not mean there did not appear numerous forms of resistance and even revolt against abuses. Events in Eastern Bohemia (Jiří Urban) or Eastern Romania (Cosmin Budeancă), where peasants used different forms of resistance illustrate this point. Collectivisation was not a linear process, but one which entailed frequent backtrackings and modifications, yet had a major impact on individuals, families, and communities (Cosmin Budeancă). This process was imposed from the top, against the majority of people living in villages, who lived under terror for years.

Rendered unable to provide for their families, the youngest peasants took to the cities and were forced to find employment in factories. Villages began to be targeted directly by political police. In Romania, for example, the Secret Service's network of informants included in 1968 11,918 people directly connected to Securitate officers and 19,261 linked to the chiefs of police precincts (Valentin Vasile).

A truly remarkable article is the one authored by Dragoș Petrescu, who investigates the relations between the rural and the urban areas between 1965 and 1989, using mostly the date provided by official statistics. A working class fully conscious of its own identity takes shape with difficulty and only very late, as for a long time industrial labour relied mostly on peasant-workers. Between 1948 and 1977, rural population decreases constantly, from 76.6 % in 1948, to 68.7% in 1956, 60.9% in 1966, all the way to 52.5% in 1977. This decrease is proportional to the increase of the urban population. Most workers come from the rural areas, and they continue to have tight relations with their native villages.

In 1973, in the various factories from the city of Brașov, no less than 50% of workers were commuters from nearby villages. They divided their time between working in factories for a wage and working the fields, practicing subsistence agriculture. The category of 'real' workers appears through internal migration, when peasants move away from unfavourable economic conditions towards the great industrial centres. Lacking any tradition of belonging to the working class, their solidarity appears slowly and late, towards the end of the 1970s.

Both the revolt of the miners from 1977 and the protests of workers from Brasov in 1987 have been initiated by this category of 'real' workers, who traced their roots to rural areas.

The fourth section is dedicated to the changes which occurred in rural areas

after collectivisation, either as a direct consequence of it, or following the other connected measures which aimed to transform villages. Two articles are dedicated to women in communism. The first was written by Natalia Jarska and deals with the changes in the status of women in Poland between 1946 and 1989.The second was written by Éva Cseszka and András Schlett, and focuses on the role of women in rural areas from Hungary. They represented true agents of change and modernity, but they acted within the confines of their traditional roles. For example, they were behind the introduction of new forms of hygiene in villages, specifically because they were traditionally expected to take responsibility for this aspect.

Ágata Lidia Ispán analyses the various aspects relating to state commerce, as practiced in Hungary's rural areas, while Cristina deals with the issue of the transformation of villages into agro-industrial centres. In Stalin's vision, the collectivisation of agriculture entailed not only the socialist transformation of the countryside, but also the 'elimination of the antithesis between city and village'. In Romania, the process of collectivisation would continue with an ample programme of infrastructure development and transformation following urban patterns.

The fifth section of the volume is dedicated to the means and forms of propaganda. Among the articles included in this section, of particular interest is the one written by Manuela Marin focusing on the identity of Tatars and Turks from Dobrogea in the 1950s, as gleaned from the articles published in the review *Dobrogea Nouă*. The periodical included several concrete cases of expressed social and ethnic 'narrative identity', in accordance with the directives issued by the Party. According to the new propaganda orientation, it was attempted to include Turks and Tatars as equals in Romanian society.

Using another periodical, *Îndrumătorul cultural*, Klára Lézok describes the forms of cultural-educational propaganda used by the Romanian Workers' Party in the Hungarian Autonomous Region from Romania. Tomasz Osński describes the propaganda deployed in Poland during the Agrarian Reform (1944 – 1945) while Judit Tóth deals with the way in which kulaks were branded as enemies while Rákosi was in power. Eli Pilve tackles issue of how agriculture was idealised in public schools under ideological pressure.

Mihaela Grancea and Olga Grădinaru focus on the field of cinema. The hegemony of the Soviet Union on the other states within its orbit is also visible in cinema, by the use of the same montage techniques, leitmotifs and clichés. Films offer an idealised portrayal of society, completely ignoring the horrific aspects, the individual and collective tragedies of peasants, and offer a comfortable version of events transforming villages, in agreement with the official ideology. The volume concludes with the article written by Zsuzsanna Borvendég and Mária Polosik about the plans to transform nature in Hungary.

Though extremely ambitious in terms of the ground it covers, the volume cannot exhaust, as it might appear at first glance, neither the whole range of social engineering measures designed to transform villages, not the angles from which these measures might be analysed. This might, after all, be an impossible task, given the complexity of social processes, both in terms of implementing state policies and in terms of the responses to these policies. As the coordinators of the volume readily admit, a whole series of aspects still await to be investigated by

researchers, for example the role of women in the organisation of labour, the organisation and functioning of agrarian cooperatives and state farms, aspects of daily life and so on. We hope future contributions might explain not so much the causes for the survival of the peasants' world despite social engineering measures undertaken during communism (it remains an open question if it truly survived, after all), but rather illuminate the inevitable tensions between the old and the new, between the elements of organic community and those imposed by the state. It is the observation and interpretation of these elements of tension that might lead us to perceive not so much the causes for the perpetuation of the peasant lifestyle, but to better understand the coexistence between the traditional form of organisation, based on the principle of networking, and the bureaucratic organisation implemented by the state and the way in which the two forms adjusted to and influenced the other.

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Maria Mateoniu

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Magazine and Book Presentations

Cartographer of Sinister History. Tara (von Neudorf). Collective work, ICC, 2013, 184 p.

Tara von Neudorf was born in Luduş, on January 17, 1974. He studied at the Faculty of Printmaking and the Faculty of Painting at the Art and Design University of Cluj. Since 2005 major exhibitions of his work were organized in Bucharest: 'Black Rumania' (2005), 'Apocalyptic for Everybody' (2006), 'Finis Mundi' (2007), 'Generation Djihad' (2009), 'National Bitch' (2011), 'Raving History' (2012), 'Tara loaded' (2015). He has also had exhibitions abroad, in the Netherlands, Germany, USA, Hungary, and Poland.

His first show in Poland, 'Cartographer of Sinister History. Tara (von Neudorf)', was staged in 2013 by the Gallery of the International Cultural Centre (ICC) in Krakow (4 September – 24
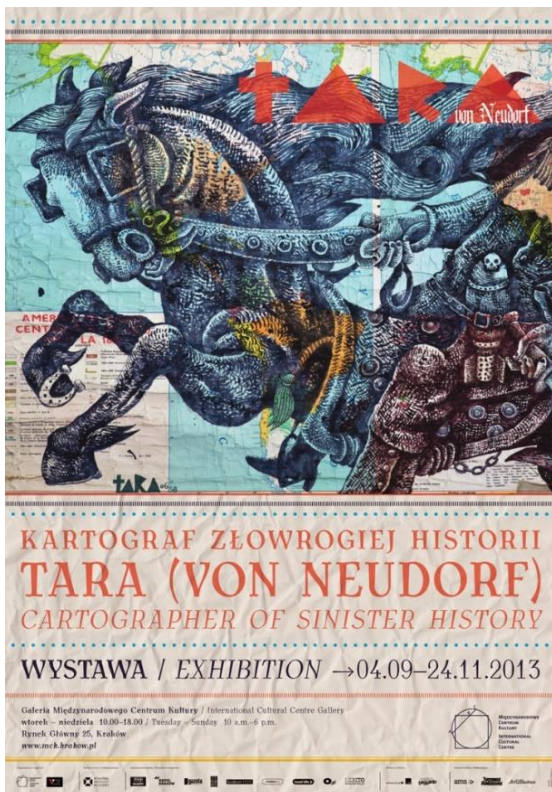
November 2013).

This 'exhibition revealed the most important motifs in the works of the artist, which are linked by an extremely subjective way of interpreting difficult and controversial historical events. This peculiar 'history according to the artist' exposes recurring and eternal, always the same, political mechanisms of instrumentalisation, manipulation and mythologisation of history for the sake of power as well as strategies of villainy and crime perpetrated in the name of higher causes, i.e. heroism, glorification of victimhood, nation, or faith'[1].

One of the outcomes of this exhibition was the album *Cartographer of Sinister History Tara (von Neudorf)*. The catalogue feature the artistic works of Tara (von Neudorf), with an introduction (*Tara (von Neudorf) on the Square in Krakow*) by professor Jacek Purchla, the Director of ICC, but also a few articles written by Diana Dochia (*After the Fall of Communism - Romanian Contemporary Art*), as well as by the curators of the exhibitions, Łukasz Galusek (*Cartographer of the Void*) and

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[1] Presentation on the site of ICC: http://mck.krakow.pl/exhibitions/tara-von-neudorf-cartographer-of-sinister-history (Accessed in May 2017).

Monika Rydiger (*Cartographers of Other Spaces*).

The catalogue features over eighty pieces: paintings, sculptures
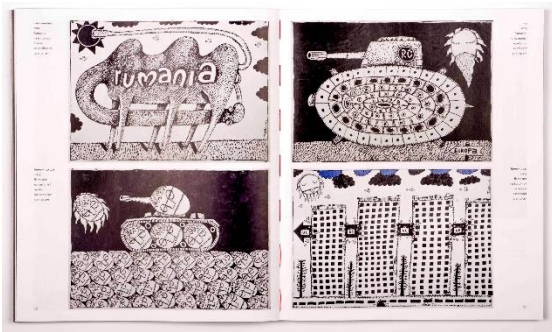
and some fashion designs as well as a number of atmospheric black and white photographs of Transylvania[2].

'Tara's art addresses the issues of identity, co-existence of cultures and open wounds. Old maps and boards from the times of the Communist rule of Nicolae Ceaușescu are used by Tara to provide the base for

his works[3]. … by means of paints and marker pens he transforms them into often shocking and sarcastic works.

'Tara is recreating the spectacle of history in his paintings. What he is recording is not so much events as the emotions accompanying them. Sometimes his paintings simply show dates, maxims or emblems. Other times they are crowded with fantastical beasts and creatures, skulls, and eyes. … And there is the snigger of history that Tara hears so well. For massacre and masquerade are often closely related', wrote in his article one of the curators and the editor of the album, Łukasz Galusek[4].

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[2] *Ibidem.*

[3] As the one called 1989 (1989, red paint and black marker on old map, 132,5x190cm) featured on the first cover of our journal. We thank the artist for his kindness in letting us using his art.

[4] Łukasz Galusek, 'Cartographer of the void', in *Tara (von Neudorf), Cartographer of Sinister History*, ICC Krakow, 2013, p. 47.

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HERITO

Herito is a bilingual English-Polish cultural quarterly published from 2010 onwards by the International Cultural Centre from Cracow focused on heritage, memory and identity in Central Europe. It publishes articles on 'locus and related reflections, on space and its various meanings, and on the geography of the imagination and of memory'[1].

25 issues have been published already dealing with various topics such as: *Silesias* (25/2016); *Patterning. Design in Central Europe* (24/2016); *The city as a work of art* (22-23/2016); *Galicia after Galicia* (21/2015); *Balticum* (20/2015); *Thinking the landscape* (19/2015); *Cold War Modern Architecture* (17-18/2015); *A century on from the Great War* (16/2014); *Nations and stereotypes* (15/2014); *Turkey* (14/2014); *Conflicts of Memory* (13/2013); *Romania* (12/2013), an issue dedicated to Romania featuring articles (among others) by Lucian Boia (*Why is Romania different?*), Dan Lungu (*The Paradox of Nostalgia over Communism*), Valentina Iancu (*The Invented Peasant? Traditionalism in Modern Romanian Art*), but also by Polish scholars like Adam Burakowski (*New after Fifty Years*), Michał Korta (*A Close-up. On Nicu Ilfoveanu's Photography*), Jakub Kornhauser (*Surrealism's Second Homeland. The Mysterious Heritage of the Romanian Avant-garde*), Małgorzata Rejmer (*The Rulers and the Exiles. The Past and Memory in Romanian Cinema since 1989*) as well as an article written by the editor in chief of the magazine, Łukasz Galusek (*The Clujians*).

Before *Romania*, **Herito** was interested in: *Croatia in Europe* (11/2013); *The elusive Center (of Europe)* (10/2013); *Slovakia* (9/2012); *Nations-history and memory* (8/2012); *Stories from countries which are not more* (7/2012); *Culture and Politics* (6/2012); *Cities for thought* (5/2011); *Art is changing (a) place* (4/2011); *The city and the museum* (3/2011); *Imagined identities* (2/2011); *Symbols and clichés* (1/2010).

Although all issues are interesting, meaningful and relevant for each topic featured by the magazine, two are of particular interest to our journal current issue: 'Cold War Modern Architecture' and 'The city as a work of art', both of them dealing totally or partially with the communist art and architecture in Central Europe.

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[1] Presentation on the website of the magazine. On-line at: http://www.herito.pl/en/issues

Issue 17-18/2014-2015 features articles on East Berlin's architecture during communism and its destiny after the Fall. (Szymon Piotr Kubiak, *"Special buildings" in the City of Ruins: Hermann Henselmann*); on the works during communism of the Slovenian and Serbian architects Jože Pleĉnik and Bogdan Bogdanović (Urŝa Komac, *The Unconventional Modernity of Bogdan Bogdanović and Jože Pleĉnik*); on the monuments erected during Tito's rule by Bogdan Bogdanović (Ivan Ristić, *The Spaces of Contemplation. On Bogdan Bogdanović*) about Skopje reconstruction in the '60s and '70s (Łukasz Galusek, *Skopje-an Unfinished City of Solidarity*); the rebuilding of Katowice according to Socmodernist vision (Anna Syska, Paweł Jaworski, *The Socmodernist Centre of Katowice*); the preservation of the modernist style in the architecture due to the exceptional (not only in terms of art, but also in terms of resistance to the socialist vision of art and architecture) Krakow school of modernism (Michał Wiśniewski, *(R)evolution: Krakow School of Modernism*), as well as articles on Tychy (Ewa Chojecka, *Tychy-the Once Socialist Town Today*) and Hungary (György Szegő, *Hungary: an alternative Moderne Forced into Obscurity*).

Issue 22-23/2016 introduces to the audience the theme of 'The City as a Work of Art?' featuring, among others, articles by Owen Hatherley (*Landscapes of Communism*)[2], who describes the characteristics of what he thought to be 'real socialist' spaces in various countries from Central and Eastern Europe; on Polish communist urban engineering of Nowa Huta (Katherine Lebow, *Nowa Huta: Poland's Unfinished Utopia*); or on the changing identities of Zagreb, with an important focus on the communist period, when Zagreb's 'post-1945 identity of urban transition was based on the idea of participation: that is, it was established on the basis of a more intensive identity exchange between individual and community.' (Fedja Vukić, *Modern Zagreb. Plan, Tradition, Identity*, p. 276). The article of Artur Klinau shows how this city made 'an Ideal City of the Communist Utopia'. Being several times destroyed, Minsk was rebuild after the WWII in order to illustrate the communist ideas of art and architecture[3].

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[2] The article is offered as a presentation and endorsement of his book, *Landscapes of Communism. A History Through Buildings*, Penguin Books, 2015.

[3] Artur Klinau, 'Minsk: The Sun City of Dreams', *Herito* 22-23 (2016), 147-148.

Through the various topics and due to the important scholars and artists collaborating to it, *Herito* built an identity of a serious, relevant and interesting cultural magazine of the region of Central Europe. Central Europe is, as professor Jacek Purchla wrote on the site of the magazine, *a conscious choice, a question of our world view, though also of our community of experience – our own and that of our neighbours. Herito is a further chapter in our fascination with this very special region of the Old Continent, where political borders have always changed faster than cultural borders. Central Europe is not a territorial region with clearly demarcated borders; it is our fortune[4].*

We hardly wait for the new issues and the new topics explored by this well-designed, well-edited and elegantly publish Polish magazine!

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[4] Jacek Purchla, editor in chief of *Herito* on the website. http://mck.krakow.pl/herito-2 (Accessed 20 May 2017).

Call for Papers, *MemoScapes*, No. 2/2018: Constructing the Social (and Individual) World: Myth, Memory, and Identity

In our long journey through history, myths have always been with us. They flourished in ancient Greece as works of fiction being later contrasted with *logos* by the Christians. The Enlightenment seemed to spell myth's doom. But even relegated to 'untruth' status, myth remained important in the debates that shaped the ideals of critical thinking and rationalism.

Myths entered a new life once scientific anthropology was set on firm grounds. Claude Lévi-Strauss defined myth as universal – something that can be grasped by people across the world[1]. Mircea Eliade described myth as narrating an event that took place at the beginning of historical time that might explain how a significant element of the world – an island, a plant species, a human custom, or an institution – came into being trough the agency of supernatural entities[2]. Eliade insisted that each time a myth is told, the sacred time of the events narrated in the myth is, in a sense, brought back to life[3]. The act of narrating the myth and thereby ritually re-enacting it has the effect of suspending historical time and enabling the individual to transcend time and space. What is more, by narrating the exemplary deeds of supernatural beings, myths put forth an ideal of human conduct[4].

Myths occupied a well-defined place in the life of traditional societies, as anthropologists have shown. By contrast, modern societies have banished mythical thought as a matter of principle, but proved unable to do away with myths completely. Cornelius Castoriadis pointed out that no society can survive without symbolic constructs that can give meaning to its social life. For Castoriadis, Western society, modern and postmodern, seems to exhibit to an even greater degree the work of the social imaginary, at once instituted and instituting (that is to say, itself structured by existing historical factors while at the same structuring the emergence of novel practices and ideas)[5]. Even in the guise of ideological and nationalist narratives, myths preserve their status as fundamental beliefs that can confer meaning upon the imagined destiny of the community.

Anthropologists, historians, and political scientists have found that the myths of our contemporary world are not fundamentally different from the myths of traditional societies. Their content is equally fluid, their contours are similarly ambiguous, and they display the same openness to different cultural influences[6]. As an integral part of the social imaginary, political, national, and identity myths give access to a system of interpretation and a model of social conduct[7]. They build

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[1] Lévi-Strauss, (1958), 232.
[2] Eliade (1963), 15.
[3] Eliade (1994), 70-71.
[4] Eliade (1963), 18.

[5] Castoriadis (1975), 174-248.
[6] Girardet (1997), 6.
[7] Boia (1998), 40-41.

creatively on a narrative core so as to meet the demands for making sense of the world, and buttressing social identities[8]. They provide individuals with interpretive schemes for making sense of their microcosm[9].

Among the roles filled by myths in modern and postmodern society a few are worth highlighting: as tools for self-definition and identity transfer, as agents of social cohesion, as vehicles for the transmission of cultural and ideological values, and as legitimizing narratives for various political movements and regimes[10].

Myths truly come to life when they are rooted in a shared collective memory. This shared memory of historical events and characters might even be viewed as a precondition for the successful transmission and implantation of myths. This living memory of places, characters, and events plays the key role in the genesis, diffusion, and persistence of myths. Doubtless political and cultural myths are imagined constructs, but they start (in most cases) from real historical facts which are reworked and fed into a discourse aimed at building social cohesion. However, one should keep in mind that collective, historical memory is always a reconstruction of the past according to the needs of the present (or at least under the influence of present events, which enter a dialogue with the past, as it were)[11]. Political and national myths are closely tied to the processes of historical remembrance and historical amnesia, which are vital in the life of any community[12].

For the second issue of *MemoScapes*. *Romanian Journal of*

Memory and Identity Studies, **we welcome articles that address the complex process through which memories are transformed into myths. This problematic interplay between memory and myth-making might be analysed in conjunction with the role of myths in the political and social life of nations, regions, etc. We are interested in papers dealing with myths as means of creation of national, local, collective, and even individual identities. We also look for papers that show how the mythological dimension of traditional societies continued to play a role in our contemporary world, inasmuch as the new cultural/political myths reused many of the symbols that defined the earlier mythology[13].**
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[8] Bottici, Challand (2013), 91.
[9] Boia (1998).
[10] Schöpflin (1997), 22-26.
[11] Halbwachs (1994).
[12] Nora (1984), XV-XXIV.

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[13] Full article manuscripts of no more than 8000 words must be submitted to the editors by *1st of September 2017* for peer review. For further details, please look at the style guide on our website:
http://studii-memoriale.ro/index.php/revista-memoscapes/info-for-authors-style-guide/

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MEMOSCAPES. ROMANIAN JOURNAL OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY STUDIES

The first issue of our journal, *Communism between History and Memory*, was coordinated by **Claudia-Florentina Dobre**

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MemoScapes **is a peer-review, interdisciplinary and yearly journal, which welcomes academic syntheses, analyses and case studies. It publishes articles from the areas of Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as empirical research data, reviews and book presentations.**

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Cover I: Tara von (Neudorf): **1989**, red paint and black marker on old map, 132,5x190cm

MemoScapes

Romanian Journal of Memory and Identity Studies

MemoScapes. Romanian Journal of Memory and Identity Studies aims to explore the construction of memorial cultures and the various forms of identity (individual, social, cultural, etc.) that may be discerned in any society. It focuses primarily on European communities, but also looks towards other continents, when comparative approaches seem promising. The Journal explores a range of topics, such as the connections between communicative and cultural memory; myths (as elements of cultural memory); the creation of social / cultural / national / local identities; the process of patrimonialization and museification from a longue durée perspective.