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## ROMA ORAL (Hİ)STORIES IN ROMANIA

LAVINIA S. STAN  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS<sup>1</sup>

To paraphrase a famous oral historian, Alessandro Portelli, “a spectre is haunting the halls of the (Romanian) academy: the spectre of (Roma) oral history.”<sup>2</sup> For the academic community in Romania, this approach is a challenge, because the Roma issue was not a topic of interest for historians in Romania. The exception is a small group of researchers at the “Nicolae Iorga” Institute in Bucharest, led by Viorel Achim, whose publications are remarkable especially for the period up to the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> The Roma, unlike other minorities in Romania, remained at the periphery of historians<sup>4</sup> interest,

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<sup>1</sup> The research leading to these results has received funding from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014, which is an initiative of the Oral History Institute, Faculty of History and Philosophy at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and it is implemented in partnership with the University of Iceland in Reykjavik.

<sup>2</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1991, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> For example, at the National Congress of Romanian Historians (25-28 August, 2016), this group of researchers lead by Viorel Achim proposed a very interesting panel on the abolitionist movement in the Romanian Principalities. In spite of the excellent work done by the speakers, the interested public was rather limited which is symptomatic for the interest of the academic community for Roma topics.

<sup>4</sup> Sociologists and anthropologists in the academic world have been more interested in the situation of Roma, see the projects developed at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca or Bucharest. Also, the Romanian Institute for

reflecting thus their positioning in the society. This marginalization explains partially the absence of the Roma from the Romanian master historical narrative about the past. Moreover, historians have not provided enough research and/or sources to disarm stereotypes and prejudices, and they did not approach the ethical dimension of responsibility in regards to the situation of the Roma in the past. I refer in particular to two different phenomena, i.e. the slavery and the Holocaust, occurring on Romanian territories where these forms of abusive behaviours were exerted by the majority on their Roma fellows. And from here, another limitation of the Romanian historiography emerges: the prevalence of positivism as theoretical framework for historical writing, especially regarding the use of written documents. Therefore, oral history has been a novelty in the Romanian historical writing, even since the creation of the Oral History Institute in Cluj Napoca in 1997. With a tradition in approaching the oral history of different ethnic and religious minorities, the Oral History Institute in Cluj-Napoca has been implementing since 2014 a project called The Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma People in Romania, thus “forcing” the entrance into the academic world of both a pariah theme, the Roma, and a methodology, oral history.

This endeavour was possible due to the tireless work of a great team of young and very young researchers (Marco Solimene, Manuela Marin, Adrian Boda, Nicolae Cristea, Călin Olariu, Ioana Cozman, Petre Petcuț, Sînziana Preda, Diana Nistor, Ionela Bogdan, Ionuț Maranda, Diana Moisa, and Marina Trufan),

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Research on National Minorities in Cluj-Napoca approached the Roma issue, as well.

encouraged, criticized and supported by some more experienced scholars (Ólafur Rastrick, Ionuț Costea, Valentin Orga), under the supervision of the two leaders of each national teams (Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, University of Iceland and Doru Radosav, Babes-Bolyai University). We benefitted of the contribution of our photographer and cameraman, Cristian Bota, who patiently photo and video documented all our activities. Nelica Morar whose support in administrative matters was irreplaceable, allowed the scholars to focus on research and not get lost in the bureaucratic web of project management. In order to print this issue in time, the texts have been translated and proof read by Thomas Tolnai, Veronica Zaharagiu and Sigrid Crăsnean to whom I express my deepest gratitude.

This special issue of the *Annual of Oral History (AOH)*, *Roma Oral (Hi)Stories in Romania* is the second one dedicated to Roma issues and it is based on an extensive research done by the project team, especially on more than 600 interviews with Roma people around the country. It gathers five articles, in English, focusing on: the experiences of Roma women in the context of pronatalist policies implemented by the communist regime in Romania (Ionela Bogdan), traditional Roma family dynamics in *Gabori* and *Cortorari* communities (Sînziana Preda), on the experience of the Roma living in Saxon houses (Diana Nistor), Roma people's ways of remembrance living in urban space during communism (Călin Olariu), and the analysis of return narratives of some Holocaust survivors (Lavinia S. Stan).

This issue has a miscellaneous section which gather two articles in Romanian on different types of dealing with a traumatic past: the Romanian exile in Western Europe during communism

(Andreea Tuzu), and the biography of a survivor of communist Gulag (Dragoș Ursu). The last part is dedicated to a book review by Dorin Pop, and it ends with some photographs of the persons whose interviews were used in the articles.

Last but not least, I thank all our interviewees, men and women, who generously accepted to share their life stories, invited us in their homes, offered us their best treats, did not discriminate us on racial basis, challenged all possible stereotypes and exhibit an exemplary hospitality. In fact, this volume is dedicated to all of them.



SÎNZIANA PREDĂ

**AS YOUTH, WE HAVE TO LISTEN TO WHAT THE  
ELDERS TELL US! EVEN IF WE DON'T LIKE IT.<sup>5</sup>**

**Abstract:** This study focuses on several aspects related to traditional Roma family dynamics in the last two decades: the stability and continuity of cultural patterns in family structure (especially in *Gabori* and *Cortorari* groups), relations between generations, family as framework for cultivation of a particular ethos, elders' role in education and economic support of the young people, kinship as a way to maintain group cohesion. The narratives reveal the positioning regarding the transformation of the world Gypsies live in, but also the efforts of preserving their own existential model and differentiation as compared to others, which make the community function like a caste, protective and destructive at the same time.

**Keywords:** Roma family, tradition, community, kinship, rules

For the conservative Roma, family continues to be not only the method of reproducing their lineage, but also the way of articulating their own society. Based on a patriarchal organisation model, the control of the family micro-universe ensures the smooth functioning of the community to which it belongs. The segregation state – in relation to the Other, promoted by both

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<sup>5</sup> The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014.

sides – allowed the Roma family to be kept unaltered, within groups which refused assimilation. Such a family has turned towards itself, it has directed its energies toward the inner side, creating a safe space, looking always to control and secure it. Therefore, the “design” of the traditional Roma family reveals the secular path of the ethnic group and the efforts to ensure a solid and inalienable environment in which group members can fully express themselves in compliance with their traditional habits. The Roma family does not *innovate*, but *respects*, it does not *evolve*, but *preserves*, while its adaptation [to social changes] occurs only as much as otherness does not perturb the system they have set up. Today, the analysis of the traditional family shows a comparative perspective: interviewees<sup>6</sup> believe that between *then* and *now* there have been some changes, but questioning the depth narratives about their own family (and the known proximity of the same ethnic group) reveals that they are superficial.

The low level of acculturation of the genuine Gypsy family is due to the force of *tradition*. Rarely explained, often invoked, Roma tradition is an institution, a clearly stated set of behaviours, of “ways of acting, feeling and thinking.”<sup>7</sup> It also encompasses the visible marks of ethnicity (clothing, jewellery).

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<sup>6</sup> The paper explores the oral history archive (audio and audio-video interviews – OHIA) created beginning with 2014, within “The Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma in Romania” project (ongoing until April 2017). The archive belongs to the Oral History Institute of Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Over 600 interviews have been conducted around the country with several types of Roma groups. In our research we used the testimonies of the following particular groups: *Cortorari*, *Căldărari*, *Gabori*.

<sup>7</sup> Adela-Elena Popa, *Sat bogat, sat sărac: comunitate, identitate, proprietate în ruralul românesc* [Rich Village, Poor Village: Community, Identity, Property in Rural Romania], Institutul European, Iași, 2010, p. 88.

Material assets (such as clothing) as well as spiritual assets (Romani language, the story of the common ancestry) are not always displayed in the foreground: for example, groups such as the *Cărămizari*, *Romunguri* and *Căldărași* are no longer distinguished by clothing and/or linguistic identity, but they overwhelmingly comply with the rules nonetheless, which they internalize as living guidelines. Unwritten, the rules prescribe behaviours and group structure, individualising it in relation to other Roma groups.

By traditional Roma we mean kin groups commonly organised “in extended families, in wider circle of relatives within the *typology of a 'clan'* (in the ethnographic, anthropologic sense of the term, also referred to as Roma ‘lineages’ or ‘quintessential’ Roma).”<sup>8</sup> They are identified by non-Roma by means of clothes, jewels, language, endogamous marriages. Matters less visible to *Gadje* [non-Roma people] and with the highest value for traditionalists are strong respect for blood ties, affiliation to a good lineage, common ancestry and extended family perceived as a solution to economic and social problems faced by its members. Extended family provides material support for young people, decides the personal and social trajectory of individuals born within it, intervenes as regulator factor in

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<sup>8</sup> “Identitatea romani între victimizare și emancipare. Nicolae Gheorghe în dialog cu Iulius Rostaș” [Romani Identity between Victimization and Emancipation. Nicolae Gheorghe in dialogue with Iulius Rostaș], in I. Horváth, L. Nastasă (eds.), *Rom sau Țigan: Dilemele unui etnonim în spațiul românesc* [Roma or Gypsy. Dilemmas of an ethnonym in Romania], ISPMN, Fundația Soros România, Cluj Napoca, 2012, p. 306.

intergenerational, interfamily conflicts, and prescribes a place for each of its members. From the outside, such an entity *appears* to be generally *constrained*, closed, and rigid. To those that belong to it, it offers affinity, understanding, closeness, empathy, compatibility, fellow feeling, and bond. The roles that articulates family in groups like *Căldărari*, *Gabori*, *Spoitori*, *Xoraxane*, are reminiscent of past eras; likewise, this type of family is from another time, through its ability to maintain the rules, structure and functionality unchanged.

One of the most relevant examples of its viability is the formation of new couples. Sometimes criticized even by Roma strongly tied to their culture, parents' intervention in the formation of young families is an unacceptable pattern in contemporary non-Roma society. But for the *Căldărari* or *Gabori* the fact that consanguineous family influence extends over the one which they have recently founded (conjugal) is an act of normality. Subordination to the elderly has a very thorough basis in the Roma community who only marry among themselves. Most often, the arguments are summarized/essentialized /included in the formula *thus is tradition in our town* or *thus is the way the elders did it*. Tradition means mainly promoting purity of lineage and preventing cohabiting relationships from the very beginning. These goals and duties are assumed by the elderly and adults.

Protecting lineage (and inherently the group) from mixing with the *others* centres on values considered as being fundamental by practitioners of old teachings: virginity, marrying at a very young age<sup>9</sup>. The innocence of girls confers honour to

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<sup>9</sup> Enikő Magyari-Vincze, “Discriminarea multiplă și intersecțională a romilor din România. Studiu de caz asupra fenomenului excluziunii sociale în

their families: honour is not just a symbolic good, but primarily represents a social and economic capital. Virginity is a *sine qua non* condition for the idea and practice of marital unions, which indicates the social control exercised over it in the extensive patrilineal Roma families.<sup>10</sup>

Getting married was a law for us. You were getting married – after the wedding, if you were not a virgin on your wedding night you would be sent home. And the girl's parents had to pay for the boy's wedding to the in-laws. (Would someone marry that girl afterwards?) – Yes, but it was hard. Harder. So it was a shame! As they say.<sup>11</sup>

Virginity is not important *per se*. Virtue, chastity, separation from Eros's temptations matter until the marriage ritual. Once the ceremony is concluded, intercourse is absolutely necessary, reconfirming the role of the female body as a "tool of biological reproduction."<sup>12</sup> The state of purity is important insofar as it is currency in the transactions between the future in-laws. In a way that it is hard to understand for the non-Roma, nurturing virginity to an end and not as an end in itself cancels the chance to

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Timișoara,” in T. Kiss, L. Foszto, G. Fleck (eds.), *Incluziune și excluziune. Studii de caz asupra comunităților de romi din România*, ISPMN, Kriterion, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, p. 246.

<sup>10</sup> Mariana Goina, “Între “țigani de mătase” și cei ce “fierb în suc propriu”. Studiu de caz al comunității de romi din Curtici, județul Arad,” in T. Kiss, L. Foszto, G. Fleck (eds.), *Incluziune și excluziune. Studii de caz asupra comunităților de romi din România*, ISPMN, Kriterion, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> B. K. (born 1960, female), interview conducted by author, audio file no. 1408 (OHIA), Burila Mică (Mehedinți county), August 19, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> *Identitatea romani...*, p. 306.

education, to a normal childhood or adolescence, to a chosen destiny (and not imposed, prescribed by an immutable culture).

Virginity, the protection of girls/youth and marriage before the coming of age<sup>13</sup> describe a genuine cult<sup>14</sup> in the conservative Roma consciousness. These values are perpetuated, because tradition is the only recognized and respected code, whereas boundaries between ethnic groups are functional. Just as the *Gabori* or *Cortorari* (the latter being, “emblematic for the Gypsy authenticity”<sup>15</sup>) do not envisage marriage between their folk and a member of the non-Roma community, the latter reject

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<sup>13</sup> “The latest research of the Education 2000+ Centre [Mălina Voicu, Raluca Popescu, *Early marriage and pregnancy in Roma communities*, 2006, p. 7], reveals that Roma women get married on average 4 years earlier than the Romanian population in its whole and give birth to their first child earlier. The age at marriage differs from one community to the other, and it is divided between traditional and modern communities. If in the case of modern communities we can say that girls get married at the age of adolescence or first youth (17-21 years old), in the case of traditional ones girls get married at as early as the age of early adolescence (12-14 years old).” – Nicoleta Bitu, Crina Morteau, *Are the Rights of the Child Negotiable? The Case of Early Marriages within Roma Communities in Romania* [Report realized with UNICEF Romania support within the Project “Early Marriages within Roma Communities: Rule of Law, Cultural Autonomy and Individual Rights (of Children and Women)”], Alpha MDN, Bucharest, 2010, p. 22-23, available at [https://www.unicef.org/romania/Early\\_marriages\\_Romani\\_CRISS.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/romania/Early_marriages_Romani_CRISS.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Cătălin Dîrțu, Margareta Herțanu, “Capitolul VI – Iași,” in E. Vincze, I.-E. Hossu (eds.), *Marginalizarea socio-teritorială a comunităților de romi din România. Studii de caz în județele Alba, Arad, Călărași, Dolj și Iași*, EFES, Cluj, 2014, p. 186, available at [http://www.desire-ro.eu/wp-content/uploads/volum-marginalizare-romi-studii-de-caz\\_EFES-Desire-iunie2014.pdf](http://www.desire-ro.eu/wp-content/uploads/volum-marginalizare-romi-studii-de-caz_EFES-Desire-iunie2014.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Marian Zăloagă, “Între imagistică, cercetarea istoriografică și politică. Tradiții moderne și paradigme postmoderne în enunțarea etnicității țiganului/romului” [Between Imaging, Historical and Political Research. Modern Traditions and Post-Modern Paradigms in the Assumption of Gypsy/Roma Ethnicity], in I. Horváth, L. Nastasă (eds.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 133.

the idea of a union with a traditional Roma partner. Social distances between the two worlds are also maintained through cultural differences. For example, the connotations that Roma give to virginity and marriage make no sense for a *Gadje*. The non-Roma does not accept arranged marriages and they do not value the marital union within the same *lineage*. For conservative Gypsy, on the contrary, the freedom to choose their partner – especially a partner with different ethnic origin – removes them from their world. Quitting the lineage disturbs one's individual balance, it only removes one from one's only recognized landmarks, throwing one in an environment of foreign patterns.

(Would you accept a Romanian daughter-in-law or...?) – No...Never. They are different [of different ethnic groups], different people, not our own [Cortorari]<sup>16</sup>... – They are less dignified. There are some people who have done this and have children and all... (So your lineage would be affected if...) – We would not have any advantages ever again, we would not be in our own society anymore and that's a very [big] disadvantage, so it is really bad.<sup>17</sup> – One would no longer be taken into consideration.<sup>18</sup> – Since you do not respect these laws...<sup>19</sup> – Our laws, you are no longer esteemed, you're doomed...<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Elisabeta Căldărar (born 1959, female), interview conducted by Ionela Bogdan, audio file no. 1080 (OHIA), Merghindeal (Sibiu county), June 21, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Veta Căldărar (born 1980, female), interview conducted by Ionela Bogdan, audio file no. 1079 (OHIA), Merghindeal (Sibiu county), June 21, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Elisabeta Căldărar, interview...

<sup>19</sup> Veta Căldărar, interview...

<sup>20</sup> Elisabeta Căldărar, interview...

The reproduced dialogues depicts the axiological system of the group, the strong belief in the rules inherited from the elders. The authentic Gypsy family is not a metaphor, but a fixed system without oscillations. No individual decides for themselves, but principles decide people's fate: "Our Roma do not choose, our Roma are forced by their parents to marry whoever they choose"<sup>21</sup>. This is the law."<sup>22</sup> This is more easily accepted because it comes from the parents, the first models for children in all aspects of their existence. The decisions taken by the elders come to be understood by successors when they become parents.

(Even if you marry them at 16, they are still kids, right?) – Well, yes! We have to get them...together – that is, to marry, to marry early, because after an age, they will decide; and then we, even if we try to explain to them what's good for them, then...they will decide for them more. (And?) – They will not listen us so much. (Children do not have their freedom? Is it not good to have freedom?) – It's good to have their freedom, yes ... but the best for them is... I do not know, to do exactly what parents want. Because this is the way we do things. (Then, are you happy with the decision that your parents had made for you, that of betrothing you?) – Yes, now I am. Yes, at that particular moment, no. Because I was a child, I did not

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<sup>21</sup> Traian Grancea (born 1946, male), interview conducted by Lavinia Costea and Ionela Bogdan, audio file no. 1097 (OHIA), Porumbacu de Jos (Sibiu county), June 5, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Victor Căldărar (born 1958, male), interview conducted by Ionela Bogdan, audio file no. 1079 (OHIA), Merghindeal (Sibiu county), June 21, 2015.



particularly know what they wanted to do with me and...<sup>23</sup>

The betrothing, the system of pre-established marriages seeks to prevent teenagers from making their own choices, who may defy the conservation status of the group. Such choices are: the freedom to begin sex life (mostly for girls); finding a partner who does not belong to the *kin* or does not come from the lineage approved by parents; postponing marriage, which lowers the “value” of the youth in question, especially if is a girl; the wish to go to high school, which removes the young person from the occupational specificity of their group or which may even convince them not to return to their community, under the influence of the role models of the outside world; choosing a partner from another group or even with a non-Roma ancestry.

The duty of deciding the fate of the offspring is relieved by the education instilled at an early age. “We are not allowed to get *infatuated with anyone, or to choose our husbands.*”<sup>24</sup> Children grow up thinking that their family and social life should not exceed the horizon of their ethnic community, or – even more restrictively – the realm of several clans agreed upon by the parents. The inoculation of endogamy from a very young age lessens a possible opposition from the children. They get to internalize it to such an extent that they even accept the injunction arising from the violation of tradition. In a discussion about a possible marriage with a Romanian and

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<sup>23</sup> Maria Căldărar (female), interview conducted by author, audio file no. 1109 (OHIA), Nocrich (Sibiu county), June 6, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Informal discussion with a young girl in Bistreț (Dolj county), August 7, 2015.

adultery, a young *Căldărar* (from the *Lăieți* group) asserts “that the girl who runs away or does not obey [her husband] should be tied to a tree.”<sup>25</sup> One way of avoiding such a situation is to educate young girls and to send them out to reside (a variable period of time before marriage) in the conjugal family. In the instances where adults have decided that for a better understanding of the concept of marriage the child bride and groom should live together, the image of the in-laws (especially that of the mother-in-law) has powerfully marked their memory. Some of them have acquired useful knowledge about the smooth running of their domestic life from the mothers-in-law, much more than from their own mothers, “because I grew up apart from my mother, I grew much attached to my mother-in-law.”<sup>26</sup> Early engagements transform the mother-in-law in a teacher for her adolescent daughter-in-law.

All that I know today, I know from them [in-laws].  
(You *didn't learn how to cook from your mother?*) – Nothing! I didn't know how to *cook*, how to sweep, how to wash my clothes ...nor how to properly tie up my apron and dress – until that age I only wore trousers – and since I came here, I had to tie up these clothes. (Is this how you say when you wear an apron, a dress?) – Well yes, you tie yourself up in them! (Laughs) I didn't know how to tie them as the other girls, who were used to this practice and had learned how to do it. And everything I learned, I learned from my in-laws, and everything I know today,

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<sup>25</sup> Dumitra Mihai (born 1950, female), interview conducted by author, audio file no. 1267 (OHIA), Ostroveni (Dolj county), August 6, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Maria Căldărar, interview...

I know from them. (Have you taught your children preventively what they need to know before marriage?) – Mostly, yes. (How to cook?) - Hmm...not this. I didn't teach her to cook, I said to myself that she would still have time for this, she is still a child after all... – An entire life!<sup>27</sup> (little laughs) – A lifetime of hardship and learning.<sup>28</sup>

Living within a closed community, respecting imprescriptible rules, the harsh sanctions for breaching them, the inability to experience different cultural patterns, all of these determine the young people to perceive their own group customs as the most suitable one for themselves. *Gadje's* world triggers some echoes, but a change to the established practices is not open for discussion. Roma do not feel that a change is *necessary*. There are *Gabori* who no longer wear hats, youth who replaced white shirts with T-shirts: small image liberties that follow the changing course of the world without affecting the powerful system of standardized traditional rules of the Gypsy world.

The law should be followed no matter what. And that's our law. That's a law passed on by our ancestors and...we have to follow it. Whether we want it or not - we have to follow it. (When you say “whether we want it or not (...)” – Well even if we don't want to! Perhaps when you're a child you don't want to get married! You don't want to follow the path that your parents have chosen for you: but even if you don't want to, you have to follow it, rituals and everything according to your

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<sup>27</sup> Sister of the Maria Căldărar.

<sup>28</sup> Maria Căldărar, interview...

religion! And do what parents say! Well, they don't constrain you! Nor ask if you want to do it! (But the world has changed, so to speak) – Well, it has changed! Yes, but our law hasn't. Nor will it ever change! (Because young people do not want this strongly enough?) – It's not that they don't want do. They do! But they should follow the same law, as it has been followed for so many years. Even if things change – even if the elders don't live anymore! – we must do as their elders did.<sup>29</sup>

Always taking into account their own law, traditionalists stay as much as possible far from the acculturation process, which has become more conspicuous with globalization. Unlike others, they refuse to participate in the knowledge diversity toleration and acceptance game. Approaching *others* only occurs in certain contexts: economical, neighbouring and sometimes friendship. Because “[...] the *Gadje* is a foe, he is not *manuș* (good man); in the Roma mind set and vocabulary a *Gadje* is a source of fear, terror and threat [...]”<sup>30</sup>

Finally, it may be concluded that the analysis of oral documents confirms once more that tradition is viewed as landmark, in a world that *consciously* cultivates its isolation and that manages its contacts with outsiders with great *care*. For any community, separation favours the conservation of ancestral customs. In fact, “ancestral,” “old” are the keywords for clarifying the difference of mentality between conservative Roma and *Gadje*: the latter regards these habits as out of date, retrograde,

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> Gheorghe, *Identitatea romani...*, p. 324.

while the *Gabori* and *Cortorari* assess the old tradition as their most valuable good, the most valuable feature of their group identity.

The conservative Roma feel very strongly about their traditions. Their discourse is not marked by fear of losing their customs under the pressure of globalization. Modernization has not erased the differences between clans: even if some families became rich after 1989, this has not raised their prestige, whereas a good lineage, despite a modest living situation, continues to be praised. Reputation matters more than financial strength. Modernization has occurred at the level of belongings (home organization, the household, possession of goods) and of the possibility of movement (freedom of migrate to Western European countries), but it has not touched family structure or levers of authority within the community or family.

Labour mobility that occurred in the culture of the majority population did not affect the traditional Roma family structure. The authority of the husband who goes abroad for is complemented by male relatives (usually elderly) and female relatives (mother-in-law). Since families are numerous and the kinship system is complex and active, there is no danger for them to fall apart (as in the case of the elementary family). In addition, the periods of working abroad are not as long as that of the majority, who are more determined to settle down in Western Europe.

Illiteracy and low education level contribute to the dominance of ethnic culture customs. Non-Roma perceive the lack of school training as a disability; for traditionalists, continuing education beyond the goal agreed by the community

means “destabilizing cultural practices,”<sup>31</sup> because it places children/young people in contexts difficult or impossible to control by the authority of tradition.

The lineage does not evolve by investing in offspring (by increasing the level of school training, by supporting the spiritual aspirations of children), but by investing in people perceived as goods traded between clans who are led by the goal of perpetuating the prestigious position in the core of the ethnic community. In this way, tradition encourages evolution/development of *the lineage*, and not of *the person*. If for the *Gadje* this means obstructing the development of a life project, within Roma communities, individuals who take the liberty to disagree with the rules of their clan must accept the perspective of exclusion.

The *Gabori*, *Spoitori*, *Căldărari* or *Xoraxane* identity is built exclusively by family. Its ancient characteristics are maintained: respect for the elders, obedience to parents, the mother's particular involvement in the well-being of the family. “The basic cell of society” is not just one of the Roma’ existential projects, but also a valuable asset. The identity of these groups – of distinct groups in the vast world of Roma and non-Roma – means a certain “lifestyle, family relationships and symbolic reporting to others: Roma versus non-Roma (*Gadje*, the majority who do not comply with a certain code of values) etc. Unlike national communities, which are defined in reference to their

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<sup>31</sup> Ciprian Necula, *Etnicitate și strategii economice ale unor grupuri de romi în perioada socialistă. Studiu de caz: Oltenița* (Rezumat) / Etnikanipen thaj Ekonomikane varesave Romane grupurjenge ando socialisto vaxt, p. 22 (Ph.D. dissertation, abstract), The National School of Political Science and Public Administration, București.

history, Roma did not require history (as discourse about the past, home heroes, glorious military campaigns etc.) to know who they are.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, non-Roma relates to a *passive* past, and traditional Roma, to an *active*, always updated one.

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<sup>32</sup> Petre Matei, “Romi sau țigani? Etnonimele – istoria unei neînțelegeri,” in I. Horváth, L. Nastasă (eds.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 19.

**IONELA BOGDAN**

**TALK IS NOT CHEAP: ADDRESSING PRONATALIST  
POLICIES AMONG ROMANIAN ROMA WOMEN DURING  
THE COMMUNIST REGIME<sup>33</sup>**

**Abstract:** The pronatalist policies implemented during the Communist Regime in Romania are regarded by the academic literature as being oppressive and trying to transform women's bodies into a public affair. The starting point was the Decree 770/1966, which prohibited abortions on demand with very few exceptions. What are the narratives of Romanian Roma women in regard to these events? Are their testimonies similar to the narratives Romanian women share in regard to the same subject? Did the economic aspect played a part in classifying a pregnancy as "unwanted"? The recollections of women who witnessed the intervention of the Communist state into their private lives lie at the heart of this article due to the richness of their lived experiences and were obtained using the methodology of oral history.

**Key words:** oral history, Communist regime, pronatalist policies, Romanian Roma women

In 1966, the Decree no. 770 was issued in Socialist Romania in order to prohibit abortions and access to contraception, acting as a tool to strictly control society and

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<sup>33</sup> The research leading to these results has received funding from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014.



increase birth rates. This measure, the foundation of the pronatalist policies promulgated throughout the following years of the Communist rule, represented an attempt to instrumentalize women's bodies in the service of the state. Women were “exhorted by the state to fulfil their reproductive duties”<sup>34</sup> by becoming socialist mothers, a role on which they were supposed to take great pride in. However, many women in Communist Romania tried to end unwanted pregnancies by self-induced abortions or by seeking procedures that more often than not jeopardized their health and safety, while facing jail time if discovered by authorities. In this sense, “women remembered traditional methods of contraception and created new strategies for terminating unwanted pregnancies, including not only ‘undesired’ pregnancies, but also those impossible for the mother to assume from a socio-economic point of view.”<sup>35</sup> The “social memory of the pronatalist times”<sup>36</sup> still represents a delicate subject to tackle in Romanian society, but from my fieldwork experiences I noticed that very often Roma women are willing to speak their mind about this phenomenon and to share their recollections on the matter, whether they refer to personal, lived experiences or they recount experiences lived by others. The present article aims at exploring the manner in which the pronatalist policies were experienced by Roma women in Romania using the methodology of oral history.

According to the oral historian, Paul Thompson: “Oral

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<sup>34</sup> Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender and Women's Movements in East Central Europe*, Verso, London, 1993, p. 46.

<sup>35</sup> Lorena Anton, “On Memory Work In Post Communism Europe,” in *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, vol. 18 (2), 2009, p. 110.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111.

history certainly can be a means for change for transforming both the content and the purpose of history. [...] It can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their words, a central place.”<sup>37</sup> The people, who are given a central place in this case, are women belonging communities who from the very beginning did not have a public voice of their own: the Roma people. Thus, the emphasis is not put only on facts and information, but also on the way interviewees remember these oppressive times when banning abortion led to a so-called “culture of hidden pain and overt hypocrisy.”<sup>38</sup> When taking a walk down memory lane regarding such a sensitive topic, the following words need to be taken into consideration: “interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets.”<sup>39</sup>

At a first glance, conducting interviews seems an easy task but there are many elements that need to be taken into consideration. Thus, one of the main aims when doing oral history is to create an environment in which the interviewees feels secure, making room for “honest voices.”<sup>40</sup> While bringing to the fore the interaction which is established among interviewer and interviewee when discussing a sensitive topic, I also wish to offer an insight into the following research questions: How do Roma

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<sup>37</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, New York : Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Gail Kligman, “Abortion and International Adoption in Post-Ceaușescu Romania,” in *Feminist Studies*, 18, no. 2, 1992, p. 405.

<sup>39</sup> Ann Oakely, “Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms”, in Helen Roberts (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*, London: Routledge, 1981, p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, New York, 2010, p. 72.

women build their narrative(s) regarding the pronatalist policies while being in front of a recording device? What role did the economic aspect play in classifying a pregnancy as “unwanted”? Are Roma women’s testimonies similar to the narratives non-Roma women share in regard to the same subject?

The oral history interviews which I make reference to were recorded between 2015 and 2016, during field campaigns in both rural and urban areas across Romania. Being a delicate subject, usually women talk more openly about abortions in the absence of men. But as it was revealed from the field experience, sometimes they do not have problems in addressing it when asked about it by a male interviewer. Thus, one of my male colleagues managed to tackle the subject of illegal abortions during the Communist era with two old ladies from a rural settlement. The subject came across naturally during the interview and the interviewees admitted that undergoing illegal abortions was a common practice during the time of the Communist regime when women or families did not have proper means to provide for an additional child. I have to emphasize that in this case we were dealing with a non-traditional community whose inhabitants lead a lifestyle identical with their Romanian neighbours, as some of them argued: “We lived and worked alongside Romanians. No one, ever, distinguished between us.”<sup>41</sup>

On other occasions, the narratives of my interviewees in non-traditional communities were interrupted by men who randomly entered the room. In these cases, the interviewees continued telling their stories, but the tone of their voice dropped

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<sup>41</sup> D.P., interview by author, audio file, no. 1281 (OHIA), Măguri, Timiș County, 21.08.2015.

and the narrative seemed prepared beforehand: they became more careful in word choice, they shifted the emphasis from the particular context to the general one, and they seemed uncomfortable or became agitated. I conducted an interview with a woman from a village in the Eastern part of Romania who, from the very beginning, was welcoming and gave a coherent discourse on the Ceaușescu era. At one point, her step-brother came into the courtyard and was listening to her; when she noticed him, she became nervous and did not make eye contact any more. After he left, she became herself again and actually told me that she could not talk freely in front of him because he always disagreed with what she said, “he put her down.”<sup>42</sup>

When conducting interviews among so-called traditional communities such as the *Gabori* or the *Căldărari* things proved to be different. One of my interviewees, a *Gabori* woman, who only gave an interview after I assured her that I would not disclose her identity, stopped talking when she saw a colleague of mine entering the room, whispering: “I’m ashamed of talking about this [women’s issues in general] if he’s here. He’s a boy.”<sup>43</sup> The reluctance in addressing sensitive issues in the presence of a man proved to be a common element when conducting interviews in the aforementioned communities. This does not mean they refused to discuss such topics, on the contrary.

One of my interviewees, a *Gabori* woman, recalled how, when she was 16, she had a miscarriage and was rushed to the

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<sup>42</sup> Eftimie Petrica, interview by author, audio file, no. 1597 (OHIA), Măcin, Tulcea County, 09.08.2016.

<sup>43</sup> B.P., interview by author, audio file, no. 1146 (OHIA), Budiu Mic, Mureș County, 06.07.2015.

hospital. After receiving medical care, she remembered waking up in a dark room, which she assumed was located in the basement of the hospital and being asked to confess if she intentionally wanted to get rid of the pregnancy:

At that point I was very scared because I didn't know what was happening and I kept saying I did not do anything to my baby. A nurse told me I should not fear if I were innocent. I was all alone, my parents were not allowed to see me. The *miliția* man [policeman] came and asked me several questions, wanting to know if I took pills or used other methods in order to get rid of the baby. He asked whether my parents disapproved the pregnancy or if I wanted to miscarry because of my age. He asked about my relationship with my husband, if we had troubles; he asked about the interaction between my husband and my parents. Meanwhile, someone was typing everything I was saying. The doctor who treated me was also present, but he didn't say anything. The next day the doctor came and told me I could go home, because it proved to be a natural miscarriage. He apologized and said: *This is standard procedure.*<sup>44</sup>

This was the first encounter of my interviewee with the pronatalist policies of the Communist regime and this is how she learnt that abortion was illegal and punishable by law. The above testimony provides to be one of the most coherent descriptions of experiences of this kind collected throughout my field campaigns. It manages to expose the core essence of the pronatalist policies

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<sup>44</sup> D.O., interview by author, audio file, no. 1179 (OHIA), Huedin, Cluj County, 17.07.2015.

and its intrusive character while emphasizing the helplessness women felt throughout those years, when they lost control over their private lives and their bodies were used as an instrument for the Communist state.

Another interviewee recalled how she ended up at the hospital after failed attempts to induce a miscarriage using homemade remedies. A part of her story goes as following:

I had a 4 month old baby and I became pregnant again, so I started using saline water in order to get rid of the pregnancy. I started feeling sick at work and my boss asked me if I were pregnant. I kept saying no, but he kept insisting with the questions. At one point, I fainted and my mother took me to the hospital. Everyone was afraid of going to the hospital because they would call the *miliția* and conduct investigations. They didn't want to take care of me before answering their questions. I said I did some heavy lifting at work and that was what caused my situation. The doctor kept joking saying I must have done some serious heavy lifting in order to induce a miscarriage. In the end my aunt came to the hospital and gave some money to the doctor so he eventually took care of me. That's how I managed to escape the consequences of what I did.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> D.P., interview by author, audio file, no. 1281 (OHIA), Măguri, Timiș County, 21.08.2015.

Even though the interviewee acknowledged that she endangered her life by undergoing the dangerous procedure, she did not hesitate to do it again:

I became pregnant again so I went to the hospital. I knew a doctor there, he was a long-time friend of our family. I told him I was not leaving his office until he would find a way to take care of my problem. He didn't want to hear about it at first. In the end he agreed to do it, but he said: 'We'll do it without anyone knowing.'<sup>46</sup>

This testimony is typical for the manner in which the Roma women I interviewed constructed their narrative(s) in regard to how they experienced the state's pronatalist policies. Most often they describe the context in which they were before deciding to undergo an abortion, such as in this case when the interviewee already had a new born baby and a full time job. Sometimes they talk about some financial aspects of their lives, which are brought into discussion in an indirect manner. They always emphasize that terminating pregnancies during the Communist regime was illegal, so they faced legal measures when deciding to undergo abortions. Last but not least, some of the interviewees give details regarding the methods used for terminating their pregnancies, such in this case of regularly using saline water. The intrusion into women's lives is emphasized, illustrated through the questions asked by my interviewee's employer. The dehumanization of the body is also emphasized by

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem.*

the refusal to treat a patient unless she offered satisfactory answers to the representative of the *miliția*.

The aftermath of such traumatic events is also reflected in my interviewee's narratives, underlying the emotional toll felt by women who at some point decided to terminate a pregnancy. One of them stated:

Even after you recover [following an abortion] you are still sick; on the inside you remain with regrets; you have remorse and you grief because in the end, you did something unnatural, something you weren't supposed to do. And time doesn't heal this, it only gets worse.<sup>47</sup>

Another interviewee admitted that "We have sins, us, women. We have these sins we carry around. But God will forgive us, because women went through some rough times back then."<sup>48</sup> This type of discourse is present in the testimony of another interviewee: "Before I'll die I will tell the priest these were my only sins: I did two [abortions]."<sup>49</sup> The sense of regret is illustrated throughout the majority of interviews and was connected with the sense of religiosity of the interviewees: they admit having committed a sin when terminating a pregnancy, but felt confident they would be forgiven by God. Moreover, they believe such forgiveness is well deserved since they were in a

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<sup>47</sup> D.J., interview by author, audio file no. 1550 (OHIA), Toflea, Galați County, 21.07.2016.

<sup>48</sup> D.Q., interview by author, audio file no. 1270 (OHIA), Ostroveni, Dolj County, 07.08.2015.

<sup>49</sup> D.P., interview conducted by author, audio file no. 1281 (OHIA), Măguri, Timiș County, 21.08.2015.



desperate situation at that specific time. I argue they use this rhetoric as a mechanism of coping with a traumatic experience.

The manner in which some of the interviewees discuss pronatalist aspects of the Communist regime, also offers an insight into the way in which narratives are constructed. Thus, I observed that women never actually use the term “abortion” when talking about it – rather they use a cryptic vocabulary, as reflecting the fact that “abortion language ... [bears] testimony to a difficult past.”<sup>50</sup> In reconstructing the memory of the pronatalist times in Romania one should also take into consideration “other ingredients of the narrative form, such as expression, intonation and metaphors.”<sup>51</sup> In the interviews I recorded, women will refer to abortion by calling it “that thing” or “curettage” or they make reference to abortion using terms such as “to get rid of,” “to take care of” or “to resolve.” The term, “curettage,” which is very often mispronounced, is frequently used among women who needed medical assistance after attempts to undergo abortions at home, using homemade remedies and improvised methods.

Another element of interest is the attitude of the medical personnel reflected in the narratives. When the pronatalist measures were put into effect, the doctors were considered responsible for the increasing of birth rates, being continually put under scrutiny in order to meet the reproductive norms of the Communist state. This meant that “doctors were caught in a web of institutionalized surveillance.”<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, as the specialised

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<sup>50</sup> Lorena Anton, *Op. Cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Perks, Alistair Thomson (ed.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2003, p. 90.

<sup>52</sup> Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998, p. 103.

literature on the matter suggests, “despite the consequences for disobeying the law, many doctors – at all ranks in the party hierarchy – became adept at manipulating both the official rhetoric and statistics. Strikingly, most people offered praise for the attempts doctors made to assist women and families during these harsh years.”<sup>53</sup> Whenever I addressed the attitude of the medical personnel, the common answer from my interviewees was that they received a fair treatment and they were satisfied with it.

The interaction between the interviewees and the medical system is very often described as a battle in which the system is regarded as the oppressor, whereas very often the medics are seen as allies. The fact that doctors could have taken actions against the women who ended up in the hospital, but decided against it, lay at the core of this so-called alliance. One of my interviewees recalled how she ended up in the hospital after an unsuccessful attempt to terminate a pregnancy at home and the medic who took care of her jokingly said: “Well, this woman has four children, she was expecting her fifth and because she didn’t want another child she got rid of it.”<sup>54</sup> Asked whether she was afraid when she heard this, my interviewee said no, claiming that “he knew we were very poor and he was kind-hearted, he could have harmed me by calling the *miliția* but he let me be.”<sup>55</sup>

Another woman recalled that, after arriving at the hospital in pain, she said in Romani language that she was afraid she

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>54</sup> D.S., interview by author, audio file, no. 1122 (OHIA), Bonțida, Cluj County, 23.06.2015.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem.*

would die, to which a medic answered, also in Romani language: “Don’t worry, you won’t die, but you have to tell me what you took, in order to give you proper help. Just tell me and I will help you.”<sup>56</sup> The interviewee claims she told the medic the truth and he helped her without calling the *miliția*. Having in mind my experience so far, I would say it is very improbable that the medic was fluent in the Romani language. I would rather suggest that the interviewee only remembers having the conversation with the medic in Romani language because he helped her without denouncing her to the *miliția*; thus, the interviewee felt a kind of familiarity was established between them, a sort of complicity to a certain degree. The interviewee felt the medic acted in the way he did because to some extent he related to the interviewee’s experience. Nonetheless, I do have interviewees who refused to go to the doctor even if they were in serious pain after undergoing an abortion: “The pain was terrible; I would gather my strength and try to be brave. The first two or three days after the procedure would be the worst. I would endure the pain because I was afraid of going to the hospital. They had the power of sending me to prison. I couldn’t take such a risk.”<sup>57</sup>

Interviewees recalled that illegal abortions were usually performed by “clever women”<sup>58</sup> from the community who were “special at these types of things/had a good hand in doing these

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<sup>56</sup> D.N., interview by author, audio file, no. 1450 (OHIA), Brateiu, Sibiu County, 27.11.2015.

<sup>57</sup> D.Q., interview by author, audio file no. 1270, (OHIA), Ostroveni, Dolj County, 07.08.2015.

<sup>58</sup> D.R., interview by Nicolae Cristea, audio file no. 1288, (OHIA), Măguri, Timiș County, 22.08.2015.

things.”<sup>59</sup> An interviewee confessed that her mother also used to perform abortions for women in the community in exchange for a small amount of money. When asked whether her mother or other women who did this were afraid of potential consequences she claimed they did not feel fear because “God gives you strength in times like these.”<sup>60</sup> The religious aspect is highlighted once more, as if their actions were in a way legitimized by a higher authority.

Not all recollections regarding the interaction between women and medics are positive. Asked whether *Cortorari* women used to have abortions during the Communist regime, an interviewee who wished to remain anonymous recalled a woman who drank oleander tea which perforated her intestines in order to lose a pregnancy; when she arrived at the hospital, due to complications, the doctor refused to help her until she admitted what she did, but unfortunately it proved to be too late to save the woman and she died.<sup>61</sup> A Roma woman who used to work as a nurse during the Communist era makes a description of what she witnessed throughout the years in which abortion was banned:

It's difficult for me to talk about this subject. Very often women lost their lives. Sometimes they arrived with septicaemia. They used to drink all sorts of awful things. Most cases of [abortions] were self-induced. When they arrived at the hospital, the medics would phone the *miliția*. It was terrible: the woman would be in pain, she would be terrified, the *miliția* would ask

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<sup>59</sup> D.Q., interview by author, audio file no. 1270, (OHIA), Ostroveni, Dolj County, 07.08.2015.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>61</sup> B.Y., interview by Sînziana Preda, audio file no. 1101 (OHIA), Bîrghiș, Sibiu County, 06.06.2015.

her questions and the medics were not allowed to treat her before the *miliția* gave consent. From this point of view I can't defend the Communist regime.<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, not all interviewees regarded the pronatalist policies as oppressive and intruding into women's personal lives:

Yes, it was illegal but some women did do it regardless; I did it also and it cost 30 lei. I did three [abortions]. The first time I gave birth to a still born baby, I was eight months pregnant. After that, I got pregnant again, but I did not want the baby so I decided to terminate the pregnancy: I was outside and I felt sick. I had to call the ambulance; they took me to the hospital and cleaned me. I paid 30 lei. They gave me an injection ... they asked me if I wanted the baby ... The pregnancy had lasted three months... [...] It's not that difficult, it's not difficult to undergo an abortion. The doctors were good ... No women died. Nowadays many more women die by doing *that thing* than they did during Ceaușescu's regime.<sup>63</sup>

When stating that “no women died”, I assume my interviewee wanted to say that she, personally, had no knowledge of women who died after undergoing an abortion during that

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<sup>62</sup> Toma D. Mariana, interview by author, audio file no. 1639 (OHIA), Crăcăoani, Neamț County, 02.09.2016.

<sup>63</sup> D.M., interview by author, audio and video file no. 1125 (OHIA), Tirimia, Mureș County, 30.06.2015.

particular period of time. This could be very possible if we take into consideration that my interviewee manifests nostalgia towards the Communist era and she makes a parallel between *then* a period in which she felt useful and needed and *now* when in most parts depends on her daughter and granddaughter to get by.

Most of the interviewees make connections between the pronatalist times and the present when abortion is legal and contraception methods are widely available. When relating their experiences during those days, they always emphasize that nowadays women have more options and that their decisions are private and not of public interest: “Abortions were prohibited. Women did it illegally, not like today when there are pills and all sorts of contraceptive methods. Back then you couldn’t find anything, whereas today pharmacies are full of everything you need.”<sup>64</sup>

Many Roma women to whom I talked emphasized that undergoing an abortion represented the only option for them, given the circumstances in which they were: stressful jobs or unemployment, lack of family/spouse support. One woman recalled that “we were poor and how to take care of so many children?”<sup>65</sup> whereas another interviewee admitted that “when I became pregnant with my third child I just didn’t know what to do. I thought to myself: we are so poor, we don’t have any income and nobody will help us. What will I do with a third

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<sup>64</sup> D.J., interview by author, audio file no. 1550 (OHIA), Toflea, Galați County, 21.07.2016.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*.

child? That's how I made my decision.”<sup>66</sup> From this perspective, the socio-economic background of the interviewees influenced if a pregnancy was desired or unwanted.

Concluding, it can be asserted that until the present, very little was written about the situation of the Romanian Roma women and the effects the pronatalist policies had on them. There were however voices in the academia claiming that:

The aggressive intervention of the state through the pronatalist policy starting in mid-60s was in most part annihilated by the resistance of the main part of the population which held the economic, cultural and social means to do so. The poorer segments did not have these means of resisting so they developed an attitude characterized by lack of control over their lives.<sup>67</sup>

I argue this theory should not be generalised since the majority of women with whom I conducted interviews were poor and that was precisely one of the reasons for which they underwent illegal abortions: they did not afford having (more) children. Moreover, I never noticed “an attitude characterized by lack of control over their lives” when discussing to my interviewees about the pronatalist policies; on the contrary, I noticed a desire of surviving no matter the costs.

“Oral history may also illuminate the collective scripts of a

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<sup>66</sup> D.N., interview by author, audio file, no. 1450 (OHIA), Brateiu, Sibiu County, 27.11.2015.

<sup>67</sup> Mălina Voicu, Raluca Popescu, “Nașterea și căsătoria la populația de romi” in *Calitatea Vieții*, XVII, no. 3-4, 2006, p. 257.

social group”<sup>68</sup> revealing among other things if there are any similarities between the recollections of Roma women and non-Roma women in regard to how they experienced the pronatalist policies. This subject has been extensively covered throughout the years in the academia with emphasis on non-Roma experiences. This can be explained by the fact that Roma population was not recognized as a minority by the Communist regime and, at least in theory, the Roma were considered Romanians. Thus, it would have been rather difficult to differentiate the non-Roma women from the Roma women in the official records, unless said records specifically recorded a woman as Roma, which is most unlikely. Having in mind the specialised literature referring to the pronatalist policies in Communist Romania, and the manner in which experiences of non-Roma women were and continue to be illustrated, I argue they are similar to the narratives of Roma women and manage to complete the already existing discourse.

The voice(s) of Roma women in Romania have more often than not been neglected or it was assumed they do not have anything valuable to say, invoking their submissiveness to paternalistic values and their ties to tradition. By using oral history as the main method of inquiry, I have managed to bring to light coherent narratives which show that Roma and non-Roma women often related in the same manner to the pronatalist measures of the Communist regime. Last but not least, by emphasizing the manner in which interviewees remember specific events I have shown that “talk is not cheap” and it can represent a mechanism of coping with a traumatic past.

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<sup>68</sup> Robert Perks, Alistair Thomson (ed.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2003, p. 90.



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**CĂLIN OLARIU**

**WE, TOO, WERE THERE!**

**ROMA PEOPLE'S REMEMBRANCE OF THE SOCIALIST CITY  
SPACE, MEMORY AND ORAL HISTORY<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** In this chapter I use oral history interviews to learn more about the ways in which Roma from a *țigănie* (Gypsy neighborhood) remember and give meaning to their experiences during the communist regime. Their accounts represent a powerful challenge to the official representations of the Roma marginal groups. Interviewees contest the communist authority's dismissal of the *țigăanii* (Gypsy neighborhoods) as places unfit to be part of the urban landscape, by talking about how the community was well integrated in the town's life and about the important social and economic roles it played before 1989. The interviews also outline powerful influences on the social and individual memory of the inhabitants, which are marked by nostalgia and dissonance. These characteristics do not stem from an uncritical engagement with the communist past, but are a consequence of the social trauma the community went through during the transition period.

**Key words:** Roma, Gypsy neighborhoods, socialism, memory, nostalgia, social trauma, counter narrative

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## Introduction

In the present day Romanian urban areas, the *țigăanii* [gypsy neighborhoods]<sup>2</sup> are places which are rebuked by both the state and by the non-Roma majority. They are considered to be dangerous, plagued by poverty, crime, unhygienic living conditions, illiteracy and moral decay. I myself was advised to take precautions when entering such neighborhoods. My experience, as it often is when strong prejudices are at play, was the opposite of this. The people we met during the fieldwork were kind, hospitable, and, after a short clarification of our intentions, eager to share their story.

In Romania, there is a significant lack of academic research on urban Roma neighborhoods. Even though anthropologists, ethnographers, sociologists and social-care workers conducted in depth studies in a few Roma neighborhoods<sup>3</sup>, documenting the challenges faced by these communities after the fall of communism, their everyday strategies of dealing with them, and the way in which the policies of the Romanian state, in a neo-liberal context, produce debatable results<sup>4</sup>, in most others, no significant research has been done. Furthermore, apart from a few notable exceptions<sup>5</sup>, the history of the Roma is a topic almost completely avoided in the Romanian

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<sup>2</sup> I chose to make a literal translation of the word *țigan* - gypsy in order to outline the pejorative connotations of the description made by the non-Roma.

<sup>3</sup> Two such examples are the Voluntari neighborhood in Bucharest and the Pata Rât area near Cluj-Napoca.

<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive analysis see EnikőVincze (ed.) *Specialization and Racialization of Social Exclusion. The Social and Cultural Formation of 'Gypsy ghettos' in Romania in a European Context*, *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Sociologica*, nr. 2, 2013 (special issue).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the work of Viorel Achim.

historiography. Therefore, although Roma neighborhoods have always been part of the urban landscape of many modern Romanian towns, it is still unclear how these places appeared and changed over time, not only during the earlier historical periods but also during the more recent communist past - a period during which the Romanian towns went through profound transformations.

The forced industrialization process coupled with the collectivization of the agriculture<sup>6</sup> in post-war Romania led to a massive migration of the rural population to urban industrial areas. This phenomenon produced a rapid increase of the urban population which could not be accommodated by the existing infrastructure. Following the pattern of the Soviet Union, the communist authorities implemented a series of urban development policies in order to manage the poorly developed Romanian cities. One of the most important of these policies was the systematization of territories and cities in accordance with a “rationally” planned out pattern.<sup>7</sup>

According to the official discourse of the time, urban systematization would lead to the creation of the so called ‘Socialist city’, which was presented as radically different from the ‘Capitalist city’ of the exploiting bourgeoisie of the interwar period. This would become a haven for equality and social equity, a quintessence of egalitarianism, just like the political regime itself. Similarly, all citizens would have equal access to services:

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<sup>6</sup> Gail Kligman, Catherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege: The collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962*, Princeton University Press, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive analysis see: Mara Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu. Urbanism și cotidian în Hunedoara și Călan 1945-1968*, Polirom, București, 2015, passim.

education, healthcare, recreation, city transport, regardless of their status, in the center or on the outskirts of cities. As numerous studies have pointed out, both in the Soviet Union and in Central and Eastern European countries<sup>8</sup>, there was a significant discrepancy between the ideological discourse on urban development strategies and their actual implementation. In reality, the cities of the communist world were places of profound inequalities between inhabitants, generated by aspects such as geographic position within the city or the redistribution system of consumer goods and dwellings.

One example of the failing of the communist urban development policies is the permanence of the Roma neighborhoods in the Romanian urban landscapes. Since many of these places were formed in the interwar years, they were, according to the official ideology, the product of the exploitation of the Roma minority by the capitalist elites. Given the ideological principles of the communist regime these spaces should have been of utmost importance for their project of addressing social injustice in the Romanian society. This was never the case. For the first three decades of communist rule there was no clear nationwide policy specifically targeting Roma neighborhoods. Indeed, the systematization process started in the late 1950s led to the demolition of several gypsy neighborhoods throughout towns in Romania, but these were consequences of the more general policies of urban planning at the time, which

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<sup>8</sup> Ivan Szelenyi, *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism*, Oxford University Press, London, 1983, passim; Mara Mărginean, *op.cit.*, passim; Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization: The Consolidation of the Modern System of Soviet Production Relations, 1953-1964*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, passim.

focused on the reconfiguration of the town centers and the building of micro-districts at the periphery. It was only in 1977 that several measures directed specifically to the Roma were drafted by the communist leadership under the direction of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Local authorities were instructed to allot areas for building houses, to provide the Roma with credits from the state as well as with building materials, and to do away with dilapidated houses and those which were not situated on authorized building grounds. Nevertheless, the regime failed to allocate the needed human and material resources or to efficiently supervise the implementation of these measures. Thus, even though several Roma neighborhoods were systematized or demolished, mainly in the capital city of Bucharest and a few other large towns, in many others nothing significant was done regarding the urban infrastructure of the areas inhabited by the Roma until the fall of the regime in 1989.

It is important to note that the failure of the systematization policies had both negative and positive consequences for the Roma living in such neighborhoods. The urban planning policies had not only social and economic goals, but also a political and ideological dimension. Although architects and urban planners used a syncretic model of urban development which encompassed both soviet and strong Western influences<sup>9</sup>, the regime had full control over this process. The reconfiguration of the Romanian urban landscape according to a rational and

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<sup>9</sup> Mara Mărginean, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

systematized plan was to lead to an increase in the “legibility”<sup>10</sup> of these spaces, which would have allowed the authorities to have more control over the inhabitants and would have facilitated their transformation in “modern” socialist citizens. In those places where no large scale systematization work was done, the community enjoyed at least a limited amount of autonomy, and thus it managed to survive and keep many of its particularities. Furthermore, the expansion of the neighborhood was done in a more organic manner, according to the inhabitants’ needs and not to an impersonal and schematic mapping of the urban planner. Nonetheless, the living conditions were lacking compared to the new systematized areas of the town, the neighborhood was under the constant surveillance of the *Miliție* (Militia), and it ultimately encompassed the prejudices of the state officials and of a significant part of the non-Roma population.

My objective in this chapter is to investigate the memory of the inhabitants from one such Roma neighborhood, from the town of Sebeș, in which we conducted oral history interviews in the project “The Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma people in Romania,” and to address questions such as: How do the inhabitants remember their everyday life during socialism? How are their recollections different from the official discourse of the state? What are the main characteristics of the way the Roma reflect on the communist past? To what degree does the post-socialist present impact on the way communism is remembered?

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<sup>10</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing like a state. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1999.



First, I will make a short description of the theoretical underpinnings of my research. Next, I will discuss the way the Roma from Sebeș describe and give meaning to their lived experiences under communism and touch upon two main characteristics of their memories: nostalgia and dissonance. I will also discuss the usefulness of the interviews for providing an alternative view on the communist regime. Consequently, I will show how the narrators' stories represent a challenge to the descriptions of the Roma found in the communist period archival documents.

The primary sources used in this chapter are eleven semi-structured interviews conducted in the largest of the three Roma neighborhoods in the town of Sebeș, Alba County, Romania. The Roma living in this particular neighborhood describe themselves as being “*țigani de casă*” (house gypsies). They are part of a non-traditional Roma group, as they do not speak Romani and have similar customs to the non-Roma inhabitants of the town. Two of the interviewees, a man and a woman, are Romanians, but they have been living in the neighborhood for several decades, are married with Roma, and are very well integrated in the community. Most of the interviewees were elderly people, only two of them were in their mid-thirties.

We conducted life story interviews asking questions about their experiences from childhood up to the present. We were particularly interested in one moment of their biography - the conflict between two groups of young men (one Roma one non-Roma) which degenerated in a fight in the town's center and a *Miliție* (Militia) raid in the neighborhood soon after. We gathered revealing narrations not only about this incident, but also about

our interviewee's experiences with this particular place both during communism and post-communism. The interviews were conducted by teams consisting of a researcher from UNTORO project and one or more volunteer students from the Faculty of History - Babeş-Bolyai University. I was personally engaged in conducting five out of the eleven interviews.

In the present day Romanian historiography there is still great reticence on the part of historians to use oral sources. Narrators' recollections are considered to be unreliable, easily influenced by nostalgia or rendered unusable by forgetfulness. These attitudes, similar to the points of view expressed in the international debates on oral history during the 1980s fail to grasp the very paradigmatic shift in the discipline produced during that time. Oral historians acknowledged that interviews do not always convey factual truths, but are subjective representations of people's experiences communicated in a narrative form. Nevertheless, as historians like Alessandro Portelli<sup>11</sup> and Luisa Passerini<sup>12</sup> have showed, the very crux of the criticism of oral sources, subjectivity, is, in fact, their most important characteristic and strength. Oral testimonies represent a way to identify people's perception and interpretation of events, the feelings associated with them or the way subsequent historical events had an impact on remembering. Without an oral history approach all this wealth of information would be unavailable to researchers.

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<sup>11</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Transtulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1991; *The Battle of Valle Giulia. Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory. The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.

Following Alessandro Portelli's work I look at the interviews not as a way to "glimpse the actual experience of life" but as "verbal artifacts shaped by the narrator's self-perception, by the encounter with the interviewer, and the interviewer's perception and interpretation of them and their words."<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the main question of my research focuses primarily on finding representations of the past which are created through an ongoing process of elaboration and construction/ reconstruction of meaning<sup>14</sup>. Or as Alessandro Portelli said, we should not obsess about "what the relationship between life and story is," but we should rather ask "what is the place of the story within the life?"<sup>15</sup> Why is it important for the interviewee to tell his story in this particular way? What does the story tell us about the interviewee? Furthermore, I pay attention not only to how and about which aspects of the past people talk, but also to the silences present in the oral narrations, the subjects on which interviewees, intentionally or not, do not touch upon.

Another important theoretical question is related to Alessandro Portelli's emphasis on the paramount importance of the dialogic relationship established between the interviewer and the interviewee. From this perspective, Alessandro Portelli sees the oral history interview as a text in the making since the witness goes through a creative effort to shape a story which has never

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<sup>13</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "The Best Garbage Man in Town: Life and Times of Valtèro Peppoloni, Worker", in Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1991, p. 118.

<sup>14</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and Event," in Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of...* p. 1-26.

<sup>15</sup> Idem, *The Best Garbage Man in Town...*, p. 118.

been told before in that particular way.<sup>16</sup> Even though fragments of a life story could have been told in many instances before, given the presence of the oral historian, the account takes a new shape. Elizabeth Tonkin also emphasized the importance of the context in shaping the oral narration, stressing the need for the oral historian to identify the genres of oracy employed by witnesses in oral history interviews in order to better understand what they are saying.<sup>17</sup> For some of the interviews such an analysis was complicated by the fact that they were not conducted by me personally. Nevertheless, trying to deal with the issues of the interpretation of interviews where the researcher is not also the interviewer, as well as of future secondary analysis of the data<sup>18</sup> were an important part of the research project. Thus, regular team meetings were held, and the researchers who conducted the interviews also provided information about the context in which it was conducted along with the audio or video recording.

### **Memories of the past - nostalgia and dissonance**

In their narrations, the interviewees touched upon different aspects of the Roma everyday life, emphasizing both the elements of continuity with the past and those of change brought by the regime. They described the social relationships which existed between the Roma and emphasized the fact that the sense of

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<sup>16</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "The Best Garbage Man in Town: Life and Times of Valtèro Peppoloni, Worker", in Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of...* p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating our Past. The Social Construction of Oral History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, passim.

<sup>18</sup> Joana Bornat, "Secondary analysis in reflexion: some experiences of re-use from an oral history perspective", in *Families, Relationships and Societies*, volume 2, number 2, July 2013, p. 309-317(9).

community, which was largely tied to the place they were living in, continued to persist in spite of the social and economic transformations which took place during the communist period. They also gave detailed accounts of the trades practiced in community and how these had changed over time. Initially, the Roma used to make bricks by hand in the vicinity of the neighborhood, but later became employed in the local factories, both because of the competition posed by the industrialization of their craft, and because of the top-down policies of integration. They also talked about the important role the Roma had in the informal economy of the town. Another topic is related to the living conditions from the area. Although interviewees mentioned the lack of infrastructure and suitable housing, and that the authorities invested very little in the area, they nevertheless consider that their life improved during communism, because then they managed to earn a decent living, enough to be able to renovate or build new houses, to properly send their children to school or afford leisure activities. The relationship with the authorities is yet another important topic for the interviewees who emphasized both the abuses of power made by local institutions and their more accommodating behavior.

What transpired most during the interviews was the sense of nostalgia the Roma had for their communist past. They made frequent positive evaluations about the period which is mainly viewed as one of stability and social security. The communist policies of integration like enlisting the Roma in the workforce, compulsory education, healthcare check-ups and enlistment in the army are seen as positive social policies, which allowed one to raise a family and to improve his economic and social status.

Starting from the etymological definition of the word, the roots “nostos” meaning “return home” and “algia” meaning “longing,” Svetlana Boym defines nostalgia as a “longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed.”<sup>19</sup> A second meaning of the word is that of a longing, not necessary for a place, but for a different time. Numerous public personalities explained the phenomenon of nostalgia in Eastern Europe as the result of an idealization of the socialist regime coupled with an overlooking of its dictatorial nature. They also believe that this idealization and selective remembering of the recent past could become a serious threat to democracy in the region.<sup>20</sup> But unlike the critics of the nostalgic views of the communist regime, in the interviewees’ memory the past is not reflected upon in an uncritical manner, a total idealization of those times. Rather, people have dissonant, contradictory memories. As I previously mentioned, they valorize the communist period because of the social security provided by the regime, but at the same time do not forget or remain silent about elements of their biographies which are solid arguments against such positive evaluations. Nevertheless, nostalgia remains unshaken and this has more to do with the post-socialist present than with the communist past. An illustrative example is that of Mărioara Muntean which has a

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<sup>19</sup> Svetlana Boym, “Nostalgia and its Discontents”, in *Hedgehog Review*, vol. 9 Issue 2, 2007, p. 7-8; Maria Todorova, Zsuzsa Gille (eds.) *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2010, p. 1-11.

<sup>20</sup> Manuela Marin, “Re-Assessing post-communist nostalgia in Romania: chronological framework and opinion polls”, in *Twentieth Century Communism. A Journal of International History, Memory and Nostalgia*, Issue 11, Lawrence & Wishart, 2016, p. 10-26.

general positive outlook on the communist regime, but also mentions the difficulties of the life in the 1980s Romania:

And it was another world. You were paid differently and you could do a lot of things with the money, you had less money but you could do a lot of things. When you went in the town, let me tell you... Some say you could not find [food] during Ceausescu's time, but you could find it during Ceausescu's time too, just so you know. [...]

We were lining for milk, for bread, because you know, I don't know if you lived during those times. It was hard during those times too, but it was hard for some who, who didn't [...] And for bread, bread was distributed through tickets. [...] During Ceausescu's time, but in the later years, later years. Some were given bags full with bread, bags and [unclear]. If I lie, it is God whom I lie to, [some] were given sacks full with bread, but I had to go to Deva or Sibiu to buy a larger quantity of bread so I had enough for my children, because here [one was given] just one small loaf, if you managed to get even that!<sup>21</sup>

A similar example where interviewees mention the negative aspects of the communist regime, but their nostalgic view of the socialist period remains unshaken, is that of that of Maria Dănuț. In her narration she talks about the control of the authorities over the society as a positive aspect, explaining that

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<sup>21</sup> Mărioara Muntean, interview by Ionela Bogdan, Călin Olariu, audio file no. 1060 (Oral History Institute Archives, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, further OHIA), Sebeș, Alba County, 07.02. 2015.

one was safer than in the present due to the work of the *Miliție* (Militia).

Complaint. But then you could [file a complaint]. I had a colleague, the one who has been to the seaside, and she broke up with her husband and didn't want to get back together with him, she had her son, and she didn't want to stay with him any longer. And she said: 'I won't take him back, Maria, I won't take him back.'[...] She was determined [unclear] and went to Alba [Alba Iulia] to the prosecutor's office and submitted a request [for a restraining order] so they.... Because both of them worked at the factory.[...] Then he couldn't even touch her [laughs] and they would climb the stairs together and meet on the stairs! [...] Because you had a place where you could file a complaint. But now? Go file a complaint! What's the point in making a complaint?! There is no one... [to receive it].<sup>22</sup>

Despite this, Mrs. Maria Dănuț does not remain silent about the abuses made by the *Miliție* (Militia).when they raided the community after a fight between a Roma and a non-Roma group of youngsters in the town's center. Like most of the interviewees, she describes how the *Miliție* (Militia) arrested many innocent people and mercilessly beat them before they were eventually released from temporary detention. She also talked at large about the people who were found guilty and sent to jail and

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<sup>22</sup> Maria Dănuț, interview by Ionela Bogdan, Călin Olariu, audio file no. 1055 (OHIA), Sebeș, Alba County, 06.02.2015.



their stories about the abuses and the beatings they endured while in prison. A nostalgic remembrance of the communist period implies a certain degree of idealization of the past, which is apparent in the interviews. Nevertheless, the dissonant aspect of the Roma remembering reveals the existence of a more critical side to individual and social memory.

Like other oral history studies conducted with marginal groups that did not have the opportunity to make their voices heard in the academic and larger social discourse have showed, subordinated groups' memories provide a valuable alternative perspective on the past, which contributes to a better understanding of its intricacies. Through their narrations, the Roma challenge the official discourse of the communist state. Their contestation is complementary to similar non-Roma standpoints on socialism, as they tell similar stories about a dysfunctional system of urban planning, of distribution of goods, or of the abuses made by the *Miliție* (Militia). They also touch on subjects like anti-gypsyism which is largely eluded in the Romanian historical master narrative about the communist period. Consequently, the interviews represent a competing perspective on how the Roma are portrayed in the official party documents, challenging both the high modernist vision of urban development of the bureaucrats and apparatchiks, as well as their stereotypical views on the Roma.

Firstly, as an area which was not systematized, in the eyes of the modernist urban planners, the Roma neighborhood in Sebeș would hardly qualify as an urban space beyond its formal inclusion within the town's borders. The landscape was made up of one story individual houses, built not according to the rational

design of an urban planner but according to the inhabitant's needs and available land. This led to a more organic development of the area, which was in total contradiction with the high modernist projects of the time. Furthermore, there were no modern amenities and the quality of the housing was inadequate. From these perspectives, the neighborhood was more similar to a rural settlement than an urban one. Nevertheless, a closer reading of the interviews clearly shows how the lived experience of a place differs significantly from the schematized mappings and categories employed by high modernist projects.<sup>23</sup> In our interviewees' memory, the neighborhood is remembered as an integral part of the town, an element in a network of interconnected places which also encompassed several factories in which the Roma were working, the town's center, the local market places and so on.

Secondly, the interviews represent a challenge to the depiction of Roma as a population which could not adapt to the rigors and obligations of a modern way of living, especially adhering to a strict work ethic. In the party reports preserved in the archives, the communist authorities emphasized repeatedly that the Roma population did not have any professional training, nor could they be trained given the fact that most of them were illiterate. There are also frequent mentions of Roma who refused employment or left their workplace soon after they received a position.<sup>24</sup> What we discovered from the interviewees' narrations

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<sup>23</sup> James C. Scott, *op.cit.*, p. 87-146.

<sup>24</sup> Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, Fond Comitetul Central al Partidului Comunist Român, Secția Oragnizatorică, dosar nr. 23/1977, f.2-7; dosar 25/1978, f. 1- 8.

is that work plays a central role in their biography. They take great pleasure in narrating about their work in the local factories, what it consisted of, how they managed to get a better position and so on. They also draw attention on the fact that the authorities overgeneralized when talking about the Roma by focusing only on the negative examples (like the drunks in the community).

Consequently, the Roma were a significant part of the town's workforce and thus played an important economic role in Sebeș. This was especially so since part of the Roma were employed in those positions which were usually avoided by the non-Roma majority, like street sweepers and others which required hard manual labor, jobs which needed to be done but for which demand was low.

Furthermore, Roma women in particular described the very strong bonds which appeared between Roma and non-Roma coworkers, for example, at the Ciserom sock factory, one of the most important of the town.<sup>25</sup> They remembered how they would exchange food recipes, borrow money from each other, enjoy a coffee together or go to see a movie. Though many of them also talk about strong anti-Roma sentiments at the time, the work environment is described as a safe place, due to the fact that people had the opportunity to better know each other and, thus, build lasting friendships.

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed analysis of the women's life stories from Sebeș and neighboring villages see: Ionela Bogdan, "A life story is also a serious business. Feminine Narratives during Communist years in the Town of Sebeș", in *Anuarul de Istorie Orală*, nr.XVI, Argonaut, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, p. 74-89.

It was very nice, very, very nice. We used to share food recipes, how to put pickles in the autumn, how to make jam, stuff like that. [laughs]. We went to see movies and afterwards we discussed them during breaks. We said to each other: ‘Listen, I know that one is a good movie, we have to go see it.’ [laughs] So we went to the movie... After that, we came home and did our domestic chores: we always managed to have time for everything.<sup>26</sup>

The people living in the Roma neighborhood from Sebeș also played an important economic role in the town by providing highly sought after Western goods through the informal economy. Many of the Roma used to trade Western merchandise such as coffee, Kent cigarettes, chewing gum or other articles, like wall hanging carpets, soap, clothes, and gold jewelry. Mr. Vasile Dăgoiu, who is a Romanian ethnic, but who married a Roma woman and is well integrated in the Roma community told us:

What happened during that time? There were these things with foreigners. There were these contrabandists, like there are in the present too. They used to buy carpets, I don’t know if you know, that kind of carpets which people used to hang on their walls. With ‘The Abduction from the Seraglio’, with whatever was in fashion during those times. It was 1500 lei, a carpet like that was 1800 lei. That was [the equivalent of] a salary! The Kent cigarettes were highly sought after. They went; they bought from Turks or Poles who used

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<sup>26</sup> Maria Dănuț, interview...

to come to us [to Romania] on trips. They bought merchandise like this and then they would sell it [in Sebeș].<sup>27</sup>

Thirdly, the interviewee s' narrations also provide a more nuanced view of the social problems associated with Roma neighborhoods, particularly the high crime rates frequently mentioned in the party documents of the time. In Sebeș, although our narrators admitted that during the communist regime many petty crimes were committed by some of the Roma [like stealing food, fire wood or different products from the town's factories] they said that these were rarely investigated by the *Miliție* (Militia). What the local authorities were most interested in was precisely their illegal activities on the black market. "Anyways, the police knew everything that moved around here. They didn't use to come for petty crimes but they used to come for things like these... For gold, for... There were many who traded gold illegally..."<sup>28</sup> According to our interviewees, the main interest on the part of the local *Miliție* (Militia) was not of following the law but to make a personal profit, since people could generally escape punishment if they bribed the Militia men. From their perspective, they were allowed to continue to trade these goods precisely because the local authorities could indirectly benefit from them.

Last but not least, the interviewees described the poor living conditions from the neighborhood, but also contested the acclaimed betterment of one's life in [at the time] the newly built

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<sup>27</sup> Vasile Drăgoiu, interview by Ionela Bogdan, Călin Olariu, audio file no. 1051 (OHIA), Sebeș, Alba County, 06.02.2015.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

parts of the town, as well as the way the distribution system of suitable housing worked in Sebeș. For example, Mrs. Margareta Iancu told us that she and her husband tried to get an apartment after they got married and had their first child. She remembers how the committee from the factory where her husband worked discriminated against them, and how they were forced to apply to the town's Popular Council for social housing. In the end, because that apartment they had received was poorly built, they decided to buy a house in the Roma neighborhood.

I want to tell you that I filed a request to the factory where we worked at, and a social investigation was conducted and they came to our house, good people! Just think about it! Who was at my mother-in-law today, at Oara's and Tibi's place? [...] You were there! They have only two rooms, you saw that. Two rooms, a corridor and a small kitchen in the back. In a room, in the first room, used to live Oara with her husband, in the first room from the entrance used to live my parents in law and in the kitchen myself, my husband and my daughter, because we already had our first daughter at that time. [...] Well... The washing was done there, the cooking, everything was done there. Nobody thought that that child needed a proper environment, but she grew up healthy, thank God. And the social investigators came. They entered the house and said: 'Ooo, but here at Dorin's [her husband] it's nice!' And they left. They didn't gave us an apartment because at Dorin's place it was nice and the house was clean. So, was the house supposed to be dirty? But if the house had been dirty, they wouldn't have given us an apartment because look, they damaged the place and

kept it dirty. If it was clean and nice, why was it clean and nice? And we showed them how we were living there, they saw our daughter, she was a few months old and I put her between a few pillows while I was washing some clothes by hand, because we didn't have washing machines then. We used to live there, to eat there, to prepare food there, and bathe there. We used to take baths in turns, some of us left [the kitchen] until others finished bathing. And we filed a request at the Popular Council [for social housing], and they indeed gave us an apartment, but we didn't move there because there was so much dampness everywhere, water was constantly flowing down the walls. And I said: 'I won't move there because my daughter will definitely get sick. I won't move there and get my daughter sick in that dampness!' Whoever had vacated that place hadn't done it because it had been good. And no, we turned it down! And eventually we bought a house in the neighborhood.<sup>29</sup>

The vividness of the recount is particularly strong, as the interviewee relives the feelings associated with this particular act of injustice: anger, disappointment, helplessness. Furthermore, if we take a closer look at the narration we can see how Margareta Iancu is also very skilled in using literary devices like irony to emphasize both the stereotypical views of the local authorities, and the double standard employed when public housing was supposed to be distributed to the Roma. This shows how, at least in Sebeș, ethnic discrimination played

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<sup>29</sup> Margareta Iancu, interview by Lavinia Costea, audio file no.1057(OHIA), Sebeș, Alba County, 07.02.2015

an important part in the socialist state's redistribution mechanism. A further element to support this point of view is related to the content of the Roma nostalgic discourse of the communist regime. In the case of the non-Roma majority, there are two social policies of the communist regime about which interviewees constant talk about, the fact that the regime ensured a stable workplace for every citizen and that people could receive a public dwelling from the state. In the case of the Roma from Sebeș, even though people talk extensively and in a similar way to the non-Roma about work they do not mention anything about public housing.

### **Social trauma and nostalgia**

In the final part of the chapter, following Alessandro Portelli, I will address the question of “what is the place of story within the life?” Why is it important for the narrators to tell their stories in this particular way and what does the story tell us about them and their community? To put it otherwise, what are the explanations for the two main characteristics of the way the Roma from Sebeș remember the communist period, dissonance and nostalgia?

I believe that the answer lies in the larger social transformations the community went through in the post socialist period. As numerous researchers who worked on post-socialist nostalgia have showed, nostalgia has more to do with the post-socialist present than with the communist past.<sup>30</sup> In my view, the

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<sup>30</sup> For a more detailed analysis see: Maria Todorova, Zsuzsa Gile (eds.), *Post-communist Nostalgia*, Berghahn Books, New York, Oxford, 2010; Maria Todorova (ed.) *Remembering Communism; genres of representation*, Social



dissonant and nostalgic attributes of the interviewees' memories are a product of the social trauma the community went through after the fall of communism.<sup>31</sup>

I look at trauma as damage inflicted by major social change to the “body” of the community, which leaves in its wake negative and dysfunctional effects. To reiterate the words of Kay Erikson:

One can speak of traumatized communities as something distinct from assemblages of traumatized persons. Sometimes the tissue of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of the mind and body... but even if that does not happen, traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos - a group culture almost - that is different from and more than the sum of the private wounds that make it up.<sup>32</sup>

The socio-economic disruptions brought by the transition to a market economy encompassed many of the characteristics of

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Science Research Council, New York, 2010; Maria Todorova, Augusta Dimou, Stefan Troebst, *Remembering Communism. Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe*, Central University Press, Budapest-New York, 2014;

<sup>31</sup> For a similar interpretation but in regards to a rural community in Bulgaria see Gerald W. Creed, “Strange Bedfellows: Socialist Nostalgia and Neoliberalism in Bulgaria”, in Maria Todorova, Zsuzsa Gile (eds.), *Post-communist Nostalgia*, Berghahn Books, New York, Oxford, 2010, p. 29-45

<sup>32</sup> Kay Erikson, *A New Species of Trouble: Explorations in Disasters, Trauma and Community*, Norton, New York, 1994, apud Valerie Walkerdine, Luis Jimenez, *Gender, Work and Community After De-Industrialization: A Psychosocial Approach to Affect*, Palgrave, London and New York, 2012, p. 83.

the type of change which can lead to individual and collective trauma. They had a particular temporal quality - sudden and rapid, they had a particular substance and scope – radical, deep, comprehensive, touching to the core, they had particular origins – were perceived as imposed, exogenous, coming from outside, and were encountered with a particular mental frame – they were perceived as unexpected, unpredicted, surprising, shocking.<sup>33</sup>

For the Roma, the transition to the market economy meant the loss of their professional occupations. Since they mainly worked in positions which required fewer qualifications they were the first to be laid off from local factories which went through several reorganizations and were eventually privatized. The Roma who were not laid off initially also lost their job since privatization in post socialist Romania most often meant closing the factories after only a short period of time, as the new owners were more interested in a rapid profit than real long terms investments. Furthermore, after the liberalization of the economy the role of the Roma in what was before 1989 the informal economy diminished as Romanians too started to trade Western goods or gold, which could now be sold legally. This led to serious material and social problems for the Roma from the neighborhood. The women from the community in particular have remarkable stories of how they struggled to survive during that period when they did not have the proper age to receive a pension from the state, could not find work, had to deal with their unemployed husbands, many of whom turned to alcohol as a way

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<sup>33</sup> Piotr Sztompka, “Cultural Trauma. The Other Face of Social Change” in *European Journal of Social Theory* 3 (4), p. 452

to cope with their diminished status in the family and the community, had children of school age and so on.

The rapid social changes from the 1990s and early 2000s also lead to the disruption of the families from the neighborhood since many of the interviewees' children decided to emigrate in the Western European countries, either permanently or temporary, in search for a better living. From the interviewees' perspective, these negative transformations had only worsened over time. At the time when we conducted the interviews [February 2015], many families struggled to make end meets. We found cases where two or three generations survived only with the income of the grandparents (who worked during communism and so received a pension). They attribute the high unemployment rate in the neighborhood to anti-gypsyism, saying that business owners in the area refuse to hire Roma because they think that they won't work hard enough or will steal from the workplace. Many youngsters try to find work in other European Union member states but very few manage to find a stable job since they lack the necessary qualifications. Elderly interviewees are often saddened by the fact that their children do not remain with them as they grow older, like it was customary to do in the past. The poor quality of the education offered for the Roma is also frequently mentioned, as well as the fact that without any help some families from the community are not able to provide their children with the basic necessities to be able to go to school.

Over time, at least in the perception of the elderly inhabitants to whom we talked to, the "ethos" which appeared as a result of the individual traumas of the Roma who found

themselves struggling to cope with the rapid changes of the early 1990s became social trauma, as defined by Erikson:

By collective trauma... I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly an even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with 'trauma'. But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of self has disappeared. You continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. I continue to exist, though damaged and maybe permanently changed.<sup>34</sup>

In this context, nostalgia is a way of coping with the trauma of the present by longing for a time when the interviewees were younger, had an active role in their families and in the community, and when they managed to improve their economic and social personal well-being. Furthermore, even though the Roma history in Romania is one of suffering, including during the communist regime, the difficulties through which the Roma went at the time never put under question the existence of the community itself - therefore are always overshadowed by the negative aspects of the post-socialist present. There were episodes of police brutality, the Roma were forced to work in certain state owned factories, to

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<sup>34</sup> Kay Erikson, *A New Species of Trouble...*, p. 84.

enlist in the army, to go to school, et cetera. They also encountered many challenges while being involved in the informal economy and some of the bonds between the inhabitants were strained by the *Miliție* (Militia) recruitment of informants. But from the interviewees' perspective, the community itself remained largely the same; they always managed to find a way to circumvent the state policies and even make a small personal and collective gain. In the present though, the massive unemployment, the huge financial strains on most of the families, emigration in other EU countries coupled with the changing values of the younger generation puts under question the very existence of the Roma community from the neighborhood in Sebeș.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I explored the memories of a group of Roma interviewees who lived in a gypsy neighborhood in the town of Sebeș during the socialist period. Their recollections provided fascinating insights into the lived experience of communism in such a place. They touched on the changes and continuities the community went through in the past, the relationships between the Roma and the communist authorities and the interdependence created between the marginal gypsy neighborhood and the town. Their recollections are marked by nostalgia and dissonance. The Roma feel nostalgic about the communist past even though they did not forget and choose to freely talk about the more negative aspect of life during communism. I argue that nostalgia is a consequence of the social trauma brought by the sudden and rapid transition to a market

economy after 1989 and subsequent evolutions and this shows how the memory of the communist period is influenced by the social changes the Roma communities went through during post-socialism. In Sebeș, nostalgia does not imply a complete idealization of the communist period, thus I could also identify a counter narrative to the hegemonic discourse of the communist state on the Roma, which is a valuable addition to the Romanian historical master narrative.

**DIANA-ALEXANDRA NISTOR**  
**BACK AND FORTH – CHANGE OF ADDRESS, CHANGE**  
**OF LIFE. THE ROMA IN SAXON HOUSES: STATE**  
**POLICY OR OPPORTUNITY?<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** Changes regarding Roma communities in post-war Transylvania bring into question urban and rural space, the center and the periphery. The fact that most sedentary Roma were settled on the outskirts of cities and villages is a well-known and accepted fact. However, according to the historiography published in Romania after 1989, the communist years bring along changes in Roma living conditions: some people living on the periphery moved to center, making room for a new population to settle there (the nomads). This paper deals with the Roma who moved in the center of some former Saxon towns and villages in Transylvania, for example Reghin, Sighișoara, Brădeni, Uila or Bradu, seeking answers to research questions such as: How did the Roma get to live in Saxon houses under the communist regime? Was it a State policy or did they take advantage of some opportunities? How did the sedentary Roma communities perceive the migration towards the center? Can we record any changes in terms of lifestyle, occupations, traditions, religion or language? In order to provide some relevant answers, the research started from the Archives and the post 1989 historiography. After that, an oral history approach was used to collect and recover life stories of the Roma from Transylvania during the communist period with the intention to complete the Romanian historical narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> The research leading to these results has received funding from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014.

**Key words:** Saxon houses, communist regime, Roma communities in Transylvania

Changes regarding Roma communities in post-war Transylvania bring into question urban and rural space, the center and the periphery. The fact that most sedentary Roma were settled on the outskirts of cities and villages is a well-known and accepted fact. This chapter deals with the Roma population who moved in the center of some former Saxon towns and villages in Transylvania, such as Reghin, Sighișoara, Brădeni, Uila, Petelea, Șaeș, Saschiz, Mureșenii Bârgăului, Jelna, Lechința, Cincu, Criț, Merghindeal or Bradu – situated in Sibiu, Brașov and Mureș counties – seeking answers to the following research questions: how did the Roma get to live in Saxon houses immediately after the end of WWII and during the communist regime? Was it a state policy or did they take advantage of some opportunities? How did the sedentary Roma communities perceive the migration towards the center? Could any changes be recorded in terms of lifestyle, occupations, traditions, religion or language? How do the Roma remember German ethnics? In order to give some relevant answers, the research builds on archival documents, the recent historiography, as well as on an oral history approach that was used to collect and recover life stories of the Roma in Transylvania.

The present chapter offers an analysis of these relocations, looking into two large waves in which, during the communist regime, the Roma moved into Saxon houses in the above-mentioned areas: firstly, the relocations which occurred immediately after the Second World War and then another



significant wave of Roma relocations which occurred during the 1970s. As previously mentioned, the fact that the Roma lived in rural and urban suburbs is a valid statement for the communist period in Romania. Yet, in Transylvania, some exceptions stand out, sometimes becoming a rule. The research methodology had as starting point the Romanian historiography which barely (or briefly) addresses the Roma who got to stay in Saxon houses after WWII and which does not make any reference to any particular decisions taken by the State or local administration regarding these relocations. In this regard, the oral history interviews uncovered relevant information about the Roma living conditions in former Saxon villages in different periods.

The end of WWII led to new waves of relocations and marked a massive redistribution of population within the Romanian territory, including Roma communities who survived the Holocaust and returned “home”. A massive wave of departures of Romanian citizens of German ethnicity was also recorded immediately after August 23, 1944. The rapid advance of the Red Army raised the issue of evacuation of the German ethnic population.<sup>2</sup> In the fall of 1944 in Romania, amid the advancing Soviet army and the withdrawal of the German troops, the evacuation of the Saxon and Swabian population from Transylvania and respectively Banat was decided. According to Nazi officials, the reason of this radical decision was to protect

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<sup>2</sup> Florian Banu, Florica Dobre, “Studiu introductiv” in *Actiunea “Recuperarea”. Securitatea si emigrarea germanilor din Romania (1962-1989)*, Editura Enciclopedica, Bucharest, 2011, p. 22.

German ethnics from any repressive actions of the Soviet Army.<sup>3</sup> Looking at the overall context of the immediate post-war years in Romania, some of the main causes of the German ethnics' massive exodus were the following: a strong desire to reunite their families separated by the events of WWII, the prosecution and unilateral discrimination of German minorities immediately after the end of the war, the massive deportations to the USSR, the Agrarian Law/Reform in March 1945, the provisions of the 1946 Electoral Law according to which Germans were not allowed to vote, the urbanization process which finally caused a decrease in the number of German ethnics in some rural communities, the disappearance of traditional social institutions/structures, and finally, the nationalization of June 11, 1949 and the new laws on education and religious denominations.<sup>4</sup>

The following years, German ethnic groups were considered responsible for all the disasters that occurred during the war, therefore the winners decided that the guilty must pay. Although German ethnics in Romania did not influence the decisions of the Third Reich, the newly established authorities considered ethnicity to have been enough to justify the following number of legislative punitive measures against German inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in December 16, 1944 the State Committee for Defense issued Order No. 7.161 according to which men aged between 17 and 45 and women aged between 18 and 30, of

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<sup>3</sup> Cosmin Florin Budeancă, *Imaginea etnicilor germani la românii din Transilvania după 1918. Studiu de caz: județele Hunedoara, Alba, Sibiu*, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai Cluj-Napoca, Facultatea de Istorie și Filosofie, Teză de doctorat, 2007, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> Florian Banu, Florica Dobre, *Cit.*, p. 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> Cosmin Florin Budeancă, *Cit.*, p. 116.

German ethnic origin from several Eastern and Central European countries were to be deported. Therefore, during 1944-1945, as a means of war reparation, Soviet policymakers deported German ethnics from Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Hungary in Donbas and the Urals. Despite the Rădescu Government protests, the measure was applied in Romania as well during January-February 1945.<sup>6</sup> According to Romanian historiography, immediately after the Communist Party seizure of political power, dissensions between the minorities and Romanians were carefully exploited and the Roma population was moved into the houses of the deported Saxon population. Paraphrasing Emmanuelle Pons, the phenomenon resulted in increasing the Romanians' resentment, who felt wronged and oppressed compared to the Roma population, whom they considered unworthy of such measures. Thus, the xenophobia became, gradually, more prominent.<sup>7</sup>

1949 brought the dissolution of Soviet labor camps and their occupants were sent home. Shipments of returnees began to be organized and dispatched to Romania starting with October 1949. The action ended in December the same year. Most of the "transports" were sorted in Sighet (city situated in North Transylvania) where German ethnic deportees were handed over to the Romanian administrative bodies – there, the deportees had the opportunity to choose to remain in Romania or to move to Austria or Germany: under these circumstances, 25.1% of them

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<sup>6</sup> Betea Lavinia, Diac Cristiana, Mihai Florin-Răzvan, Țiu Ilarion, *Lungul drum spre nicăieri. Germanii din România deportați în URSS*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2012, p. 9-13.

<sup>7</sup> Emmanuelle Pons, *Țiganii din România. O minoritate în tranziție*, Editura Compania, București, 1999, p. 11-27.

went to Germany and 0.2% reached Austria.<sup>8</sup> In some of the villages in the regions of Transylvania and Banat, many abandoned houses were assigned to the Roma living at the periphery of that particular village or coming from elsewhere. This was the moment when the Roma living on the outskirts of villages entered the center, causing the old peripheral status of the Roma to radically change, as historian Viorel Achim stated in one of his works: „in terms of housing, during years of socialism, the Roma population has experienced indisputably progress.”<sup>9</sup> Regarding Saxon houses, there can be noticed different ways in which the Roma got to live there in the first post-communist decade: Roma relocations in former Saxon houses abandoned immediately after the end of WWII, the relocations orchestrated by Romanian local authorities in abandoned Saxon houses or in houses of Saxon deportees (during the Agrarian Reform), the relocation of the Roma in the same household with Saxon families, and finally, the relocations of the Roma in former Saxon houses made by the local authorities during the 1970s and 1980s (after another large wave of Saxon departures in Germany took place).

### **Roma who occupied abandoned Saxon houses at the end of WWII**

As mentioned above, in 1944, along with the withdrawal of the German troops, most Saxons were forced to leave their

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<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Poledna, *Sint ut sunt, aut non sint? Transformări sociale la sașii ardeleni după 1945*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, p. 91.

<sup>9</sup> Viorel Achim, *Țigani în istoria României*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1998, p. 156.

houses and went to Germany. Their departure was massive in the town of Reghin (Mureș County) and the surrounding villages (Dedrad, Batoș, Uila, Petelea or Idecu), but also in many villages in Năsăud County, including the town of Bistrița. These areas entered into a real rout: abandoned houses, robberies, random occupied dwellings. Starting with October-November 1944 former Saxon villages were occupied by Romanian and Roma families, the so-called “poor of the fields”, who also gathered the field crops.<sup>10</sup> As historiography states, most of these colonists were actually former workers from Saxon households and knew of their departure. Therefore, immediately after the massive Saxon departure, they randomly occupied the houses, mostly with the authorities’ agreement – this was the reason for which some of these houses were not nationalized and Romanian and Roma families became their owners if the Saxon families didn’t return. However, there were several situations when, upon encountering various difficulties on the way, Saxons decided to return to their home villages and homes. By the time they arrived, their place was no longer their “home”. This is why, for a period of time, they had to share their household with the newcomers, with those “poor of the fields”.

In other cases, the situation took different turns: Poțo Augustin, a 93 years old Roma blacksmith from Petelea (former Saxon village in Mureș County), remembered that in Petelea no Roma family had dared to move into Saxon houses because Saxons told the locals they would come back after the Soviet

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<sup>10</sup> Ioan I. Costea, *Reghin. Destin și istorie*, Editura Petru Maior, Reghin, 2007, p. 338-339.

troops withdrew from Transylvania.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, briefing notes elaborated by Gendarmerie Legions in order to show the “the mood of the inhabitants/ population” in various former Saxon villages have emphasized tensions created by some rumors about the Saxons’ return and getting their properties back. More so, according to an information note drafted by the Gendarmerie Legion in Nășăud in March 1946, several families of Saxon returnees were cited to court with regard to their submitted requests for regaining Romanian citizenship. This piece of news sparked a series of rumors regarding the colonists living in their homes, who received plots of land under the Agrarian Reform, and who were to be forced to return recently received properties to their former owners.

“The colonized and allotted Romanian population in this community is quite concerned because they left their small properties in their home villages, came and occupied State property houses [nationalized Saxon houses], took care of those new homes and plots, during which time their proprieties got destroyed. Considering the Saxons would regain rights, the colonists would again reach their former status of poor daily laborers. [...] Therefore, we [Gendarmerie Legion] have taken measures to combat the aforementioned

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<sup>11</sup> Augustin Poțo, interview by the author, audio file, no. 1407, Oral History Institute Archives, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, (further OHIA), Petelea, Mureș County, August 18, 2015.

news and rumors and identify those who spread them.”<sup>12</sup>

„May 20, 1946: I am honored to report that in Batoș [former Saxon village in Mureș County] the mood of the population is currently calm. There were no major conflicts. The colonists in the villages of Dedrad and Batoș are very concerned about the rumors saying that the Saxons will come back and they will be forced to leave the houses.”<sup>13</sup>

The Romanian historiography addresses the population who randomly occupied former Saxon houses at the end of the Second World War, namely “the poor of the fields”, as being Romanian<sup>14</sup> and rarely makes any reference to the Roma who

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<sup>12</sup> Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund *Legiunea de Jandarmi a Județului Năsăud*, Dossier No. 205, f. 80

<sup>13</sup> Arhivele Naționale Mureș, Fund *Jandarmeria Județului Mureș*, Dossier No. 545, f. 17

<sup>14</sup> Fieldwork campaigns in former Saxon villages during the research tackling Romanian population in Saxon houses in Mureș County, emphasized multiple cases in which Romanians occupied abandoned Saxon houses even before the local authorities dealt with their distributions. Most interviewees remembered the end of the war and the months after, when the Saxon population left their homes and withdrew with the German army. Their testimonies showed the manner in which people went into those almost entirely empty Saxon villages and randomly occupied houses. Some interviewees recalled the moment some Saxon families returned to the village and found their houses were already inhabited – one of the interviewees remembered her large family living with a Saxon family who came back and who agreed to let them live in one of the rooms: “And they came back home with a little bag... they came at the gate and said: ‘This was our home, will you let us in?’ Look, I get goose bumps! Just imagine: they asked us if we let them in their own house! My mother said: ‘Of course you can! It’s your house! I will leave with the kids!’, and they said: ‘You don’t have to go, you can stay in this room!’ Nine people in a room, there you

occupied some of those houses as well. On the other hand, collective memory in these areas today speaks of Roma who stole goods from abandoned Saxon houses and occupied them for a short period of time until the authorities redistributed them. The archival documents also contain some reference to the Roma colonist population who lived in these houses: in this regard, in 1946 the Hall in Lechința, one of the former Saxon villages in Năsăud County, notified the Gendarmerie Local Legion that many colonists lived in the village without being registered at the office, most of whom were Roma (“Gypsies”) and who caused “all kinds of complaints by the people of the village”. Therefore, the document urged the immediate eviction of these “foreign Gypsies who were illegally living in the village of Lechința.”<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, a further document highlighting a Gendarmerie decision in this particular case was not to be found among the records of the Gendarmerie Legion.

### **Roma population settled (by local authorities) in Saxon houses**

Immediately after the war, Saxon deportations were carried out on Soviet order. This was the moment the local authorities decided to occupy their houses with families in need, who were living in difficult conditions: homeless people or people living in makeshift accommodation. As shown in the above paragraphs, some of the empty houses were occupied

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eat, wash, sleep... everything!” (Gliga Saveta, interview by the author, audio file, personal archive, November 2013, Dedrad, Mureș County)

<sup>15</sup> Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund Legiunea de Jandarmi a Județului Năsăud, Dossier No. 150, f. 455.



immediately after the owners left them – Romanian and Roma families randomly chose their homes and lived there for a couple of years. When the local authorities began to manage the flow of colonists into these former Saxon villages, some documents were drafted, attesting the fact that Roma families had already occupied and lived in those houses. A document from the village of Arcalia in Năsăud County (today Bistrița-Năsăud County) attested that in 1946 the abandoned Saxon houses in this village were inhabited by a number of Roma families, counting 30-40 people, who resisted leaving them in favor of several families who had been assigned by the Local Committee of Arcalia to live there. What is interesting about this Notification No. 2730 signed after the meeting within the County Commission of Guidance for the Agrarian Reform in November 6, 1946 is the fact that the residents of these abandoned houses which were to be evacuated, are labeled “Gypsies i.e. Roma” (Romanian: “țigani adică romi”), and this situation in which an official document used both terms, Roma and Gypsy, is quite unique. Considering the archival documents which mention the Roma in different situations during the 1940s and 1950s at a local level, a likely explanation would be that the local authorities wanted to highlight the problems faced in regard to this population at the time.

Along with the implementation of the 1945 Agrarian Reform, the absentees’ houses (both of Saxons who left immediately after the end of WWII and of those who were deported to the USSR, or houses belonging to the Jews which remained empty after the end of the war), were nationalized and distributed to families who did not own land at the time. This is how, as many archival documents show, protocols were

elaborated,<sup>16</sup> recording: total land area in various villages, total number of large animals, the number of inhabitants and their religion (recording each ethnic group: Romanians, Gypsies and Saxons who remained in that village), the number of German ethnics (absentees) who left the village and abandoned their houses and plots, the number of colonists in the village, the number of empty absentees' houses and their condition (habitable or uninhabitable). These numbers were to be used to facilitate the allotment of lands and houses in the following years. Regarding these assignments to local and colonist families, the archives record several requests written by Roma families in order to receive Saxon houses and lands (as the one below), stipulating various reasons: lack of habitable housing and lack of agricultural land, or the poor location of their houses and the high risk of flooding each year.<sup>17</sup> Some other archival documents show Roma participation in the Agrarian Reform Committees and their rights to the distribution of land along with other ethnicities living in those areas.

“The undersigned Lăcătuș Vicariu from  
Rusul de Jos, Beclean, with obedience I inform  
you that last year when the land intended to be  
shared in this community was divided, I was  
entitled too and given one and a half acres of  
land, and of all those who received land, it was  
only me that sowed it, the others were not

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<sup>16</sup> See Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund Comisia de Plasă pentru Aplicarea Reformei Agrare Lechința, Dossier No. 4, f: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11 and Dossier No. 1, f. 37.

<sup>17</sup> Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund Comisia de Agricultură a județului Năsăud 1948, Dossier No. 113, f. 282-283.

deprived of food like I was, having lands of their own. Now, on August 24 the court decided the land redistribution, and I was rejected from receiving that land I worked, and they have redistributed it to people who have at least 4-3 acres given by the former Agrarian Reform, on the grounds that I am a craftsman (a blacksmith). [...] For all the above, I obediently ask Mr. President to kindly intervene in this matter and order to return the land they took from me with no serious reason.”<sup>18</sup>

On the contrary, multiple documents in the archives emphasize a general state of disagreement within the local (Romanian) population regarding the land allotment to the Roma inhabitants in different villages. In this regard, many requests were registered to dispossess Roma ethnics of the lands they had received during the implementation of the Agrarian Reform, on the grounds that the lands were not seeded and properly used. In 1947 one of the documents drafted in Jelna and Orheiul Bistriței villages<sup>19</sup> (in Năsăud County) showed the changes that had been made in terms of the size of the plots the Roma received, namely their reduction to two acres on the grounds that the Roma were not farmers and therefore were unable to work large plots of land. After re-adjudication, these plots were allocated to Romanian families but at the same time, some decisions stated that those

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<sup>18</sup> Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund Comisia de Reformă Agrară a Plasei Beclean, Dossier No. 5, f. 70, 71, 72.

<sup>19</sup> See full text at: Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund Comisia de Agricultură a județului Năsăud 1947, Dossier No. 27, f. 198.

lands remained in the possession of their former beneficiaries, the Roma – therefore, the signatories of the document required a division of these lands or otherwise the Roma should have been provided (by the State) with seeds for sowing the lands as soon as possible.

According to some documents in the same county of Năsăud, there was stipulated a reduction of land plots previously granted to some Roma families. Thus, some of the Roma beneficiaries of the Agrarian Reform were dispossessed in 1947 as follows: from 5 to 1 acres of land, from 4 to 2, 3 to 1 or from 1 acre to 800 fathoms.<sup>20</sup> In other localities, the Local Committees for the Agrarian Reform decided to dispossess Roma families for the reasons set out in many other documents from different nearby villages – the official record issued in 1947 in Mureșenii Bârgăului ordered “the cancellation of all land properties the Gypsies own, because they do not work the land as they did not work it last year.”<sup>21</sup> The next year, the Informative Bulletin No. 4 of April 19, 1948 drafted by the Gendarmerie Legion in Bistrița, recording “the mood of the population” within the area of Năsăud County, raised the issue of the Roma who did not work their recently received lands and therefore they did not have any food supply: “colonists, particularly Roma, did not work the land they have received and thus they are now deprived of food.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See full text at: Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund Comisia de Plasă pentru Aplicarea Reformei Agrare Lechința, Dossier No. 31, f. 15, 16, 17.

<sup>21</sup> See full text at: Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund Comisia de Agricultură a județului Năsăud 1948, Dossier No. 113, f. 298.

<sup>22</sup> Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund Legiunea de Jandarmi a Județului Năsăud, Dossier No. 226, f. 195.

During the period in which the local authorities started to manage the abandoned Saxon houses, to nationalize and rent them out, a newlywed Cortorari family, nomads at the time, applied and received a Saxon house for rent in the village of Criț, in Brașov County. Eva Grancea remembered the moment she and her husband decided to settle in a permanent house and abandon their nomadic lives:

“We were travelling, camping in our tents near villages. When we wanted to go, we left without any problems to another village. When we found a place we liked, we'd stay there and live with no worries at all! Afterwards, I realized our children grew up and they were often sick, so we said: ‘It is not O.K.’ My husband added: ‘Let's rent a house!’ It was the time when the state put some Gypsy families in Saxon houses. They [the authorities] were throwing them [the Saxons] out of their houses and then took them out of the country. Just like they sent our elders in Russia! [...] So, my husband went and asked for a house at the City Hall and we received a Saxon house, and we paid rent for it, monthly.”<sup>23</sup>

At the beginning of the interview, Eva Grancea's testimony talks about her life during childhood, the period her family was deported to Transnistria (describing the terrifying facts she remembered from there). In the end, she reached the moment

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<sup>23</sup> Eva Grancea, interview by the author, audio file, no. 1314, (OHIA), Mihai Viteazu, Mureș County, August 22, 2015

when she forsook her nomadic lifestyle and settled in permanent location. Regarding housing conditions, she remembered it was for the first time in her life she had a stove, an oil lamp for lighting, a floor and a bed. She also described how she used to clean the house and how she became accustomed to a household, to a different, better way of life, as she claimed it was. For the same period, in Merghindeal (village in Sibiu County), Danilă Clopotar recalled the manner in which the local authorities “settled only Gypsies with houses” (Roma who were already sedentary, Romanian: “*țigani de casă*”) in Saxon houses after the war. At the time, his family continued to travel by carriage, but he remembered very well the Saxons leaving their homes and the moment “Gypsies with houses” received households during Petru Groza’s governance:

“They [the authority] settled Gypsies in those houses, “Gypsies with houses” [*țigani de casă*]. They lived there for about three years, and then the state took everything from the Saxons who were still living in the village... there was a time when they had nothing to eat! [...] Gypsies received a lot of things! Not us! They received cows, plots, horses, carriages, harrows... but they sold everything! Petru Groza put Gypsies in those houses, yes. There was even a saying: “Lord, take Petre Groza in heaven because he gave us carriages and horses!” [Romanian: „*Du-l Doamne pe Petre Groza-n rai/ Că ne-o dat căruț’ și cai!*”]<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Dănilă Clopotar, interview by the author and Ionela Bogdan, audio and video file, no. 1075, OHIA, Merghindeal, Sibiu County, May 20, 2015.

Another saying remembered by a Cortorari lady who lived in a Saxon village during the communist regime, goes as follows: „Saxon man, in your homes, Gypsies now make brooms!”<sup>25</sup> (Romanian: „Sasule-n casele tale, fac țiganii măturoaie!”), making reference to the same “Gypsies with houses” nation (Romanian: nație). Regarding the events that happened after the end of the war, the interviewee spoke about them with discontent, considering the decisions taken by the communist state as unfair: “the State shouldn’t have caused such torment to Saxon families.”<sup>26</sup> She also remembered that for a period of time “Gypsies with houses” received former Saxon houses in the village of Bradu (Sibiu County), but she was born in the 1960s and she stated that those relocations were made when she was still very young or even before. On the other hand, she recalled her childhood when her family was already settled somewhere at the periphery of the village, when Saxons were still living in the center of the village:

“In 1990, all Saxons went abroad. Without Saxons, the village is ugly! Saxons were the pride of the village! If you had entered a Saxon courtyard, you would have seen how great it was! The Romanians are lazy... [...] The Saxons were hardworking people! Moreover, we had so much to learn from them. We lived in the same village with the Saxons, and we took

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<sup>25</sup> C.A. (Anonymous), interview by the author, audio file, no. 1106, (OHIA), Ighișu Vechi, Sibiu County, June 6, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

example! I had a lot to learn from them! They were so hardworking.”<sup>27</sup>

The area inhabited by the Roma was frequently delimited from the village by a natural border, such as rivers, hills or ravines, or by a train line, in this way occupying the spatial margin of the village, the periphery, if not somehow outside the village if that “border” was understood as a symbolic boundary between the village and the outskirts.<sup>28</sup> In the case of this Cortorari lady’s family and community, after being settled sometimes during the late 1950s, they lived in small houses at the edge of a river at the periphery of the Saxon village of Bradu. C.A. (Anonymous) remembered her community was called “Gypsies of the Saxons” (Romanian: “țiganiî sașilor”) because they lived in the same village and interacted very much: her parents used to make different items for the Saxons. In this regard, the interviewee made a clear distinction between the Cortorari Roma and other Roma nations (mostly referring to them as Gypsies with houses), emphasizing the fact that Cortorari communities were closer to the Saxons, therefore had better relationships with them. Moreover, in order to strengthen her statement, she recalled that she resembled a Saxon girl in the village, and the teacher at school used to confuse them.

Writing about the politics of collective identity formation, Ioana Bunescu stated that “identity is flexible and contextual, not so much monocentric, but polycentric, shaping itself on the needs

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> See Ioana Bunescu, *Roma in Europe. The politics of collective identity formation*, Ashgate Malmo University, 2014, p. 30-37.



of the population and being shaped by some identity strategies.”<sup>29</sup> In this regard, during the fieldwork campaigns in former Saxon villages in Transylvania, each interviewee was asked to locate on the mental map of the village the “others,” in order to understand how the Roma group identity is negotiated in relation to other ethnic groups living in the same area. Therefore, the fieldwork data suggested that in the case of Roma who lived in Saxon villages, the interviewees often made reference to some habits, or things that resembled those done by the population living in the center (here: Saxons), frequently showing good relationships with them, which in the end placed the Roma closer to the center, closer to the majority, a fact that sometimes helped them differentiate from the Others (here: other nations of Roma).

“There was a Saxon girl, we were alike!  
The Saxons would joke and tell my mother:  
‘You conceived her with a Saxon!’ Most Saxon  
ladies wore tails, and us too, we do not cut our  
hair! And that girl was wearing braids and I was  
too, so the teacher did not know which one was  
Karin and which one me. You know, we were  
alike!”<sup>30</sup>

As emphasized above, some of the Saxon families who were deported to USSR came back in late 1949. This was the moment when most of the Roma families who received their houses had to leave and received a plot of land, most often somewhere at the periphery of the village, where they could build

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> C.A. (Anonymous), interview...

houses. If the Saxons did not come back to get their houses back, some Roma families stayed and lived there paying rent until they managed to build their own house or, as some of the interviewees claimed, until they bought it after the fall of communism.

According to archival documents, during the period in which the abandoned Saxon houses were managed by the State and occupied by poor or homeless families, including Roma families, most of these houses ended up damaged. This fact is illustrated by documents drawn up by the local Legions of Gendarmes, who were in charge of watching over the “mood and living conditions” of the population in their area of jurisdiction. One of the documents drafted by the Gendarmerie Legion in the village of Lechința, Năsăud County, showed that many of the “absentees’ houses”, inhabited by colonists, were in 1948 in a disastrous state and needed urgent repair. In this regard, the document mentioned that many of those tenants could not afford to repair the houses and others, who were able to repair them, did not take any action because they were unsure of their tenant status. This informative note no. 3/ May 10, 1948 required stability, and recommended to the local administration to avoid frequent change of tenants and provide these houses with long term tenant families.<sup>31</sup> Regarding this situation, Eva Grancea remembered the day when local authorities checked the condition of the rented former Saxon houses and decided to evacuate some of the Roma families who had destroyed the properties in the village of Criț.

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<sup>31</sup> See full text at: Arhivele Naționale Bistrița Năsăud, Fund Legiunea de Jandarmi a Județului Năsăud, Dossier No. 78, f. 13

“The Party [communist Party] got them out after three or four years. But they destroyed the Saxon houses, they ruined everything! Just imagine: The Party from Braşov and Bucureşti came; they saw us and the accommodations and how we lived there and said: ‘You pay the rent. They have no reason at all to put you on the street!’ I was crying: ‘Please, Mr. Mayor, please don’t kick us out!’, ‘Grincioaie, [her name is Grancea] I will not. We will evict only those who ruined the houses and didn’t pay the rent!’ So, I got to keep the house and everyone else was kicked out. Afterwards, the State gave us plots and the right to make our own houses.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Roma population relocated in houses inhabited by their Saxon owners**

Once the Russian troops reached the villages in Transylvania, people's memories are full with assault actions the Soviet army applied against the locals, especially against the Saxon population who were seen as sympathizers of Nazi Germany. Most Saxon families who remained in these villages were sorted and taken to labor camps in the USSR. In many villages in Sibiu, Braşov, Alba and Mureş Counties, the lives of Saxon families who did not withdraw with the German army or were not deported to Russia, changed in accordance with the new policies implemented by the communist state, which triggered a vehement policy against German ethnics. Although the

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<sup>32</sup> Eva Grancea, interview...

historiography does not register any cases in which Saxons were forced to receive Roma in their homes or to live with Roma ethnics, the collective and individual memories recalled and described the period in which “punishments for German ethnics”<sup>33</sup> were applied in some of the former Saxon villages. This was the moment when, for a certain period of time (decided by the local authorities), Saxon families had to share their homes with Roma families. These measures were taken by local authorities at the end of the Second World War, yet the archives do not contain any document to stipulate those relocations. However, the memory of elderly people, Roma, Romanian or Saxon, provided reference and portrayed these events. According to a lady interviewed in Brădeni (village in Sibiu County), it was initially decided that Saxons families were to be forcibly evicted from their houses and moved into some adobe houses at the periphery of the village where Roma were living at the time. Eventually, the local authorities decided that Roma families were to be moved in the same household with the Saxons. Valeria Ciurar mentioned she knew about these discussions of the local authorities because her father was named deputy mayor of the village immediately after the communist regime came to power:

“Petre Groza [Petru Groza]! He ordered that every Saxon family must get out of their houses and move in the houses where Gypsies lived. But then, Gypsies were moved in their houses. So, the Saxons lived with the Gypsies in

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<sup>33</sup> I used the phrase “punishments for the Saxons/ German ethnics” because this is how Roma people I interviewed explained the phenomenon and this is how they remembered and understood the actions that the local authorities took immediately after the end of WWII in their villages.

the same courtyards. Yes, they did! There were decent Roma families, but there were bad people too. [...] The Saxons were put in the backyard rooms, and the Roma with their families got the best rooms, the front rooms. That's how all the Gypsies lived here. But not all of them, not all of them... for instance, we said: 'We don't want to take your front rooms. We will stay in the backyard. We'll stay there and then, at some point, we'll make our house and leave.' And so we did.”<sup>34</sup>

The same actions were remembered by Ioan Șandru from the village Saschiz where, apparently, the Russian army (“the office of the stationed army”) was dealing with the Saxon houses problem. Although the interviewee had not been born yet, he knew of the stories regarding these atrocities from his parents, stories that he reproduced in details.

“Back in the 1940s, there was this order that all the Gypsies and Romanians should enter the Saxon houses. The Saxons were taken into account and then received a small room in their house. They were oppressed. Why? Because that's how the law was, that Party. There was the Red Corner, that's how it was called, the place

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<sup>34</sup> Ciurar Valeria, interview by the author, audio file, no. 1185, OHIA, Brădeni, Sibiu County, July 25, 2015.

where the Russians gave orders... if you were too noisy they would shoot you right away!”<sup>35</sup>

In Cincu, one of the former Saxon villages in Braşov County, former nomads Nicolae Cercea and his wife Elisabeta Căldărar remembered the time when the local authorities moved some “Gypsies with houses” (Romanian: “*ţigani de casă*”, already settled Roma communities) to live together with the Saxons in their houses. The interviewees highlighted the fact that the local authorities offered this opportunity only to “the Gypsies with houses” and not to the nomadic Roma families located at the outskirts of the village. Nicolae Cercea and Elisabeta Căldărar described the inappropriate behavior of those who lived for a short period of time with the Saxons, putting it at the expense of the lack of education and extreme poverty those families showed – apparently, in their opinion, those Roma families were poorer than the nomadic Roma families settled in Cincu at the time.

“It was indeed as I tell you, I know it because I remember that thing. There was a Gypsy, but he was rich, he got power from the State, that is, from that Government that was then, and he made the decisions with the mayor of the village. He made the decisions and took the Saxons out of their houses, just imagine, he had that power, he took the Saxons out and put the Gypsies in those houses. [...] But only the ‘Gypsies with houses’ [*ţigani de casă*] who

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<sup>35</sup> Şandru Ioan, interview by the author, audio file, no. 1426, OHIA, Saschiz, Mureş County, August 22, 2015.

were very poor, they were put there, and the Saxons were pulled out of their homes, of those big houses, and put in the back [...].”<sup>36</sup>

“After the Saxons left for Germany, that's another thing, what to do with their houses? They [the authorities] gave the houses of those who left, they forced them [the Roma] into the houses and then they ruined them... Because at that time a Gypsy had five or six children and they were poor, very poor, they were poorer than us... another race, another nation! [...] I remember that at some point those Gypsies were being taken out of the houses, as they did so many things, if the houses had basements, they [the Roma] didn't go out to the toilet, they'd break the floor in the house [laughs] and stand there to... they were destroying the houses!”<sup>37</sup>

In the same village of Cincu, Brasov County, I met a Saxon lady who remembered her childhood back in the former Saxon village of Brădeni (where I afterwards interviewed Valeria Ciurar). She recalled the years after WWII, when she was 11 years old, and the decisions regarding the relocation of Roma in Saxons houses. She remembered Brădeni during that period and even before the end of the war: the Saxon population was the largest and the Roma were living at the periphery, “the Gypsies

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<sup>36</sup> Nicolae Cercea, interview by Ionela Bogdan, audio file, no. 1088, OHIA, Cincu, Brasov County, June 3, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*

were living on a hill, there was a hill”<sup>38</sup>, until “the state”, the Village Hall, decided to move them into Saxon houses. She placed the events sometimes during 1948-1949 when she recalled that together with her mother, they were forced to live in their house with a Roma family for about a year. She remembered that period with sadness because their house was almost completely destroyed. When asked if she knew anything about the reason of such a decision taken by the local authorities, she said that perhaps the authorities wanted to civilize the Roma:

“They [the Roma] said: ‘Get out of here, this is my house!’ And it was so close to take us out of our houses, and then ultimately, I don’t know how, it was decided that Gypsies were to come and live with us. I was living only with my mother because my father hadn’t returned from the war, and then, at some point they [the Village Hall] gave us the right and the Gypsies had to leave our homes. And after the Gypsies left, we had to clean up there... [...] I lived in my house with them. Us, in the smaller room. And because we couldn’t fit all the furniture in that little room, and it remained in their rooms, we couldn’t use it after they left. [...] We had a barn there, and they broke it and made fire! They kept their pigs in the rooms! [...] They stayed there for about a year and after one year they had to leave and go back to their places. They were not allowed to live in our houses anymore.

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<sup>38</sup> Maria (Anonymous), interview by the author, audio file, no. 1162, OHIA, Cincu, Brasov County, June 7, 2015.



There was a law... after they ruined everything,  
they went back...<sup>39</sup>

However, according to Valeria Ciurar's testimony, there were cases in which Saxon and Roma families got along well. She added that Saxons had a positive influence on Roma families, providing a good example in household management and behavior. This was one of the reasons for which most of the recorded Roma interviewees described the Saxons as being landowners, a rich, wealthy and organized people. In addition, the Roma often expressed their sorrow for the Saxon village of yore. According to most interviews recorded with Romanians who lived in Saxon villages, the relations between the Saxons and the Roma or the Romanians were not very close. Saxon communities always kept a distance towards other cohabitants because of their physical/geographical localization – as the Romanians and the Roma were most of the times living on the periphery of Saxon settlements. Regarding the period in which Valeria Ciurar lived in the same courtyard with a Saxon family in Brădeni, she remembered:

“We lived there with them, with this Saxon family. She [a Saxon lady] was like my mother! If I went out she would come after me: ‘You’re too dirty. That apron is dirty, take it off!’, ‘But I don’t have another one!’, I was telling her that I didn’t have another apron. She went and brought me one of her own. Yes! Yes, she was a good mother. A good mother! But I

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<sup>39</sup> Maria (Anonymous), interview...

was likewise. If she washed the clothes I'd help her, if she cooked bread I'd knead there with her. Everything, everything, everything... I lived there as if she was my mother! And they had a girl in Russia, because the Saxons were taken to Russia! They gathered all young Saxons, can you record this thing? All young Saxons were gathered and taken to Russia: women, men, well not so many men because they were at war, but women yes, they gathered them all and took them to Russia. They went. And there, in Russia, they put them to work, they worked and suffered so much there! They said that they received something to eat only once a day! Oh, how much they suffered! Very, very... and one of their daughters [of the family with whom they lived] was sent to Russia. [...] She came back, but her husband died in the war. She remained alone with a child to raise. [...] There were Saxons who were beaten by Gypsies, and other things they have done, but we didn't do anything! We got along well with those people! We considered them our parents! And they said: 'Valerică [her name is Valeria], come on, try and build your own house!' She told me so. And we managed at some point to build one, we worked, we had some money and we worked. And we bought construction materials and we built a house there, on that side [she pointed at the other side of the street]. Yes. And the Saxon lady said: 'Make your own home!', the Saxons encouraged us: 'Come on, you can do it! Built you home!'. We did it, we gathered materials, we gathered everything. Then we sold the cows and bulls,

bought some smaller animals, we gathered the money and bought the equipment and we made a little house over there. And this is how we moved out of the Saxon house.”<sup>40</sup>

“Here in the village [Șaeș, Mureș County], my parents lived in the house of a Saxon family. They lived with the Saxons, so it was. [...] My parents said that they got along well with the Saxons, they considered the Saxons their parents. Very well, they got along very well. They gave us rooms to live in, and my parents had animals: a household, animals, pigs, cows, everything. At that time, my father worked at C.A.P. [Collective Farms] and mother as well, my father was an accountant!”<sup>41</sup>

Considering there are no archival documents to be found in this regard, according to the testimonies recorded in villages of Brădeni, Șaeș, Saschiz or Cincu, Roma families had lived with Saxons in their houses for one to eight years when the local authorities decided to move them back to their homes, if they had any, or, otherwise, the Roma were given plots of land where to build their own houses. As Valeria Ciurar remembered, the Roma from Brădeni received land on the road to the nearby village of Retiș, a street which remained in the collective memory of the village as the Bank Street, because the Roma borrowed money in order to build their houses.

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<sup>40</sup> Ciurar Valeria, interview...

<sup>41</sup> B.V. (Anonymous), interview by the author, audio file, no. 1186, OHIA, Șaeș, Mureș County, July 25, 2015.

“Gheorghiu Dej. He gave the order that all Gypsies should leave the Saxon houses, not only here in this village, but in the entire country! And they went out, and a State Bank was founded which lent them money. They [the Roma] bought construction materials and built their own houses. They all live together on the Bank Street.”<sup>42</sup>

### **Evangelical Roma from the village of Uila, Mureș County**

The former Saxon village of Uila, in Mureș County, is at the same time an atypical and typical case of a Saxon village in the post-war period in Transylvania in terms of its inhabitants. Being located near other Saxon villages, part of its Saxon population left the country at the end of WWII, while a small part remained and lived there until the fall of communism. The population of Uila before the end of the Second World War consisted in a compact population of German ethnics living in the center of the village, a compact community of Roma who dwelled on the periphery, and very few Romanian families who were also living on the outskirts of the village. An interesting fact regarding the Roma population in this village is their religious denomination, respectively the fact that the Roma community was also evangelical and was baptized at the Saxon church even during and before the interwar period. This is for sure an exception, as most Roma living near Saxon villages claimed they had not participated in any religious ceremonies in the Saxon

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<sup>42</sup> Ciurar Valeria, interview...

church, therefore their religion was either Orthodox or Greek Catholic – as far as both oral history interviews and archival documents registered.

The Documentary Fund of the National Council for Studying the Securitate Archives (ACNSAS) contains a copy of an article entitled “Gypsies in Transylvania” written in German by Rolf Kutschera and published in an unknown work. This article emphasizes the visit of some German university professors in September 1937 in Saxon villages or cities in Transylvania who wanted to learn about the traditions of other ethnic groups living in these areas. The article presents the nomadic Roma communities they encountered in their trip, making reference to the number of Roma in Transylvania during the 1930s, their occupations and traditions. The next short article, written by Friedrich Krauß and copied from the same work, is entitled “Evangelical Gypsies from Uila” and describes the Roma population living in the Saxon village of Uila during the interwar period. The text portrays the population of the village before WWII, which consisted of 589 Saxons, one or two Romanian families and 160 Roma persons. According to the document, the Roma lived in small houses at the periphery of the village, but at the same time very close to the Saxon houses, and that was the reason for which the Roma were fluently speaking the Saxon dialect: “All Roma, as long as they are born in the village, speak the Saxon dialect, but with mistakes - for example, they reverse the words: ‘hun ich = ich habe’ or ‘kit e = er kommt’.”<sup>43</sup> The Roma earned their living as day laborers or by begging, while

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<sup>43</sup> National Council for Studying the Securitate Archives (further: ACNSAS), Documentary Fund, Dossier No. 11201, f. 193.

many of the men were “extraordinary musicians.”<sup>44</sup> The Saxon school in Uila was seldom frequented by Roma children, according to the description in the article “if they had completed a year of school it was enough for a lifetime.”<sup>45</sup> Regarding the Roma religious denomination, the article wrote about their belonging to the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Uila (even though they were not paying the annual contribution) with some exceptions, namely the Roma who migrated to the village and who were Catholics “on paper” but who wanted to baptize their children at the Evangelical Church.

“On the feast-day celebrations, the Gypsies attended the church service, sitting on the back benches. In the case of funerals, Gypsies used to call on the Evangelical priest’s service: the sermon was held in the Saxon dialect, while the ‘Our Father’ prayer in German. When ‘Our Father’ was said in Gypsy language – during the visit of a millionaire Gypsy from Köln – sometime around 1932, the Gypsies in the village present at the funeral believed that the prayer was profaned; They wanted to hear the prayer in German, even though only a few of them understood the language.”<sup>46</sup>

The interview with Silvia Boroş and her daughter Adriana Țuțura from Uila, described the daily life of the Roma in the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, f. 194.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem

village since the interwar period. Silvia Boroș, born in 1944, remembered the stories told by her grandparents about the way the Roma were working for the Saxons during the interwar period, and about the well-known Roma musicians from Uila who went to play music in the nearby villages, but also very far from home (in Bucovina) in order to earn money and support their families. The interviewees recalled the good relations the Roma had with the Saxons in Uila and how the Saxons influenced and taught Roma families to maintain a household. She also made reference to the moments they worked together at the C.A.P. and the I.A.S. (State agricultural enterprise, Romanian: “Întreprindere Agricolă de Stat”) or at the food canteen in the village during the communist era. The interviewees remembered the housing situation of the Roma before WWII, during the communist period and after 1989. In this context, Silvia Boroș mentioned that after WWII, many Romanian and Hungarian families began to enter the village, as several families of Saxons left their households and went to Germany.

“Here, in the village, we grew up with the Saxons. And I frequented the German school in the village, four classes. And so, our parents worked, we had lands, we had money, animals, we were like the Saxons, we worked. At that time, there was no C.A.P. here in the village. Everyone had their own land and worked it, and had whatever it was needed in the house, agriculture was our trade! There were children who went to school and... but most of them remained at home. And that's how life passed! And after that, the Collective Farms

were implemented, and they took the cows from people and everything they had, they took everything! And we were left with nothing! [...] Here in the village, there were only two Romanian families! One was working with pigs and the other with sheep, they were shepherds! Only Gypsies and Saxons were living here. In the entire village! We got along very well with the Saxons.”<sup>47</sup>

“The women worked, long ago, so, my mother's grandparents were working for the Saxons, you know? They went and worked their lands and received... just as it happened elsewhere, the Saxons were giving them food, because they did not have money at that time. And so, they grew up together and of course that Gypsies copied some Saxon customs. And they learned a lot. I think the Saxons have as well learned from the Gypsies, you know? How to have fun and things, and the Gypsies in their turn learned from them other things, good things I suppose. [...] At first, Gypsies lived on the edge of the village. So, it was the bottom of the village and the other side, down this street where we're living now, and then... in time. So, at first, I think, they, the Saxons, didn't know the Gypsies. Only after they saw that they [the Roma] were hardworking people, they accepted them. In time...”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Silvia Boroș, interview by the author and Ionela Bogdan, audio file, no. 1442, OHIA, Uila, Mureș County, September 6, 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Adriana Țuțura, interview by the author and Ionela Bogdan, audio file, no. 1442, OHIA, Uila, Mureș County, September 6, 2015.



Regarding the religion of the Roma living in Uila, Silvia Boroș remembered that both her grandparents and her parents were evangelical like the Saxon population in the village. The interviewee recalled that in the past the Roma did not attend the church regularly, but after the massive departure of the Saxons they “left the Evangelical Church to the Gypsies.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, after 1989 the evangelical priest from the town of Reghin held a sermon twice a month in the Evangelical Church in Uila. Nowadays, the Roma in Uila are either Orthodox or Protestant, but, as Silvia Boroș stated, those who were natives to the village are evangelical and continue to baptize their children in this denomination.

As for the Saxons’ massive departure before the fall of the communist regime or after 1989 and their houses in Uila, the interviewees recalled that some of the Saxons left their homes to be taken care of by some villagers with the desire to come back. If they left during the communist era, the state took their properties and indemnified them accordingly. In the case of the house the interviewees owned and lived in, they recalled it was a Saxon house where Silvia Boroș took care of an old Saxon lady, who at death donated the property to them. The interviewee told us about the very interesting and “out of the ordinary” history of this woman. Her family owned a store in Uila during the interwar period and therefore this was a wealthy and respected Saxon family in the village. At some point, their daughter fell in love with a Roma man who also lived in Uila and who worked as a butcher in the town of Reghin. The interviewee remembered that

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<sup>49</sup> Silvia Boroș, interview...

such things were very rare within the Saxon community and therefore the woman's family vehemently opposed the relationship, so she decided to move with her boyfriend at the edge of the village. Meanwhile, at the end of WWII, her family left the village and went to Germany, therefore she stayed with her husband, who at some point got very sick and died. Silvia Boroș remembered how the Saxon lady, being alone in her house, took care of her children while she was at work. Thus, they became friends and the Saxon lady offered Mrs. Boroș a room in her house and then decided to donate her propriety to them.

### **Roma in former Saxon cities during the 1970s and 1980s**

During Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime (1965-1989), a policy of placing Roma in nationalized Saxon and Jewish houses was implemented in Transylvania. In the city of Reghin, Mureș county, former Saxon and Jewish houses situated in the center of the city were nationalized (before Nicolae Ceausescu) and put under the administration of I.G.R. (Management Office of the District, Romanian: Întreprinderea de Gospodărie Raională). Housing distribution was held both by the plants/factories the people were working at, and by the Dwelling Office at the City Hall. Usually, in order to receive a house, at least one of the family members had to be employed – yet there were some exceptions: according to Law no. 5 of March 28, 1973 “those who had harsh living conditions, especially those with many children”<sup>50</sup> were to be given priority to receive houses. Thus,

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<sup>50</sup> Law No. 5 of March 28, 1973 published in Official Gazette no. 47/ March 31, 1973.

many Roma families received houses in the center of the city for a monthly rent to pay at the Management Office of the District.

According to Alexandru Bugnariu, mayor of the town of Reghin between 1967-1977, the old Saxon buildings had “a problem” because until the late 1970s they were not connected to running water or to the sewage system. Under these circumstances, many Romanian and Hungarian families refused to live there, especially since the construction of apartment buildings was under development. Therefore, most workers requested and received apartments in the newly finished apartment blocks, and lived in the nationalized houses just for a limited period of time. On the other hand, the former mayor of the town remembered that at some point an acute need of doctors at the hospital in Reghin was registered, especially due to the fact that most doctors were attracted to the hospital in the county center, Târgu Mureș, that was rapidly developing in the mid-1970s. Under these circumstances, the local authorities in Reghin had to do some favors and offer very good living conditions to the newly employed medical staff: 3-4-room apartments on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the newly-built blocks. Thus, several Roma families were offered the chance to move into some of the centrally positioned former Saxon houses. The mayor recalled that these houses were offered to the Roma since the Town Hall was planning to build some apartment buildings at some point, exclusively for the Roma living in Reghin at the time. When asked whether it was a state policy or an opportunity the Roma benefited from in order to live in the center of the city, Alexandru Bugnariu stated that the Roma benefited of many “policies of civilization,” but regarding the Roma who got to live in the old former Saxon houses, he

considered that it was an opportunity, given the refusal of other locals to live there. In addition, Alexandru Bugnariu recalled that Roma families wanted and required to live in houses rather than in apartment buildings.

“Jews and Saxons left behind old houses. We [the Town Hall] moved some Gypsies in that area because some buildings were old; in addition, they were not picky like other Romanian and Hungarian citizens, who were quite demanding. We made this move. I remember we [the local authorities] had a plan: to build some solid buildings in terms of structure for the Gypsies and then relocate them there. [...] What truly bothered me: other citizens hardly tolerated their Gypsies neighbors. I remember some situations in which I was criticized by some Romanian and Hungarian citizens, who accused me when I provided places to live for Roma families: ‘Why did you bring Gypsies here with us?’”<sup>51</sup>

“An integration policy was applied. All the time, but we were not able to integrate them. For example, if a Gypsy family lived together with Romanians or Hungarians, they did not really get attached to each other. Probably there was repulsion on both sides or... [...] The policy of integration had always been applied: at school, at work or at home. But their integration was quite difficult. [...] We [the local

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<sup>51</sup> Alexandru Bugnariu, interview by the author, audio file, no. 1410, OHIA, Reghin, Mureș County, August 19, 2015.

authorities] did not carry out a policy of isolation regarding them, but they isolated themselves by their way of life or their behavior and so on.”<sup>52</sup>

With respect to housing allocation by the Dwelling Office of the City Hall, the interviewee remembered that during the 1970s the law provided a minimum area of living space per person. Article 6 of Law no. 5 of March 28, 1973 stipulated that the “locative norm for the dwellings in the state dwelling fund should be 10 square meters living area for each person. In the case of smaller rooms, they will be assigned a minimum of 8 square meters per person.”<sup>53</sup> Regarding the Roma families in Reghin, Alexandru Bugnariu remembered that most of them were quite numerous: 10 to 12 persons per family – this situation had led to the distribution of older, but more spacious dwellings in the city center. Moreover, according to Alexandru Bugnariu’s testimony, people who had their identity documents issued by Reghin local authorities had the right to request housing, a workplace or social assistance: “The Town Hall managed a social care canteen here in the center, next to the Saxon Church. Somewhere there was a nice canteen, and that canteen cooked food for people in need and we [the local authorities] incurred all the expenses for the poor people in the locality.”<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, people who were employed in local factories needed to apply for housing at the dwelling

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>53</sup> Law no.5 of March 28, 1973 on the “Management of the housing and the regulation of relations between owners and tenants”, published in Official Gazette no. 47/ March 31, 1973.

<sup>54</sup> Alexandru Bugnariu, interview...

office of each company. As the interviewee explained, the Town Hall allocated the available dwellings to local plants, while a part of them were still distributed by the Town Hall to Militia and Army employees, and others were kept for “exceptional situations such as: retirees, pensioners due to sickness or for some Gypsies who would have otherwise slept on the streets.”<sup>55</sup> Here, Alexandru Bugnariu recalled the opening of a new department at the sport shoe factory in Reghin, which doubled its capacity within a year. The interviewee remembered his discussion with the Minister of Light Industry and decided to hire 800 unskilled people: “All the Gypsies must go to work there! Everyone who demanded a place to work must go at IPM Sport!”<sup>56</sup> This was the moment when a large number of Roma in Reghin were hired, and then, within a few years, they attended courses and got qualified in light industry.

Ileana Crăiescu lives close to the Reghin center where she received rooms in a nationalized house during the communist regime. During the interview, she remembered the manner in which, at first, she and her husband received a house on Apalina Street, a street inhabited almost entirely by Roma during the communist regime, but where, even though she was a Roma, she could not adapt: she claimed she came from a hardworking and wealthy family in Moldova (in Târgu Frumos) and the Roma in Apalina neighborhood were not used to work and to keeping a clean household, so she decided to request a new place to live. Therefore, she went to the Town Hall again and received a nationalized house that they had to share with some Romanian

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*

and Hungarian families. Ileana Crăiescu recalled the amenities she had at the new house: they had no running water and the toilet was improvised in the courtyard. As for drinking water, they had a fountain in the yard, while water for doing the laundry was carried from the Mureș River or collected in large cans placed in the yard when it rained. At some point, as she remembered, the apartment buildings were finished and her Romanian and Hungarian neighbors moved out and were replaced by Roma families with whom she did not get along and frequently came in conflict.

“Hello, have a seat, lady! What problem do you have?” I answered: ‘I have a request.’ Oh, but I didn’t have neither an identity card issued in Reghin nor a residence permit, nothing, because I was from Târgu Frumos [...] I had an identity card but from the city where I was born. ‘Please, I am also a poor woman, I sincerely tell you’, I was twenty years old, no, I was nineteen, and he said: ‘Do you need a home?’, ‘Yes! At least a hut, where to have shelter’. He looked at me and, I tell you, my dear, he said: ‘Come back next week and we’ll give you a small home! OK? Do you have children?’ And I, Lord forgive me, I told him lies, ‘Yes, I have children too!’, I didn’t mention how many: ‘I have children!’ [...] I got back home and told my husband: ‘Victor, take your sister’s identity card and go to receive a house!’ He went with his sister, I don’t know what tricks he did, but he received a dwelling. A small room! It was on Apalina Street. Yes, on

Apalina Street, not in the village of Apalina. It was closer to the city. So, we received that home. [...] I didn't like it there. Gypsies were living there. On Apalina Street. [...] So I went again... I went to the City Hall [Romanian: 'la Sfat'], until thank God, I received this home [very close to the city center]. He said: 'Do you want to live in an apartment building?' 'No, I need a house, please!' And he gave me this house. And here again, all the same things: I had animals, everything [...] Then, they [the neighbors] moved in blocks because of him [her husband], the neighbors went. Because he was making noise, he listened to music too loud and the neighbors moved in apartments when the blocks were built. Who came here? Gypsies!"<sup>57</sup>

In the former Saxon city of Sighișoara, Ion Tambac, the Roma representative at the City Hall, recalled the manner in which his family lived in the city center in the 1970s. He remembered that his parents were employed in factories at the time, so they applied and received a place to live quite easily, a house provided by the factory. In order to rent a house, one had to meet two criteria: to have a stable job and a large family in care. After several Saxon families moved to Germany and their houses were nationalized, many Roma families received dwellings in the center of Sighișoara: "Luckily, most Gypsies lived in the city center, in the historic center... especially in large houses [...] we

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<sup>57</sup> Ileana Crăiescu, interview by the author, audio file, no. 1444, OHIA, Reghin, Mureș County, September 7, 2015.



copied their habits [...] there were no differences made in terms of nationality, religion or age.”<sup>58</sup>

However, the interviewee added that many dwellings were damaged by tenants, due to the fact that most of them did not want to repair them as long as the houses were state propriety and they, as tenants, paid the monthly rent at the City Hall. Concerning this matter, the above mentioned law in 1973 on the “management of the housing and the regulation of relations between owners and tenants” stated that the residents and those who lived with them would lose the dwelling area and they would be evicted if they caused significant damage to the building, its installations and accessories, as well as any other annexes related to it. Therefore, the rental contracts stipulated that “tenants were required to pay rent, as well as to maintain and repair the inside building elements and installations, but also part of the common use of the building and its annexes. In addition, the tenants were required to repair and replace building elements and damaged facilities, results of their inappropriate use, inside and outside the building.”<sup>59</sup>

After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, many buildings in the city center of Sighișoara were returned to their former owners. The families who were left without housing were given new dwellings, most often at the periphery of the city – Ion Tambac recalled that the Roma were placed in isolated settlements, fact which has contributed and still contributes, in his

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<sup>58</sup> Tambac Ion, interview by the author, audio file, no. 1425, OHIA, Sighișoara, Mureș County, September 7, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Law No.5 of March 28, 1973 on the “Management of the housing and the regulation of relations between owners and tenants”, Article No.48, published in Official Gazette no. 47/ March 31, 1973.

view, to “an ethnic segregation of the Roma in the Sighișoara area.”<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusions

To conclude, most Roma got to live in Saxon houses during the post-war years either immediately after the end of WWII (when they randomly occupied empty Saxon houses following the withdrawal of the German Army or after being rented out houses by local communist authorities) or during the 1970s and 1980s along with the legal mass departure of the Saxon population from Transylvania to Germany. Concerning the first moment, during the 1940s and 1950s, we can mention both the opportunity the Roma and other ethnic groups benefited had to occupy the empty houses but, at the same time, the fact that local authorities orchestrated mass relocations of Roma families into Saxon houses in different villages in order to make them live with the remaining Saxon families. In the following years, the 1970s and 1980s, the local authorities or factories implemented local policies and created opportunities for the Roma. In this regard, the examples in the former Saxon cities of Reghin and Sighișoara show the procedures by which nationalized Saxon dwellings were rented out to Roma and other ethnic groups.

This article emphasized the manner in which the Roma lived in the center during the communist regime and not exclusively at the periphery, as one might be inclined to believe. Roma testimonies showed how much they enjoyed to live in the center, having at that time the opportunity to interact with the *Others*, Romanians, Hungarians or Saxons, to learn their language

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<sup>60</sup> Tambac Ion, interview...

and very frequently to even borrow or copy their customs and habits. Most of the interviewees lived in Saxon houses for a period of time and therefore the testimonies are relevant to this study of a chapter regarding “the place” of the Roma communities in Transylvania – with long-term implications in terms of language, traditions, customs and religion.

LAVINIA S. STAN

**GETTING BACK FROM HELL. STORIES OF ROMA  
REPATRIATION FROM TRANSNISTRIA<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** This article deals with a specific segment of the Romanian Roma Holocaust, that is, the narratives about the journey back from Transnistria. These particular fragments of biography are essential for a thorough understanding of the Roma deportation, which is fundamental for our democratic and multicultural society. It complicates, sophisticates and complements the perception, remembering and the ways of commemorating WW II. While in most works about the Romanian Roma Holocaust there is no much space given to the analysis of what happened after leaving deportation areas, in oral history narratives, people tend to give detailed descriptions on their way back home. This highlights the difference between history as written by historians and the past lived by people who give different importance and assign complex meanings to events and phenomena. The articles tries to answer questions such as: is there a place for the Roma refugee in the historical master narrative, especially given the nowadays refugee crisis Europe is facing? How are the time and the space represented in the return narratives? What is the meaning assigned by the interviewees to the traumatic experience of deportation? What is the role of (these) particular oral history narratives in the understanding of the past? Is there a gender relevant issue in narrating the past? In order to answer these questions, I approach several issues such as the time-space interplay in the narratives, how gendered stories about the return are, the performative aspects of the stories, and

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how this particular life-story fragment is transmitted within Roma families to next generations.

**Keywords:** Roma, Holocaust, oral history, Transnistria, narratives, performative

In nowadays Europe, speaking about refugees comes easy to anybody, sophisticated specialists or internet trolls, everywhere: in academic debates, media, kitchen discussions or administration offices. The refugee crisis occulted an older preoccupation of European public, the Eastern European Roma migration to Western Europe. It generated fierce debates and radical measures, such as the expulsion of the Romanian Roma from France during Nicolas Sarkozy's mandate. While the distinction between the refugees and the Roma migrants seems to be clear in 2016, going back in time, half century ago, because of the Holocaust, Roma survivors were among the countless refugees and displaced people<sup>2</sup> that World War II produced. During the war, Roma people from Romania were diachronically

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<sup>2</sup> There is a complex conceptual framework with juridical applicability when dealing with different types of people movements. According to the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is a person who "as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." See *The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, Geneva in 1951 (with a Protocol relating to the status of Refugees signed in 1967, which extended the time and geographical limits of the initial definition of the refugee), available online at <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>, accessed 15.07.2016.

*deportees* by their own government, *internally displaced persons*, as Transnistria was under Romanian administration and, during the last stage of the war, *refugees* on their way back to Romania. And yet, nobody would think about the Roma as refugees, as they are stereotypically perceived being anyway on the move.

The “happy ending” of World War II allegedly generated a new world order, which is highly contested by authors such as Daniel Gerard Cohen who considers that the dramatic situation of displaced persons launched Europe in a new type of dis-order.<sup>3</sup> However, there is no much attention given to this particular time segment when the people were wandering around a Europe in ruins. One can get a better perspective on the time and space of post war Europe from the memoirs of people who moved across these territories,<sup>4</sup> which provide an image consistent with Cohen’s perspective. The image of a devastated Europe at the end of the WWII is present in oral history interviews, as people talk about the impact of war on their daily lives. Roma people’s testimonies have a multiple relevance in this context: it democratizes and personalizes history by co-involving the Roma in history-making, it provides additional sources for historical interpretation of the post-war Europe, and it offers to next generations information about the unspeakable experience of the Holocaust, as “to tell a story is to take arms against the threat of time, to resist time, or to harness time. The telling of a story preserves the teller from

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Gerard Cohen, *In War's Wake. Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the memoirs of the Romanian-French Jewish psychologist, Serge Moscovici who remembers his travel from Romania to France, in a devastated landscape at the end of the war. *Cronica anilor risipiți. Povestire autobiografică*, Polirom, Iași, 1999.

oblivion; the story builds the identity of the teller and the legacy which she or he leaves for the future.”<sup>5</sup> Moreover, ‘it can break down barriers between teachers and students, between generations, between educational institutions and the world outside; and in the writing of history ... it can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place.’<sup>6</sup>

In this chapter, I focus on a specific segment of the Romanian Roma Holocaust, that is the journey back from the deportation area. These particular fragments of biography are essential for a thorough understanding of the Roma deportation, which is fundamental for our democratic and multicultural society. It complicates, sophisticates and complements the perception, remembering and the ways of commemorating WW II. While in most works about the Romanian Roma Holocaust<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “The Time of My Life. Functions of Time in Oral History,” in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories. Form and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 59.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> There are several excellent works about Romanian Roma Holocaust, including some welcomed collections of documents, such as Viorel Achim, Constantin Iordachi (eds.), *România și Transnistria: Problema Holocaustului, Curtea Veche*, Bucharest, 2004; Viorel Achim, *Documente privind deportarea Țiganilor în Transnistria (vol. I-II)*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2004; *Études tsiganes. Des territoires d’extermination à l’Est de l’Europe (1941-1944)*, nos. 56-57, 2015/2016, p. 68-130; Radu Ioanid, Michelle Kelso, Luminița Mihai Cioabă (eds.), *Tragedia romilor deportați în Transnistria (1942-1945)*, Polirom, Iași, 2009; Vladimir Solonari, *Purificarea națiunii. Dislocări forțate de populație și epurări etnice în România lui Ion Antonescu, 1940-1944*, Polirom, Iași, 2015; Lucian Năstasă, Andrea Varga (eds.), *Minorități etnoculturale. Mărturii documentare. Țiganii din România (1919-1944)*, Centrul de resurse pentru diversitate etnoculturală, Cluj, 2001. Last but not least, worth mentioning is the initiative of father Patrick Desbois who included the experiences of the

there is no much space given to the analysis of what happened after leaving deportation areas, in oral history narratives, people tend to give detailed descriptions on their way back home. This highlights the difference between history as written by historians and the past lived by people who give different importance and assign complex meanings to events and phenomena.

The research is based on life-stories interviews with Roma survivors recorded by the Oral History Institute team between 2014 and 2016, as part of a larger project called *The Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma People in Romania*. Moreover, I have used some published interviews recorded by scholars who focused on the Holocaust, as well as archival documents, issued by the Romanian authorities in order to provide the temporal and special context of the stories. In doing this analysis, I am asking questions such as how are the time and the space represented in the return narratives? What is the meaning assigned by the interviewees to the traumatic experience of deportation? What is the role of (these) particular oral history narratives in the understanding of the past? Is there a gender relevant issue in narrating the past? In order to answer these questions, I approach several issues such as the time-space interplay in the narratives, how gendered stories about the return are, the performative aspects of the stories, and how this particular life-story fragment is transmitted within Roma families to next generations.

Following the deportation of the Roma, in July and September 1942, a general tendency among the Roma to flee Transnistria is visible in archival documents. Viorel Achim claims

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Romanian Roma deported to Transnistria in the discussion on the Holocaust by bullets (<http://www.yahadinunum.org/patrick-desbois/>).



that “already in the fall of 1943, the unauthorised desertion of the deportation places had become a mass phenomenon. Those caught trying to flee were sent back to Transnistria.”<sup>8</sup> The authorities tried unsuccessfully to limit this phenomenon by creating camps in which to put all fugitives.<sup>9</sup> However, most of the Roma who survived the deportation returned to Romania in March-April 1944 as the Romanian and German armies withdrew under the offensive of the Soviets,<sup>10</sup> while few came back later, with the Russian army.

Some of the Roma deportees were successful in getting back to their home places very soon after the deportation, as it is the case of three women from the village of Maciova, Severin county. On December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1942 they were already back home, after being deported in the autumn (most probably, in September) 1942. According to the interrogatory carried out by local authorities, there was no one guarding them in Transnistria. A few days before Christmas, a large group of 60 people left, as “a captain who distributed food, has told us to flee if we can and not to starve to death.”<sup>11</sup> The three women reached Odessa by December 24<sup>th</sup> and got on a train to Romania. No one asked them for a ticket until Tighina. It was only there that a train inspector asked for a ticket, “we answered we don’t have ticket, and that we

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<sup>8</sup> Viorel Achim, *Documente...*, p. XXXVII.

<sup>9</sup> Which in fact did not happen with the exception of the Golta camp created in the autumn of 1943, where 475 Roma were interred. Final report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, Bucharest, 2004, p. 280-281, available online at <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20080725-romania-commission-roma-deportation-romanian.pdf>, accessed 23.08.2016.

<sup>10</sup> Viorel Achim, *Documente...*, p. XXXVII.

<sup>11</sup> Lucian Năstasă, Andrea Varga (eds.), *Minoritățietnoculturale...*, doc. no. 314, p. 534.

were going home from Transnistria, as there were dying. He allowed us to stay in train.” They changed the train in Bucharest and finally in Cărvan train station on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1942.<sup>12</sup> The train journey took about eight days from the deportation site to the home village, and it provides an approximate time reference for the travel between Transnistria and Romania, in a relatively peaceful context as the area was controlled by the Romanian army at that time. One needs to bear this in mind as most of the oral history testimonies about the return from Transnistria expand or collapse time, in a war space that needed to be crossed for the return home.

A report made by the Gendarmes Inspectorate of Balta, in December 9<sup>th</sup> 1943, mentioned there was “an unstoppable tendency of the Roma to flee Transnistria.”<sup>13</sup> The document emphasizes the creativity of the Roma in finding solutions to flee, some of which are consistent with oral history interviews. Thus, the Roma spread rumours that they were evacuated by the Germans in order to get across Romanian authorities. They got legal transportation documents by bribing the administration. A person would go to the Bucharest Office of the Transnistria Government requesting a two way transportation authorization to and from Transnistria. Then, other people were added on this authorization, imitating the same hand writing or using the same typing machine. The Roma would take advantage of the evacuation of agricultural tools, cattle and benefit of the negligence and corruption of the control agents. Knowing that the

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. no. 314, p. 534. According to a note in the same document, in February, they were sent back to Transnistria.

<sup>13</sup> Viorel Achim, *Documente...*, doc. no. 553, p. 392.

patrols were active especially during the days, they would walk towards the Dnieper river during the nights in smaller or bigger groups. Last but not least, the Roma were lacking identity documents which meant they could assume different identities when caught by patrols.<sup>14</sup> To illustrate the ingenious fleeing strategies, a document of October 1943 states that some Gypsies were hiding in the body of a plane which was transported in a train car to Bucharest, under a soldier's supervision. The Roma on the train had asked the Romanian soldiers to allow them to hide in the train, so they got to Romania where they were arrested.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, there were legal returns, as archival documents mention. On February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1943 a document issued by the Gendarmerie stated that there were 1261 persons who got positive answers on their request for repatriation, while 7298 got negative answers.<sup>16</sup> One problem was that on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1943 any repatriation from Transnistria was suspended until May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1943, in order to prevent the spreading of the typhus epidemic.<sup>17</sup> Most of the approved repatriations were given to the Roma whose family members were in the Romanian army or to those who were mistakenly deported, and were granted upon individual investigations. Consistent with this approach, Gypsy soldiers who were looking for their families were granted free travels for this purpose, starting January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1943.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> Lucian Năstasă, Andrea Varga (eds.), *Minorități etnoculturale...*, doc. no. 338, p. 563-566.

<sup>16</sup> Viorel Achim, *Documente...*, vol. II, doc. no. 306, p. 107-108.

<sup>17</sup> Lucian Năstasă, Andrea Varga (eds.), *Minorități etnoculturale...*, doc. no. 318, p. 539.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. no. 317, p. 538.

Oral history interviews are consistent with this go-and-back return journey, with people fleeing, getting caught, fleeing again, conquering little by little the space between deportation area and home. The geography and the distances are relative, while time dilates or contracts, according to the meaning the story tellers assign to a particular phase of their travel. By telling us their story, the interviewees provide a new special and temporal proximity which brings the listener/reader in the unmediated proximity of the deportees' experience.<sup>19</sup>

All these sequences contract in a single meaningful return narrative as "the impact of trauma makes the processes of remembering and forgetting more complex than in other situations, and survivors are therefore particularly likely to express themselves in stories containing elements which are imaginary, fragmented or disjointed, and loaded with symbolism."<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Alessandro Portelli considers that "time is a continuum; placing an event in time requires the continuum be broken down and made discrete. As is the case with other continua, this process happens at two levels: that of linear succession and that of vertical simultaneity."<sup>21</sup> When people

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<sup>19</sup> Doru Radosav speaks about how oral history generates seven types of different proximities in "Trecutul de lângă noi. Istoria orală și comunitățile locale: o istorie de proximitate," in *Anuarul de Istorie Orală* (further AIO), no. XIII, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, p. 8-10.

<sup>20</sup> Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydesdorff, Graham Dawson (eds.), *Trauma: Life Stories of Survivors*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick and London, 2004, p. 1. For a overview of the discussion on the limits of representations in writing about the Holocaust and the role of memory and history, see Doru Radosav, "Holocaustul între istorie și memorie. Câteva considerații," in AIO, no. VII, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, p. 5-21.

<sup>21</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "The Time of My Life...", p. 69.

make references to season successions rather than strict chronology, it is a way of keeping up the time continuum. Petre Pandelică says:

When it the time of the war, after the weeding was done, we came, they sent us back. The Russians sent us back. They told us: “Who sent you, Antonescu, you have to go back!” Then we were happy, because we knew we were coming back, in our country. [Q: And how did you come back?] Little by train, little by walking, we walked for weeks until it was clear the trains were broken and out of order.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, when Sebastian Nederic describes his return to

Romania, he starts with what seems to be the general withdrawal in March-April 1944. Then, it becomes obvious that he speaks about a long term returning event, which started sometime in the spring of 1943 and lasted until the spring of the next year. One of the strengths of oral history resides precisely in the fact that it conveys meaning rather than events,<sup>23</sup> and in Sebastian Nederic’s return narrative this aspect is reflected in the melting of different events into a single return story:

Colonels came, people from the prefecture came,  
it was spring, and they did this census. And out of

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<sup>22</sup> Petre Pandelică, interview by Săcărea Diana, audio file no. 1047, Oral History Institute Archives, Cluj-Napoca (further OHIA), Florești, Cluj county, 27.01.2015.

<sup>23</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “What makes oral history different,” in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories. Form and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 50.

14.000, there were only 4000 left. These 4000, we left that spring, and a very large group was organised, everybody gathered and left... left for Romania. We walked until the train station where we came from, and there we got on trains. We were caught eventually by Ukrainian citizens of German origin, there where whole villages with such civilians. They had weapons, they let them have weapons. And they, when left there, in evacuation, repatriation, they left too, some of their own. Because they were Germans and the Russians were shooting them. And they left along. And I want to say that ... while we were withdrawing, when we left there in ... these citizens caught us and brought us back in different ... they took us to the Prefecture. At the Prefecture, we were separated three-four-five families in one collective farm. [...] That spring, they sent us to the collective farms. We stayed there a while, and in the autumn we left again. In massive groups again, we gathered all around, as we were separated in different farms, word got out, and everybody left. This group, we reached the town of Mostovoi [Mostove, in Ukraine]. Still in Ukraine. And there they caught us again and sent us back. And the Gendarmes sent us to collective farms again. And they brought us to Sufabanta [SukhaBalka, in Ukraine] where there was a huge collective farm, a Russian firm and they put us there. They put us, again, in stables. And we were 70-80 families in a stable and 70-80 in a family, in a stable. And all of us were lying on straws on the floor. We built some fire places to cook food there and used turns to do so. Some food! And we stayed there until

spring. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, the front came back and a Romanian engineer came and said: “Guys, tomorrow morning, at seven, when I come, I don't want to find you here anymore. It's repatriation to Romania! All the Romanians.... I got the newspaper. All Romanians have to go!”<sup>24</sup>

While, in general, time references are blurred under seasonal cyclical repetition, Sebastian Nederic retains the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1944<sup>25</sup> as a turning point in their fate, as “a Romanian engineer” told them “all Romanians are going back!” Sebastian Nederic appeals to the implicit recognition by the interviewer (and the larger public) of his identity as Romanian in the institutional context of the war. Another level of identification is that of collective belonging to a larger group which repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to flee Transnistria. The movement of large groups requires a degree of organisation and indeed, throughout Mr. Nederic's testimony, the escape was organised with the limited resources the Roma had. What is lacking in this fragment is the personal level of interpreting events, as Alessandro Portelli defines three such levels: institutional, collective and personal, with their correspondent space referents: the nation/the world, the town/the neighbourhood/the workspace and the home.<sup>26</sup> The next

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<sup>24</sup> Sebastian Nederic, interview by author, audio file no. 1419 OHIA, Fața Cremenii, Mehedinți county, 20.08.2015.

<sup>25</sup> According to Viorel Achim, it was the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1944 when Mihai Antonescu gave order to evacuate “all Romanian citizens of any origin.” See Viorel Achim, “La deportation de Rroms en Transnistrie, les donnees principals,” in *Etudes Tsiganes, Des territoires d'extermination a L'Est de l'Europe (1941-1944)*, no. 56-57, 2015/2016, p. 79.

<sup>26</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “Time of my life...”, p. 70.

stage of Sebastian Nederic's travel brings into the story "his personal involvement in the two other levels"<sup>27</sup>:

There were 70 souls that I led from Tighina, from Tiraspol. I led them to Galați. [...] I was fourteen at that time. I brought them with me, as people didn't know how to get by not to get lost. When they got lost, I used to say: 'We have to follow the telegraph lines. The telegraph is bringing us to villages, to the roads, and we have to make it.' And people then said: 'This boy knows very well!' I was fourteen, but I had a very good memory. And I led them to the border. Here we crossed the border and got on a train, which was not allowed to leave, as it was with the army. It [the train] waited for orders, because the front was moving. And ... it was waiting its orders. In the end we started walking. I said: 'We have to walk on the rails in order not get lost.' And we followed the railway. I knew and I got in the some railway communication stations and would call different train stations and they would tell me: 'Hey, boy, there is a train that leaves, but you have to hurry. Come quickly. Which communication station are you in? To the no....' And I gave him the number. I asked: 'How many kilometres are until there? Three hundred, but you should hurry, because the train is waiting for you.' And I was begging them, the signalmen, our people, Romanians. [...] And they would hold the trains and we changed three trains. Where the train stopped, we continued marching.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>28</sup> Sebastian Nederic, interview...



While in the male narratives, the key to a successful return were information and action, women suggest that submission allowed them to get home safely. Sebastian Nederic portrays the heroic figure of him as teenager, leading a group of Roma men, women and children back from Tiraspol to Galați. His key to success was some practical knowledge he described in another part of the interview: as a child he used to play next to a communication station of the railway and the signalman taught him how to use the wires in order to make telephone calls. This knowledge proved to be essential in his survival on the way back to Romania. The dialogue with the rail signalman remembered by Sebastian Nederic probably never took place as such. However, it might mean that he succeeded to get the necessary information in order to find the running trains.

Sebastian Nederic's story continued as his group walked on a bridge across Dnieper river, in spite of the fact that it was guarded by Germans who would not allow them to pass. A Romanian soldier, "good man," walked them all to the other side of the river.<sup>29</sup> His story offers a heroic perspective on a very traumatic event of his life, in which as male leader, with little (male) assistance, he was able to overcome the tragedy he experienced.

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<sup>29</sup> The Final report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania speak about the help Romanian soldiers, Romanian rail workers, or Germans provided, Bucharest, 2004, p. 282, available online at <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20080725-romania-commission-roma-deportation-romanian.pdf>, accessed 23.08.2016. However, oral testimonies mention Germans or Russian as being abusive, while other speak about the help Roma got from the Russians.

Yes. To leave Russia. So we left, naked...as we were. There were no shoes, no socks, no clothing. Can you imagine, it was the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, and there was snow. We did as the others did. Many stayed behind. Some girls stayed behind: they were naked, in the straws, in the stable, with only a blouse made by themselves...out of cement bag paper, out of cardboard [...] They stayed back, naked, because they couldn't, they didn't have anything to wear. So we started marching and [we were on the road] for one month till Tiraspol, with repatriation, in 1944. We came there to ... And they wouldn't let us cross the border. The Germans were on the bridge and they wouldn't let us cross. We were suspect and they didn't want to leave civilians to cross it. They were the ones who were guarding the border and they didn't let us. Still, some of our Romanians came, with the army withdrawal, a very good, very good man. [...] He was a soldier who lined us up and crossed a lot of people to the other side of the bridge. [...] In a line he took us across the bridge. So, we crossed the bridge to Tighina and we came from there. Some were walking, some were hanging on trains. Until Galati.<sup>30</sup>

In most return stories told by male survivors, the helpers on the way back are male, while in female recollections of the past, there are both men and women who help them getting back. Anuța Brânzan's story is very coherent, in spite of the fact that she was around 10 at the time to return. She and two of her sisters were the only survivors in the family and they travelled alone to

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<sup>30</sup> Sebastian Nederic, interview...

get back home, on different phases, starting March 1944 when they left for Odessa. They were caught and stayed in an unspecified place for two more months, and they had to get through a Russian army occupied zone, populated with soldiers in a battlefield landscape. Her story has an invisible, vague, unnamed collective figure, in an authority positioning, generically called “they.” “They” act, decide and the little girls are submissive and any movement they take is successive to “their” agency, as shown in the fragment below:

We left one evening, they let us know that there was a train [leaving]. The train was just a platform, and on the platform they were loading tanks, and we would be sitting next to them. And we left. When we were about to leave a bombing started, so we lay down on the ground as the tanks were firing and the earth was shaking. After the bombing, they brought us to the station, put us next those tanks, they brought us, I don’t know up to where, up to where they were able to go, and they left us there. And then we started walking. We would meet convoys of German and Romanian prisoners.<sup>31</sup> When we got to Bessarabia, there was a river we weren’t able to cross, the bridge was blown up and the Russian army crossed it by boats. We asked them to bring us to the other side, and they told us to be patient, once the entire army got there, they would bring us too. And that’s what they did: they took us

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<sup>31</sup> Anuța Androneta Brânzan’s return occurred after the Transnistria was controlled by the Soviet armies, which beginning of April 1944 have already reached Dniester river, according to the detailed analysis by David M. Glantz, *Red Storm over the Balkans. The Failed Soviet Invasion of Romania. Spring 1944*, University Press of Kansas, 2007.

there in boats. And while in the boats, us, as children, we got close to the margins and my sister, Marga, fell in the water. And she almost drowned, but some Russian ladies jumped and pulled her out the water. Then we walked, we walked, we slept in trenches, in graveyards, where the night would catch us. We were starving, but at some point, we run into a Russian army and with them there were some Romanians, some of our military divisions fighting along the Russians.<sup>32</sup> And we have told them, in Romanian, that we came from Transnistria [...] And we told them, in Romanian, that we came from Transnistria, we told them we were Gypsies, that my parents died and we are three sisters, I told them my life. And a soldier told me: “Go there, there is a Russian general who speaks Romanian, tell him your story and ask him to bring you in the country. And then you come back to tell me” I did as he said, I found the general, he received me very well as I was a child: “Well, he said, I am not allowed to send you back in the country as nothing has been established yet. But tell me where you are, where can I find you if i want to look for you? I can only help you with this: send you to a children’s home.” [...] Then I went back to the soldier and told him. He told us there was a railway nearby, and there were some workers from Galați working there. When they go home, you stick to them and they will think you are with them. And we did so, and we got to Galați.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Most probably, there could have been soldiers from Tudor Vladimirescu division, made out Romanian prisoners who chose to fight against the Axis armies, before 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1944.

<sup>33</sup> Anuța Androneta Brânzan, interview, Bucharest, June 2001, in Lucian Năstasă, Andrea Varga (eds.), *Minorități etnoculturale...*, p. 621.

For the three sisters on the run, as children, all adults around were in an authority position, therefore this passive dimension of Anuța Brânzan's story is easily understandable. This attitude could also explain why they left Transnistria after it was occupied by the Soviet army, although most of the Roma started to leave with the Romanian and German army's withdrawal. The image of the three little girls (probably there were other people too), sitting on platform rail cars, next to huge tanks is relevant for the crushing disproportion of forces in World War II. Crossing the river, most probably Dnieper at Tighina, to Bessarabia, the little girls faced another danger: one of the sisters fell in the water, but she was saved by "some Russian ladies." That means that the interviewee and their sisters got to the border while it was under Russian control. This is one of the few situations in which female characters help people on the run. Her story continues with the travel from Galați to Roșiori, their destination, where all three of them succeeded to get.

Another lady's testimony is slightly different, as her way back to Romania was with her mother and a Roma man who helped them along:

Then my father left. He was with us more than one year. Then we were left alone. I don't know the power my mother had. She attached to this Dumitru. And this Dumitru gypsy would take us with him everywhere, in order for us not to be killed. "Please, Dumitre, don't leave me, as I am with the girls and the old man left and I don't know" [said the mother]. And when we left, we left almost twenty times, one hundred times we left, and they sent us back. But finally, when we got there [to the border], there were no border patrols, no

nothing, and he made a big raft made out of bulrush. And they would cross us two by two. When we saw we were crossing, oh my! Lord! We would make the sign of a cross, and kiss the dirtiest ground where we got. [In Bessarabia] we were given clothes, shaved our heads, put in bathtubs. [...] On Dumitru's padded coat the lies would stay like this. They burnt our clothes. They cooked chickens, eggs, food, cheese [...] Then we left for Brăila, bald, dressed like that, with what we got from there. Then on the ferryboat to get to Tulcea [...] then we walked until Luncavița where nea Dobre was from, father's brother, with Bănuleasa... She took us in, gave us clothes and she brought us to this hill, do you see it? There! It was on the Easter day, you know? And she took us over the hill and we reached Macin. [...] Women from the village welcomed us with cakes, entire cakes, meat, chicken legs, they filled our bags [...].<sup>34</sup>

Upon their arrival back in Romania, Maria Andrei recalled as being welcomed by her family members and the rest of the community. Women stress more the fact that children and the elders are the most vulnerable human beings and the most exposed to risks. Strong emotions such as fear or sensations such as thirst are present as well in many female narratives. Florica Gongoroiu provides such an example:

When we run from that village fearing the war, we would walk day and night through the wood, we

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<sup>34</sup> Gherghina Maria Andrei, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1571, OHIA, Măcin, Tulcea county, 09.08.2016.

couldn't get out to the roads, as the Germans would have killed us. There were people carrying their children on their backs, some who fell would die, some who were old and could not walk anymore, died, they collapsed on the way. There was nothing you could do, you couldn't stay by their side, you couldn't stay with them, there. And we were walking. We were thirsty to death – never mind hunger – but thirst was killing you, and we drunk out of horses shoes imprints in the dirt, where they had walked and it had been raining, water stayed on the ground, where the horse stepped. We would take it in our hand, with mud, blood, it did not matter. When the Russians came with the war, they found us very poor, they gave us some houses and told us to stay there until they left. "When we leave, we will take you with us in the carriages, with the horses, in the cars, we will not leave you here." And they took us. Where do you think they brought us? Somewhere near Galati, where we stayed for several months. And then they put us in a camp. They gave us treatment, disinfected us, gave us baths, food, clothes, they dressed all of us, and everyone who had ID, no matter where they had it from, was sent to their place."<sup>35</sup>

While recording oral history interviews with Roma

Holocaust survivors, I was many times overwhelmed both by the content of the narratives and the form it embodied. Thus, researchers need to make an effort to understand not only what is said, but how it is said, as "oral history narrative is first and

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<sup>35</sup> Florica Gongoroiu, interview, Bucharest, June 2001, in Lucian Năstasă, Andrea Varga (eds.), *Minorități etnoculturale...*, p. 642-643.

foremost a performance of words, a way of speaking separated from ordinary speech, a speech act performed for an audience in a particular context.”<sup>36</sup> Linda Shopes considers that

The telling of stories is inherently performative: an interviewee puts on a show, creates an identity, within the context of talking to the interviewer. The stories told, often deeply expressive of history’s burdens, lay claim on us for retelling so that history may be known, shared, perhaps overcome. Performance, operating in the liminal space between then and now, you and me, what happened and what someone said happened, is an especially powerful means of doing so.<sup>37</sup>

Della Pollock considers the oral history as performative in the encounter between the interviewee and the interviewer

As oral history is a process of making history in dialogue, it is performative. It is co-creative, co-embodied, specially framed, contextually and intersubjectively contingent, sensuous, vital, artful in its achievement of narrative form, meaning and ethics, and insistent on doing through saying: on investing the present and future with the past, re-marking history with previously excluded subjectivities, and challenging the conventional frameworks of historical knowledge with other ways of knowing. [...] The oral history interviews lifts

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<sup>36</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, 2010, p. 130.

<sup>37</sup> Della Pollock (ed.), *Remembering: Oral History Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. p. xi.



what might otherwise dissolve into the ephemera of everyday life onto the plane of ongoing exchange and meaning-making, infusing it with the power of shifting relationship among tellers and listeners (and listeners who become tellers to tellers who become listeners) near and far.<sup>38</sup>

Many return stories can be read within the performative analytical framework. These dense fragments of life-stories are populated by diverse categories of people: helping, supporting, supervising, punishing, abusing, abandoning. People populating the stories are both dead and alive and are visible in the foreground of a changing landscape, in which battlefield dramatically alternate with (apparently) peaceful households, water with land etc. In order to exemplify this aspect, I choose the story<sup>39</sup> told by Ioan Marin who is a particularly skilled narrator, who verbally (re)creates a meaningful past for his audience, in the shape of dramatic genre.<sup>40</sup> He starts at a rather regular pace of telling the story:

Near the end, when we withdrew, from Alexandrudar, each of us went where we could, as we weren't hold by the army anymore, and the army was

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, much of the performative dimension of the interview and the peculiarities of oracy are lost in the double transformation of the record, by transcription and translation in English. However, both the transcriber and translator tried to grasp as much as possible from the vivacity of oral informal discourse.

<sup>40</sup> For a detailed discussion about the social meaning of specific genres in oral history see Elisabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts. The Social Construction of Oral History*, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

withdrawing as well, and they couldn't guard or supervise us anymore. They would leave and they would leave us in disarray and they yelled at us: 'Find your own way! How you can! If you are able to save yourselves, great, if not, God be with you!' [...] I withdrew with my cousin in a locality, I think it was Suhabalta. These localities, in that region, were at big distance; 40-45 km seemed very close, but there were almost 60-70-80 km between the two places.[...] It was around the beginning of August, we started, it seems to me, at the end of July, beginning of August 1944,<sup>41</sup> to get back towards the country. My cousin and I we weren't able to walk anymore. We stopped at a Russian, I think he was a Roma, an ironsmith, an old man who had a daughter whose husband had died. A little girl, in her twenties. And my cousin fell in love with that girl.[...] <sup>42</sup>

The return story is dense, multi-layered and sequential. It has some key elements for contextualizing: the time(s) and the place(s) of the action. At institutional level, we can see the lack of organization both of army withdrawal and deportees return, positive representation of the powerless army, whose lack of involvement meant their freedom of movement. It is a story of salvation, carried out by two young men, bound by strong family and friendship ties, with the help of some people they met on their way back and, sometimes, with God's supernatural intervention.

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<sup>41</sup> Most probably the escape of Ioan Marin had several stages, and it started earlier than July-August 1944, as at that time the area was already under the control of the Soviet Army.

<sup>42</sup> Ioan Marin, interview, Bucharest, June 2001, in Lucian Năstasă, Andrea Varga (eds.), *Minorități etniculturale...*, p. 601.

What is interesting is that in this dramatic experience they went through, there is space for a love story which happens in the background of the stage, on which the two survivors perform. Among those who help them on the way, there is the old man, the girl's father, who might have been, according to Ioan Marin, a Gypsy. In the last part of the story, after getting to Romania, there is another man who helps them and who might have been a Roma as well. After spending, as the interviewee says, several weeks with that family, most probably he knew if they were Roma. The two boys found a deeper connection with helpers with whom they shared identity, relying on a stronger empathy for Roma's fate. Another aspect that is underlined here is that there are no exterior, physical traits that could make the interviewee certain that the helpers were Roma.

Ioan Marin's return story is visual, it reconstructs before the interviewer's/reader's/listener's eyes a complex and meaningful image that is usually lacking in the history of Roma deportations. While telling his story, Ioan Marin goes back, starts again, as the spontaneity of oracy allows, and gives more details about how they got to this old man's house and what happened next:

It was only the two of us that left. The others left later, organized, with the army withdrawal. We left with the help of some Romanian soldiers who had become friends with my cousin. How? We were on the way to Berezovka. My cousin went to them I don't know why, to get some bread, to see if he could get something, anyway, and: 'Hey, you! Where are you from?' asked some soldiers. 'From Alexandria!' 'From

Alexandria? I am from that area too!’ says one of them. ‘Where from?’ And so on, until they asked him what was the matter with him. Meanwhile, the soldiers told him they were heading to Romania. ‘When will you leave? Take us with you!’ said my cousin. ‘How can we take you, cause you are civilians?’ But they find some military equipment and they took us along. But they only got to a village, I don’t remember which one, but it was at about 40 km from Berezovka. They were only able to get us there. ‘What shall we do now? Let’s go back to Berezovka.’ We thought we could reach the border by walking. So we started walking. They [the soldiers], poor souls, gave us some bread, two breads or three if I am not mistaken, some canned meat, dry cheese. Well, we had that military equipment and we were afraid that the army, the gendarmes, the army police would catch us. So we were walking only during the night. During the day we would hide, and walked during the night. So, exhausted, we got to Berezovka. And here, we stopped at that girl’s. It was a decent household, not rich, average. [...] My cousin spoke to them as he had learned Russian and he could understand them perfectly. We stayed there for three weekds and first, I started shivering, as the malaria had reactivated, but from malaria, I got epidemic typhus. They got in touch with the local nurse, doctor, I don’t know what he was, he was responsible with giving injections, anyway. He told them: ‘Try to isolate him as he has typhus!’ And, indeed, nausea, headaches, no appetite, fever, shivering...anyway, I was exhausted. And what this little guy tells them: ‘If he is lucky and I find some injections, he will survive, if not, pay attention not to get sick as well. Isolate him, do not go to him, don’t go inside.’ My cousin started to cry to

this girl: ‘How can I let him die, he didn’t die for almost two years, almost a year and a half and now, when we are about to arrive...at least step foot on country ground.’ [...] But God wanted me after a few weeks to get better. I was hearing the military withdrawing, and he [the cousin] tells me: ‘What are we going we do? Please get stronger, don’t leave, me ‘cause I’ll die next to you, I’m not leaving you behind!’” I was crying as well, my tears kept coming, and I told him: ‘Save yourself, leave me!’ But he was saying: ‘How can I let you die now, how? No, I’ll die along! You have to get stronger, you have to have faith we’ll get back to our country.’ God wanted for that the Russian nurse to come back and he gave me two injections, not one after the other, but within a twelve hours difference. Imagine that he stayed with me, when I got over 41 [Celsius degrees] fever, he got me out, put me in wet sheet and threw cold water on me. Then I started too: ‘Please, leave me alone, don’t torment me anymore, let me die, just make sure to bury me well, this is all I want!’ And my cousin started screaming: ‘Don’t leave me alone, don’t leave me alone! We have to get home!’ And so, one more week passed and hesaid ‘it’s over now, we crossed the valley! We chased away death!’ And slowly, I got better and better. My appetite came back...Today like this, tomorrow like this, I started to walk on my own feet. In the evenings my cousin would bring me out. [...]’<sup>43</sup>

The chronological succession is clearer now, albeit there is no reference to time segments, as obviously the two young men

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 613,

left Alexandrudar before the army withdrawal. There is no reference to the girl's family as being Roma, but there are other people that help: the Romanian soldier with whom they shared the place of origin, and the male nurse, responsible with the saving injections. According to official documents, the typhus epidemic was between February and May 1943, so either Ioan Marin was living in Berezokva at that time, in an area affected by the epidemic, or he was a later isolated case. The reproduction of a dialogue within the dialogue with the interviewer and the present tense of the verbs employed accentuates the shared dramatic experience.

The third stage of the story is the travel from Berezovka to the Romanian border:

Then we thought to go further. Some Ukrainians had to bring some bags of wheat, corn, I don't remember what it was, to Tiraspol and then to Tighina. And they were saying: 'Well, we will bring you there, but what are you going to do with him?' 'Well, we make a bed'. And they made a bed out of some Russian clothes, a winter coat, and I don't know what, and after one day and one night we got to Tiraspol. [...] There were many people running towards the border, to avoid the Russians who were coming, to avoid the planes bombing them. [...] My cousin had some *mărci*, those Russian money from Transnistria. We managed to get into a cattle wagon, he spoke with the railway worker to bring us to Tighina. We somehow got there, always fearing the bombings. The main crossing point to Romania was in Tighina. It was guarded by police, gendarmes. How to get across now? How, how? We were hiding between trains, in

order not to be seen, waiting for a possibility to get to the other side. And a patrol found us and asked what was the matter with us. [...] ‘Come with me!’[...] And where do you think they bring us? To the main control post. ‘What is the matter with you, guys?’ asks a lieutenant. ‘You ugly people, what are we going to do with you?’ ‘Well, sir, you see, we are Gypsies, we have been deported by Antonescu’s order and since we saw that the armies was withdrawing, we were afraid not to be killed, not to be caught by the Russians and shot. We wanted to go back to our country and there was no way. So we were waiting for a possibility.’ ‘No way- he said – here’s what’s going to happen: you go to the medical post, for disinfection, and there you tell them about your situation!’ And he gave us a soldier [to bring us there]. There, at last, they checked us. [...] First, they weighted us. I had only 38 or 39 kilograms. They cut our hair, gave us clothes. God, I’m thinking now, if someone had been there to film us, to see, it would have been the pity of the world. Then, we got some transportation, a kind of wagons with various loads. And this way, after two days and two nights we got in the country. What do you think we did when we got off the train? [Q: Kissed the ground?!] Absolutely! I had never-ever kissed the ground. I made the sign of the cross, I took some dirt in my hand and kissed the ground. [...] We were on our ground, we were in our country, we could manage speaking our language, we could ask for something.<sup>44</sup>

The stories told are moreover performative in themselves. The uniqueness of the return stories resides, beside other, in the

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 614.

dense narration of the events that occurred during the travel back home. Sometimes the details are so microscopic that the visual image is accompanied by an aural dimension lacking in most other sources. Petre Pandelică remembers how he was walking by a war zone:

There were a lot of bombings; it was the end of the world. And some gypsies made a fire in a train station, as they were cold [...] And, as I passed by, I saw how a bomb was thrown right in their midst. There were human body parts thrown even in the trees, it's better not to talk about it! [...] So, we came back. It was hard, we were hungry, but we were happy to come back to our country. Yes, we came back, there were these Germans too who were withdrawing from there, with their cars. They threw bread at us, sausages, on the road. They were good people, threw [food] at us. Even our Romanians, as we were with them. And we have travelled for one month, I don't know, until some trains started to run. There weren't any; those who came from the battlefield had cars or horses and carriages, but they wouldn't take you. There were some that took us for a while, but after that would tell us: "Get down!" And got down, and kept walking

According to his testimony, Petre Pandelica crossed Transnistria and Bessarabia with Romanian and German armies. Usually, these armies have positive recollections, with exceptions such as the story of Anuța Brânzan who remembered a context in which, while in the occupied zone by the Russians, some drunk German officers came and wanted to



shoot them, but some Roma musicians started to play and the Germans gave up killing them.<sup>45</sup> However, while in the description of their way to Transnistria, the authorities are not very visible, on the way back, there is a fluctuating perception on authority – depending on the position of the front.

The last phase of return stories usually opens with a recurrent element of the narrative is the way most, if not all, of the Roma survivors, refer to their country. There is a small detail in the definition which is not perfectly fitting the situation of the Roma: in spite of the persecutions they faced in Romania, their run for their life to what many of them called their home.<sup>46</sup> The emotional and passionate relation they have with the country that, in fact, deported them, is portrayed in a theatrical performative manner of kissing the ground, and worship God.<sup>47</sup> To give just one example, Sebastian Nederic says:

When we got to Galați, everyone stepped off the train, sat in a square and put me in the middle and told me: “You, boy, you brought so many souls. May God give you good health, peace and everything you want in this country, in this world.” And, eventually, people kissed the ground, got on one knee, and worshiped God for reaching Romania.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Anuța Brânzan, interview..., p. 620.

<sup>46</sup> About the meaning of the home in the migratory context, see the seminal work by Sarah Ahmed, "Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement," in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 2, issue 3, Sage, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> Kissing the ground is an emblematic gesture made by a literary figure, Ion, the Romanian peasant par excellence in the homonymous novel by Liviu Rebreanu.

<sup>48</sup> Sebastian Nederic, interview...

Then, most of the interviewees – explicitly asked or not – close their stories by recalling what happened in their home places. Petre Pandelica says that “there was nothing. We came in open field until we settled and when our old people started to work. We were able to buy some land, build a house, out of dirt bricks.”<sup>49</sup> Elisabeta Căldărar speaks more about people they found when getting back: “People were happy with us coming back. They were looking forward to give us [materials] to build our homes. To make ourselves a living. Our Romanians, [good] people. Because we were from here.”<sup>50</sup>

Instead of conclusions, I will draw upon the way return stories have reached successive generations in the same family. In some instances, the second and third generations were able to remember what the elders shared; in others they did not have any recollection about the deportations. Definitively more summative than the ones by the survivors, these second generation stories emphasise the missing people in families – those left behind (both on site and on road back). Ion Bratu said that

My father told me that when they came back they carried their children on their backs. Four, five year old children. Some froze to death on their backs, poor souls! They would leave them down, had nothing to bury them with, scratch the dirt [makes the gesture] as animals, and put some dirt on their faces. My father used to say... And when they moved forward, the dogs

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<sup>49</sup> Petre Pandelică, interview...

<sup>50</sup> Elisabeta Căldărar, interview by the author, Ionela Bogdan, audio/video file no. 1094, OHIA, Porumbacu de Jos, Sibiu county, 05.06.2015.

would take people's bones, children's bones. Very bad!  
And they got to Romania.<sup>51</sup>

Nani Cinaghir, the nephew who brought his grandfather for the interview, recalled that his grandmother used "to bring us around her as you are now" and she was recounting her experience in Transnistria. Members of the family who died on the way back home are still alive in the narrative:

At his [the brother's] request, he stayed there to... He stayed there because they couldn't carry him anymore. He had two older sisters and they took turns in carrying him. But his skin was breaking and the blood was flowing, as he was frozen. And then, he told them: 'Leave me here, just leave me here, next to a tree or wherever they left him [it was a wind mill]. Leave me here and save yourselves. If it will be all right there, you come and take me, but leave me some water.'<sup>52</sup>

Unfortunately, unlike these two examples, there is as little knowledge about the fate of the Roma in the WW II within both Roma - with the notable exception of those who experienced deportation - and non-Roma communities. The historical master narrative that populates history textbooks and collective memory includes only the oversimplified idea that Antonescu had deported the Roma to the Bug. This sentence is overloaded with

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<sup>51</sup> Bratu Ion, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1557, OHIA, Andrășești, Ialomița county, 02.08.2016.

<sup>52</sup> Nani Cianghir, interview by the author, audio file no. 1418, OHIA, Șimian, Mehedinți county, 19.08.2015.

significance, being used by Roma themselves, Roma haters, and Roma supporters. It sparks in situations involving the Roma such as in the online hate speech at the launching of our project on Oral History of the Roma People; when Roma "taint" the image of Romanians abroad, or even when speaking about the responsibility the Romanian state has towards its Roma citizens. Interestingly enough, both Roma and non-Roma communities share this limited information about the Holocaust which means, among other, that the diverse Roma communities and the non-Roma ones might be more similar than stereotypically considered until now. Roma refugee stories could thus provide a better understanding of what the people on the run experienced and of the responsibilities the state, institutions and the majority needs nowadays to take, in order to heal a traumatic past, preserve the present and safeguard the future.

## MISCELLANEOUS

ANDREEA IUSTINA TUZU

### ORGANIZAȚII POLITICE ALE EXILULUI ROMÂNESC POSTBELIC. STUDIU DE CAZ: CONSILIUL NAȚIONAL ROMÂN (1978-1989)<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on a political organization of the postwar Romanian exile, The Romanian National Council (1978-1989), presenting on the one hand, the context of its creation, the purpose and its actions and, on the other hand, the main criticisms against it. This approach is an attempt to recover some ways of organization and activities of exile, this political organization being little approached in Romanian historiography. Against this background, it is necessary to know this part of the history of exile, bringing to light the work of one of its organizations.

#### 1. Introducere

Studiul de față își propune să abordeze o organizație politică a exilului românesc postbelic, Consiliul Național Român (1978-1989), prezentând, pe de o parte, contextul înființării sale, scopul și acțiunile întreprinse, iar, pe de altă parte, criticile la adresa sa. Prezentul demers reprezintă o încercare de recuperare a unei părți din modul de organizare și de activitate ale exilului, acest organism politic fiind foarte puțin abordat în istoriografia

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română. Pe acest fond, se impune cunoașterea unui segment din istoria acestui exil, lucrarea aducând la lumină una dintre organizațiile sale, realizându-i o radiografie.

Sursele folosite pentru elaborarea studiului constau, în primul rând, într-o serie de documente inedite din fondul texte documentare al Arhivei Bibliotecii Române din Freiburg (Germania), a căror importanță este semnificativă pentru prezentarea organismului politic menționat. Este vorba despre comunicate ale Consiliului, statut, scrisoarea regelui Mihai adresată organizației cu ocazia acordării girului său, precum și corespondența dintre rege și primul președinte al Consiliului din momentul demisiei celui din urmă din această funcție, în speță Ioana Brătianu. Apoi, o resursă documentară importantă este reprezentată de presa Consiliului, *Lupta Românească* (devenită în 1984 *Lupta Română*) și *Azi spre Mâine*, care se regăsesc în format integral tot în Arhiva Bibliotecii Române din Freiburg și, doar în puține și disperate numere, în Arhiva Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc din București. De asemenea, au fost folosite și alte publicații ale exilului românesc în scopul de a surprinde cât mai bine modul în care a fost percepută această organizație în epocă. Pe lângă acestea, au fost folosite articole, interviuri, memorialistică și unele instrumente de lucru – dicționare, enciclopedii - care au abordat, după caz, exilul românesc, unele dintre personalitățile și organizațiile sale și, tangențial sau mai detaliat, dar incomplet, Consiliul Național Român.

Din punct de vedere metodologic, articolul este un demers de microistorie, analizând la „microscop” o organizație a exilului românesc postbelic. Astfel că cercetarea, bazată pe reducerea

scalei de observație a exilului anticomunist, nu constituie o generalizare a modului de organizare și de acțiune ale acestuia, însă, în anumite condiții, ar putea contribui la dezvăluirea unui context mai larg.<sup>2</sup> Prin urmare, radiografierea acestui organism politic este un mod de a reconstrui istoria unei epoci, îndeosebi istoria exilului românesc postbelic.

## **2. Consiliul Național Român: contextul înființării și modul de organizare**

Consiliul Național Român (C.N.R.) s-a constituit la data de 3 iunie 1978, la Paris. Ideea înființării acestui organism politic a aparținut unui grup de români, foști deținuți politici, printre care Nicolae Penescu,<sup>3</sup> Radu Câmpeanu<sup>4</sup> și Dinu Zamfirescu.<sup>5</sup> Aceștia

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<sup>2</sup> Din punct de vedere teoretic, lucrarea de față face apel la abordarea lui Giovanni Levi asupra microistoriei; vezi Giovanni Levi, „On microhistory,” în Peter Burke, *New perspectives on historical writing*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991, p. 93-113.

<sup>3</sup> Nicolae Penescu (1897-1984), avocat, a fost secretar general al P.N.Ț. și ministru de interne în al doilea guvern Sănătescu (4 noiembrie - 5 decembrie 1944). La 14 iulie 1947 a fost arestat, împreună cu alți lideri ai P.N.Ț. în timpul înscenării de la Tămădău. A fost închis între 1947-1956, după care i s-a fixat domiciliu obligatoriu. La 11 august 1959 a fost arestat din nou și condamnat la 10 ani de muncă silnică. A fost eliberat la 28 iulie 1964, în urma unui decret de grațiere. În anul 1968 i s-a permis să plece pentru un an în Franța în scopul întocmirii dosarului de pensie întrucât până să fie arestat prima dată a fost consilier juridic în cadrul unei societăți suedeze. Înainte de a pleca din România, între Nicolae Penescu și Securitate a existat o înțelegere în baza căreia acesta se angaja să transmită informații în legătură cu exilul românesc din Franța: „Nu s-a ținut de angajament și nici nu a mai revenit în țară.” Nicolae Penescu s-a stabilit la Paris. La 19 octombrie 1976, Securitatea i-a deschis dosar de urmărire informativă sub numele de cod „Trișorul” pentru „cunoașterea și contracararea oricăror acțiuni dușmănoase inițiate de Nicolae Penescu prin intermediul rudelor și legăturilor sale aflate pe teritoriul României.” Informații în conformitate cu datele cuprinse în volumul lui Mihai Pelin, *Opisul emigrației*

și-au expus inițiativa într-o declarație publică transmisă la 16 mai 1975, la distanță de 6 zile de la prezentarea demisiei de către Constantin Vișoianu, președintele Comitetului Național Român,<sup>6</sup> regelui Mihai. Discuțiile propriu-zise pe marginea fondării unei astfel de entități politice au început însă câteva luni mai târziu, în ianuarie 1976, când Consiliul Partidelor Național-Țărănesc, Național Liberal și Social Democrat din exil a lansat oficial apelul în vederea înființării unui Consiliu Național Român provizoriu. În acest sens, au fost invitate partide politice, instituții culturale,

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*politice. Destine în 1222 de fișe alcătuite pe baza dosarelor din arhivele Securității*, București, Editura Compania, 2002, p. 253-254.

Pentru mai multe detalii în legătură cu Nicolae Penescu, a se consulta și Dumitru Dobre, Iulia Huiu, Veronica Nanu (editori), *Personalități ale exilului românesc în arhivele Securității*, București, Editura Corint, 2007, p. 97-98; Aurel Sergiu Marinescu, *O contribuție la istoria exilului românesc*, vol. 5, București, Editura Vremea, 2005, p. 530-534.

<sup>4</sup> Radu Câmpeanu (1922-2016), avocat, a fost deținut politic în perioada 1953-1955, sub acuzație de activitate clandestină în favoarea P.N.L. A plecat legal din România în 1973, împreună cu fiul său, stabilindu-se la Paris, unde se afla și soția sa. În 1977, împreună cu Dinu Zamfirescu, a fondat Asociația Foștilor Deținuți Politici din România, iar între anii 1983-1990 a condus publicația exilului românesc postbelic, *Buletinul de Informații al Românilor din Exil (B.I.R.E.)*.

<sup>5</sup> Dinu Zamfirescu (n. 1929), avocat, fost deținut politic, a fost unul dintre liderii organizației de tineret și elevilor din cadrul P.N.L. din București. A plecat din România în 1975, stabilindu-se în Franța, unde a devenit profesor de drept la Academia Créteil. S-a implicat în viața exilului românesc, fiind corespondentul la Paris al postului de radio BBC, secția română, timp de 14 ani. A fost, totodată, membru în Biroul Ligii pentru Apărarea Drepturilor Omului din România, cu sediul la Paris.

<sup>6</sup> Comitetul Național Român a fost fondat în anul 1949, la New York, și a îndeplinit funcția de guvern al României în exil. Scopul său era acela de a: reprezenta națiunea română și de a-i apăra interesele până la momentul prăbușirii regimului comunist din țară; desfășura acțiuni care să ducă la restabilirea sistemului democratic din România; coordona activitatea românilor din afara granițelor țării în lupta lor anticomunistă.



asociații și personalități românești din exil care să-și aducă contribuția la concretizarea acestui demers. Au răspuns afirmativ Institutul Român de Cercetări – Biblioteca Română din Freiburg, o serie de asociații și personalități, precum și membri ai Mișcării Legionare, prin expresia sa politică Partidul „Totul pentru Țară.” Drept urmare, la 24 septembrie 1976, la Paris, invocându-se „legitimitatea adusă de Partidul Național Țărănesc, Partidul Național Liberal, Partidul Social Democrat Independent și Partidul Totul pentru Țară care au exprimat voința națională în România și în exil,”<sup>7</sup> s-a decis crearea unui for reprezentativ al românilor. Atunci au început practic demersurile clare pentru constituirea acestuia, acțiuni care s-au desfășurat de-a lungul a 2 ani. Astfel că, la 3 iunie 1978, a fost înființat C.N.R. provizoriu, dată la care a difuzat și un comunicat oficial, care detalia asupra etapelor care au avut loc pentru înființarea lui, precum și obiectivele sale. Potrivit acestuia, membrii Consiliului recunoșteau „fără rezerve, permanența principiilor democratice fundamentale exprimate în Carta Națiunilor Unite și în Carta Drepturilor Omului” și afirmau că activitatea sa era „incompatibilă cu participarea celor care, în mod direct sau indirect, nu acceptă ca principii fundamentale de organizare pluralismul democratic, libertatea de exprimare a ideilor și credințelor religioase.”<sup>8</sup> Consiliul era deschis tuturor persoanelor

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<sup>7</sup> Arhiva Bibliotecii Române din Freiburg (în continuare se va cita A.B.R.F.), fond Texte Documentare/1712, Radu Câmpeanu, „Scrisori diferite și un apel – Comunicatul Consiliului Național Român provizoriu” transmis de la Paris la data de 3 iunie 1978, f. nenumerotată.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

care voiau „să-și pună gândul și fapta în slujba instaurării libertății românești, în afara oricărui criteriu de partid sau de grup.”<sup>9</sup>

În ceea ce privește obiectivele C.N.R. provizoriu, continuate ulterior de C.N.R., membrii acestui organism politic au considerat că scopul primordial era acela de a afirma „cu glas tare, ceea ce românii nu pot exprima în țară” și anume: dreptul de a-și alege sistemul de organizare politică, administrativă și socială a statului; dreptul de alegere liberă a conducătorilor și reprezentanților săi; dreptul suveran și inalienabil asupra tuturor teritoriilor românești. Mai mult, erau stipulate drept „îndatoriri esențiale” ale membrilor Consiliului următoarele: apărarea patrimoniului spiritual al românismului; promovarea realizărilor și valorilor românești; elaborarea unor puncte de vedere cu privire la politica internă și externă a României; dezvăluirea, în fața opiniei internaționale, a arbitrarului administrativ și a represiunii polițienești a regimului comunist, îndreptate împotriva cetățenilor săi; colaborarea cu reprezentanții celorlalte națiuni captive din Europa centrală și de est în vederea unor acțiuni comune; stabilirea unor legături cu guvernele occidentale și cu organizațiile internaționale; precum și reprezentarea exilului și rezolvarea problemelor acestuia.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A.B.R.F., fond Texte Documentare/1712, Radu Câmpeanu, „Scrisori diferite și un apel – Apelul Biroului de Coordonare al Consiliului Național Român provizoriu” din 8 iulie 1978, f. nenumerotată.

<sup>10</sup> A.B.R.F., fond Texte Documentare/1712, Radu Câmpeanu, „Scrisori diferite și un apel – Comunicatul Consiliului Național Român provizoriu” transmis de la Paris la data de 3 iunie 1978, f. nenumerotată. Pasaje din cuprinsul acestui comunicat au fost preluate și de Florin Manolescu, *Enciclopedia exilului literar românesc 1945-1989. Scriitori, reviste, instituții, organizații*, București, Editura Compania, 2003, p. 183-184.

La data de 8 iulie 1978, Biroul de coordonare al C.N.R. provizoriu a lansat un apel în cadrul exilului prin intermediul căruia invita românii să i se alăture, susținând că importanța și eficiența acestui organism politic deriva din lupta comună a tuturor:

Noi credem că uniți vom exprima cu mai multă putere cuvântul țării asupra făcându-l înțeleas aici și auzit acolo. Avem profunda convingere că prezența noastră activă în orice împrejurare care interesează poporul român îi va întări convingerea că nu se găsește singur în fața minciunii și puterii care-l oprimă. Cunoscându-vă sentimentele românești, considerăm prezența dumneavoastră în cadrul C.N.R. ca o întărire a posibilităților lui de acțiune și de izbândă.<sup>11</sup>

La 3 iunie 1978, C.N.R. provizoriu se înființase fără aprobarea și participarea regelui Mihai. Acesta a fost consultat 2 ani mai târziu, în contextul primelor alegeri din cadrul noului organism politic, ce au avut loc la data de 31 mai, respectiv 7 iunie 1980. Înainte de alegeri i s-a solicitat regelui, care a acceptat, să primească, la 28 martie 1980, o delegație a partidelor care

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<sup>11</sup> A.B.R.F., fond Texte Documentare/1712, Radu Câmpeanu, „Scrisori diferite și un apel – Apelul Biroului de Coordonare al Consiliului Național Român provizoriu” din 8 iulie 1978, f. nenumerotată. „Apelul” a fost semnat de un număr de 20 de personalități ale exilului românesc, acestea fiind: Radu Câmpeanu, Horațiu Comănicu, L. Constantinescu, Cornel Crișan, D. Ienciu, Petre Indrieș, Nicolae Penescu, Claudiu Petruc, Dinu Zamfirescu, Alexandru Bratu, D.M. Dumitru, A. Marinescu, Dumitru Moldovan, G. Popescu Botoșani, Arhimandrit Ușeriu, Grigore Dumitrescu, Constantin Mareș, C. Nagacevski, Emil Ghilezan și L. Gatterburg.

puseseră bazele Consiliului. Atunci când s-a hotărât componența delegației, aceasta era alcătuită din 4 persoane: Nicolae Penescu, Radu Câmpeanu, Horațiu Comănicu și dr. Vasile Andrei, însă la momentul întâlnirii cu regele, la reședința sa din Versoix, cel din urmă nu s-a mai prezentat. Ceilalți trei i-au prezentat regelui planurile de activitate ale C.N.R. provizoriu și i-au spus că imediat după alegeri i se va trimite lista cu rezultatele votului pentru Biroul Executiv Central, cel care coordona întreaga activitate a Consiliului, dintre membrii căruia regele urma să numească președintele acestui organism politic al exilului.

Primele alegeri au avut loc la Casa Poloneză din Paris, la 31 mai 1980. Votul a fost exprimat la nivelul secțiilor deja constituite, și nu prin delegații. Această procedură a provocat nemulțumirea unora dintre membrii Consiliului de la acea vreme, Cicerone Ionițoiu, membru al secției din Franța, catalogând acest moment drept unul prin care s-a încercat „măsluirea” primelor alegeri. Conform celor consemnate de acesta, la ultima ședință a Consiliului de dinainte de alegeri, Radu Câmpeanu, însoțit de Dinu Zamfirescu, le-au prezentat celorlalți membri 16 delegații pe care susțineau că le aveau de la români din Grecia în scopul de a-i reprezenta în ziua alegerilor. Cei prezenți s-au împotrivit. Răspunsul lor a fost acela ca românii din Grecia să pună bazele unei secții a C.N.R., în cadrul căreia să organizeze alegeri al căror rezultat să fie transmis către biroul central.<sup>12</sup> Totuși, după cum afirmă Cicerone Ionițoiu, în ziua alegerilor, în cadrul secției din Franța a Consiliului, Radu Câmpeanu, împreună cu 5 membri ai secției din RFG și anume Radu Roșeanu, Constantin Mareș,

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<sup>12</sup> Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Memorii. Drama României văzută din exil*, vol. 2, ediție îngrijită de Cosmin Budeancă, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2011, p. 44.

Marius Roșca, Șerban Budișteanu și Mircea Constantinescu, a insistat ca aceștia să voteze la secția din Franța. Ceilalți membri n-au fost de acord, justificând prin faptul că fusese suficient timp pentru ca cei din RFG să-și trimită prin poștă votul către secția de care aparțineau. Potrivit mărturiei lui Cicerone Ionițoiu, neacceptarea acestei situații, l-a determinat pe Radu Câmpeanu să afirme: „Noi nu participăm la aceste alegeri în care membrilor nu li se dă voie să voteze.”<sup>13</sup> Astfel că s-a retras din sala în care aveau loc alegerile, însoțit fiind de Dinu Zamfirescu, Doru Novacovici, Dan Cernovodeanu, Florin Boițeanu, Dan Damian, Constantin Mareș, Radu Roșeanu, Marius Roșca, Șerban Budișteanu și Mircea Constantinescu.

Revenind la alegeri, desfășurate la data de 31 mai, respectiv 7 iunie 1980, acestea au avut loc în vederea constituirii Biroului Executiv Central al Consiliului, precum și a birourilor executive ale secțiilor existente la acel moment. Așa cum aminteam mai sus, lista componenței Biroului Executiv Central a fost trimisă regelui Mihai. Astfel că dintre cei 15 membri<sup>14</sup> aleși de Adunarea Generală prin secțiile regionale, regele a desemnat-o

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>14</sup> În ceea ce privește componența Biroului Central Executiv al C.N.R. decisă în urma alegerilor din 1980, din acesta au făcut parte: Nicolae Penescu (81), Dumitru Găzdaru (76), Horațiu Comănicu (75), Vasile Andrei (74), Augustin Alexandru Bidian (72), Nicolae Guguianu (66), Vasile Boldeanu (63), Arhimandrit Ușeriu (63), Emil Ghilezan (62), Ion Miloe (61), Petre Vălimăreanu (58), Alexandru Bratu (57), Ioana Brătianu (54), Claudiu Petruc (54) și Cicerone Ionițoiu (52). De menționat este faptul că în dreptul numelui fiecăruia a fost consemnat numărul voturilor primite.

Pentru mai multe detalii în acest sens, a se consulta Cicerone Ionițoiu, *op.cit.*, p. 46-47.

președinte pe Ioana Brătianu,<sup>15</sup> printr-o scrisoare adresată Consiliului. De exemplu, numirea sa în această poziție a fost catalogată de D.C. Amzăr drept o „soluție solomonică.”<sup>16</sup> De reținut în acest context este faptul că în conformitate cu rezultatul votului, Ioana Brătianu obținuse un număr de 54 de voturi, cel mai mult având Nicolae Penescu, anume 81 de voturi, însă desemnarea ca președinte al Biroului Executiv Central și al C.N.R. se stabilise deja să fie făcută de rege. De menționat în acest context este faptul că decizia ca președintele Consiliului să fie numit de rege nu a fost luată la momentul înființării C.N.R., în 1978, ci s-a revenit asupra ei mai târziu, mai ales din considerente legate de legitimitatea C.N.R.<sup>17</sup>. Inițial, s-a dorit alegerea sa prin vot și nu printr-o numire.

Revenind la scrisoarea adresată de rege Consiliului, pe lângă transmiterea numelui persoanei alese în funcția de președinte, în conținutul său, acesta și-a exprimat și propriile viziuni asupra priorităților pe care ar fi trebuit să le aibă în atenție membrii C.N.R., acestea fiind următoarele: a) întărirea solidarității membrilor Biroului Central Executiv și integrarea în cadrul Consiliului, prin cooptări și afiliații, a celui mai mare

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<sup>15</sup> Ioana Brătianu (1929-2009), fiica lui Gheorghe Brătianu, a plecat din România în martie 1944, la vârsta de 15 ani, împreună cu sora sa, Maria, și cu fratele geamăn, Ion. Aceștia au fost trimiși de părinți în grija guvernantei lor în Elveția. A urmat studiile în Elveția, la Fribourg și Zürich, și, mai târziu, în Franța, la Paris. A devenit jurnalistă. S-a implicat activ în organizarea și activitățile exilului românesc postbelic. A revenit în țară în luna ianuarie 1990, unde s-a implicat în reînființarea PNL. A decedat la Paris, fiind înmormântată la mausoleul Brătienilor de la Florica.

<sup>16</sup> Dumitru Cristian Amzăr, *Jurnal berlinez*, ediție îngrijită de Dora Mezdrea, Dinu D. Amzăr, București, Editura România Press, 2005, p. 584.

<sup>17</sup> Nicolae Guguianu, „Apel,” în *Lupta Românească*, anul I, nr. 3, decembrie 1981, p. 3.

număr de români și al asociațiilor exilului; b) elaborarea unui program de acțiune pentru situația prezentă și viitoare a României, atât din punct de vedere social, economic, cultural, juridic, cât și al politicii interne și externe; c) redobândirea suveranității și a integrității teritoriale a României Mari, printr-o „voință neclintită” a celor care se vor alătura Consiliului în „serviciul sfânt al liberării Patriei.”<sup>18</sup> În încheiere, regele își manifesta susținerea sa pentru C.N.R., subliniind, în mod deosebit, necesitatea restabilirii unei atmosfere de liniște și înțelegere și a existenței unei concepții de profundă îndatorire și răspundere din partea membrilor acestui organism politic, prin integrarea în cadrul Consiliului a unui număr cât mai mare de români.<sup>19</sup>

În cursul anului 1981, regele Mihai și-a retras sprijinul oferit C.N.R. La data de 20 mai 1981, Ioana Brătianu, printr-o scrisoare, i-a prezentat regelui demisia sa din funcția de președinte al Consiliului, pe care și-a motivat-o astfel:

Ambițiile personale și spiritul sectar nu numai că nu au permis realizarea acestor obiective – și nici restabilirea atmosferei de împăciuire și liniște – dar au stârnit ostilitatea celei mai mari părți a exilului. Deși vreme de luni de zile am făcut tot ceea ce mi-a stat în putință pentru a îndrepta starea de lucruri descrisă mai sus, nu mi-am putut atinge scopul din pricina opoziției sistematice și a procedelor

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<sup>18</sup> „Scrisoarea M.S. Regelui Mihai adresată Consiliului Național Român – 30 iunie 1980, Versoix,” în *Lupta Românească*, anul I, nr. 1, februarie 1981, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> A.B.R.F., fond Texte Documentare/2987-2090, Ioana Brătianu – documentul nr. 2089: „Scrisoare către regele Mihai privind C.N.R., 20 mai 1981,” f. nenumărată.

obstrucționiste cu care au fost întâmpinate toate eforturile mele.

A primit răspunsul regelui în câteva zile, la 25 mai 1981, care-i transmitea că-i înțelegea decizia, argumentând că el însuși nu mai era de acord cu activitatea întreprinsă de C.N.R., subliniind că membrii săi „s-au îndepărtat de țelurile lor fundamentale inițiale, producând în exilul nostru o mare dezamăgire și nemulțumiri crescânde, și că toate eforturile ce le-ați făcut cu multă abnegație și energie, pentru înlăturarea cauzelor acelor neajunsuri, n-au izbutit să schimbe și îndrepte condițiile acestei stări.”<sup>20</sup> Retragerea sprijinului regal, precum și demisia Ioanei Brătianu n-au rămas fără reacție din partea Consiliului. De ambele gesturi, C.N.R. s-a arătat dezamăgit. Despre demisia Ioanei Brătianu, de pildă, C.N.R. a consemnat următoarele: „(...) ne-a dezamăgit felul nu tocmai justificat cum s-a despărțit de C.N.R. Să sperăm totuși că într-un mediu mai puțin dur va fi mai constantă.”<sup>21</sup>

Schimbând registrul, după alegerile din 1980, C.N.R. provizoriu și-a schimbat denumirea în C.N.R. și și-a elaborat un statut propriu, la 21 noiembrie 1981. Potrivit acestui regulament intern, Consiliul, considerat de fondatorii săi ca „a doua etapă în existența politică a exilului românesc,”<sup>22</sup> era gândit să existe „până în momentul în care poporul român își va putea exprima

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<sup>20</sup> A.B.R.F., Fond Texte documentare/2087-2090, „Răspunsul Regelui Mihai către I. Brătianu la 25 mai 1981,” f. nenumerotată.

<sup>21</sup> „Solidaritatea «high-life»,” în *Azi spre Mâine*, anul I, nr. 3, noiembrie 1981, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Mihai Fotin Enescu, „O nouă fază în politica exilului românesc,” în *Azi spre Mâine*, anul I, nr. 3, noiembrie 1981, p. 1.



voința sa în mod liber, neconstrânsă de nici o forță dinlăuntrul său sau din afara țării și își va alege în mod democratic forma de guvernământ.”<sup>23</sup> C.N.R. era deschis tuturor persoanelor care doreau să contribuie la lupta dusă împotriva comunismului din România în scopul instaurării unui regim democratic. Nu erau acceptați acei indivizi despre care se știa sau se bănuia că au avut în țară sarcini de răspundere sau de propagandă date de partidul comunist sau care în afara granițelor României se aflau în slujba autorităților de la București.<sup>24</sup> Mai mult, se atrăgea atenția asupra faptului că C.N.R. depășea criteriul de partid, în sensul că nu urmărea să facă politica vreunui dintre partidele care i-au pus bazele, membrii Consiliului proveniți din aceste partide nereprezentându-le în acest cadru interesele: „Toți din C.N.R. suntem uniți de o ideologie care primează față de toate celelalte: ideologia libertății, a României și a Europei!”<sup>25</sup>

O atenție deosebită era acordată colaborării cu asociații și organizații ale exilului românesc, lansând și în cuprinsul Statutului un apel către acestea, arătând că unitatea și solidaritatea românilor din afara granițelor țării putea fi realizată prin crearea unui front comun, colaborare care n-ar fi afectat identitatea proprie a nici uneia dintre respectivele entități care ar fi aderat la C.N.R. În plus, era avută în vedere înființarea unui Comitet de coordonare, alcătuit din reprezentanți ai C.N.R. și ai asociațiilor și organizațiilor exilului, care să hotărască în cazul unor acțiuni comune.

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<sup>23</sup> A.B.R.F., fond Texte Documentare/2908-2918, documentul nr. 2911, „Consiliul Național Român – Statut,” f. nenumerotată.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> Mihai Fotin Enescu, „De la inerție la mișcare,” în *Azi spre Mâine*, anul I, nr. 1, septembrie 1981, p. 1.

Ținând cont de faptul că românii erau răspândiți în diferite țări și continente, C.N.R. a propus o structură descentralizată. Acest lucru presupunea existența unor secții regionale, cu birouri executive regionale, precum și a unui birou executiv central, care să asigure o direcție comună de acțiune la nivelul Consiliului. Astfel că au fost înființate 4 secții regionale: Europa Centrală și de Nord,<sup>26</sup> Europa de Vest,<sup>27</sup> Europa de Sud,<sup>28</sup> America.<sup>29</sup> Explicația

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<sup>26</sup> Secția Europa Centrală și de Nord (RFG, Austria, Olanda, Danemarca, Țările Scandinave - sediul la Freiburg, RFG), așa cum a fost aleasă la început, a fost alcătuită din: Augustin Alexandru Bidian (președinte); Paul Morcov (secretar-casier); Dumitru Cristian Amzăr, Mihai Fotin Enescu și Sava Gârleanu (membri).

<sup>27</sup> Secția Europa de Vest a fost alcătuită din Franța, Marea Britanie, Spania, Portugalia, Belgia și Elveția, cu sediul la Paris, unde se afla Biroul Executiv Central al C.N.R. Componenta inițială a acestei secții a fost următoarea: președinte – Ion Miloe; secretar – Nicolae Guguianu; membri – Paul Barbăneagră, Ioana Brătianu, Lia Constanțescu, Petre Indrieș și Cicerone Ionițoiu.

<sup>28</sup> Secția Europa de Sud s-a constituit din Italia și Grecia. Sediul a fost la Roma, președinte fiind Emil Ghilezan.

<sup>29</sup> Secția America a fost alcătuită din America de Sud, America de Nord și Australia, fiecare având un birou executiv regional. Astfel că pentru America de Sud, sediul a fost stabilit în Argentina și a fost compus din: Mardare Popinciuc - avocat (președinte); Teodor Ilie Adameșteanu – comerciant (secretar); Codruț Popinciuc – profesor (casier); și membrii: Dumitru Găzdaru (profesor universitar), Nicolae Horodniceanu (inginer), Dem. Gh. Holla (comerciant), Petre Mișa (contabil) și Nicolae Arnăutu (avocat). Pentru America de Nord, biroul executiv regional a fost stabilit pe teritoriul SUA, acesta având, la început, următoarea componență: Ion Ovidiu Borcea (președinte); secretar - Grigore Caraza; casier - Valeriu Manzicu; membri - Eugen Popescu, Aurel Constantin, Nicolae Marin și Dumitru Moldovan. După decesul lui Ion Ovidiu Borcea, președinția C.N.R. în acest spațiu a revenit lui Grigore Caraza. Biroul executiv regional din Australia, cu sediul la Sydney, a fost inițial alcătuit din: C.I. Untaru (președinte); T. Silvaș (vicepreședinte); Corneliu Mohole (secretar); Florian Moholea (casier) și 27 de membri, dintre care merită amintit Dumitru Nimigeanu, autorul volumului *Însemnările unui țaran deportat din Bucovina*.

acestei organizări ținea, în primul rând, de faptul că românii erau stabiliți în zone geografice dintre cele mai diverse și mai îndepărtate, motiv pentru care era nevoie de o organizare a acestora în locurile în care se aflau. Apoi, era nevoie de o anumită autonomie de inițiativă și acțiune la nivel regional. Activitățile erau coordonate de birourile executive regionale, ce reprezentau linia politică generală a C.N.R., ele fiind comunicate către biroul executiv central, aflat la Paris. Fiecare secție era alcătuită dintr-un număr de cel puțin 15 membri. Pe lângă cele 4 secții regionale deja constituite, statutul C.N.R. prevedea și formarea unor noi, singura condiție fiind aceea ca numărul de membri care să-i pună bazele să fie 15, iar românii care își doreau să se constituie într-o secție aparte să fie dintr-una din țările care făceau parte dintr-o secție regională prevăzută de statut.

În aceeași ordine de idei a organizării C.N.R., acesta avea două organe directive - Adunarea Generală a Consiliului și adunările generale regionale – și două organe executive: Biroul Executiv Central și birourile executive regionale. Pe scurt, Adunarea Generală a C.N.R., alcătuită din toți membrii secțiunilor, era organul suprem de decizie, având competență totală în ceea ce privea organizarea, funcționarea și politica Consiliului, trasând directivele birourilor executive și stabilind politica generală a C.N.R. Apoi, adunările generale regionale, alcătuite din membrii unei secții regionale, erau cele care hotărau cu privire la sarcinile ce-i reveneau prin Statut, atribuții ce puteau fi anulate de Adunarea Generală a Consiliului, la cererea Biroului Executiv Central (B.E.C.). Referitor la organele executive, B.E.C., ales de Adunarea Generală a C.N.R., era organul de

execuție al C.N.R., fiind alcătuit din 15 membri, aleși o dată la 3 ani. B.E.C. era condus de un președinte, care reprezenta C.N.R., desemnat fiind de B.E.C., prin propuneri, concertarea membrilor sau prin vot secret dacă nu se ajungea la un acord unanim. Existau, de asemenea, un vicepreședinte, un secretar general, un secretar adjunct și un casier. Scopul B.E.C. era acela de a duce la îndeplinire hotărârile Adunării Generale, de a stabili legături cu asociațiile românești din exil în vederea realizării unui front comun de luptă împotriva comunismului, având, totodată, și posibilitatea la inițiative și propuneri proprii. Birourile executive regionale, organele de execuție ale secțiilor regionale, erau alese o dată la 3 ani, fiind compuse din 5-9 membri, un președinte, un vicepreședinte, un secretar și un casier.

În ceea ce privește componența sa, C.N.R. era format din 3 categorii de membri: activi, corespondenți și de onoare. Analizați pe rând, membrii activi erau românii care, chiar dacă erau cetățeni ai altei țări, erau dornici să-și aducă contribuția constant la „lupta pentru libertatea României,” în anumite condiții. Prima era aceea de a fi recomandat de 2 membri activi, iar cea de-a doua de a declara în scris că era de acord cu toate principiile, obiectivele și organizarea Consiliului, după cum erau prevăzute în Statut. Cererea de înscriere era adresată Biroului regional, care oferea răspunsul în termen de 15 zile. În caz de respingere a cererii, solicitantul sau un membru al Biroului regional putea face apel la Adunarea Generală care hotăra cu majoritatea de voturi a celor prezenți. Membrii activi aveau și o serie de drepturi de a: lua parte la toate adunările și manifestațiile C.N.R.; exprima liber oral sau în scris în cadrul Consiliului opinia lor cu privire la problemele de interes public; exercita dreptul la

vot liber, egal, secret, direct sau prin corespondență în adunările generale; avea libertatea de inițiativă în probleme de interes național, atunci când acestea nu contraveneau principiilor C.N.R. și programului său politic și sub rezerva ratificării de către organele directive. În schimb, obligația membrilor activi era aceea de a depune toate eforturile, prin toate mijloacele avute la dispoziție, de a-și îndeplini misiunea la care s-au angajat, fiecare membru activ fiind catalogat drept „ambasador responsabil al intereselor românești.”<sup>30</sup> Cea de-a doua categorie de membri era aceea a corespondenților, formată din românii care, din diferite motive, nu se puteau implica activ în acțiunile Consiliului. Aceștia erau propuși de către Birourile executive sau se puteau înscrie singuri, printr-o cerere, fiind acceptați în aceleași condiții ca membrii activi. Aceștia aveau dreptul de a-și exprima opinia, precum și de a lua parte la adunările și manifestările C.N.R., votul lor fiind însă numai unul consultativ.<sup>31</sup> Membrii de onoare, cea de-a treia categorie, erau personalități notorii care susțineau lupta anticomunistă. Aceștia erau propuși de birourile executive și validați de Adunarea Generală. Nici un membru nu putea face declarații în numele Consiliului, fără mandat din partea sa. Există și posibilitatea pierderii calității de membru, prin demisie scrisă, prin radiere pentru neplata cotizațiilor după două somații făcute în scris de casierul secției regionale și prin excludere din cauza unor abateri grave de la principiile și scopurile C.N.R., a unor disensiuni provocate în cadrul Consiliului, precum și a împiedicării unei bune funcționări a acestui organism politic.

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<sup>30</sup> A.B.R.F., fond Texte Documentare/2908-2918, documentul nr. 2911, „Consiliul Național Român – Statut,” f. nenumerotată.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

Excluderea intra în competența biroului executiv regional, cu drept de apel la Adunarea Generală. Nu a fost realizată o statistică a numărului de membri ai C.N.R. de-a lungul existenței sale. Există totuși o informație în acest sens, din anul 1983, că la momentul respectiv Consiliul avea peste 100 de membri.<sup>32</sup>

La nivel de structură, C.N.R. era organizat într-un Centru de Documentare și Presă, un Serviciu de Orientare a Refugiaților Politici și în șapte comisii de lucru: Comisia de Politică Generală și a Relațiilor Exterioare; Comisia studiilor juridice, de drept public și privat; Comisia de studii a finanțelor și a economiei; Comisia agriculturii, zootehniei, silviculturii, reformei agrare și cooperăției; Comisia muncii, asigurărilor și a relațiilor sociale, a igienei publice și private; Comisia culturii, educației, a tineretului, cultelor și a relațiilor inter-confesionale; Comisia de selectare a membrilor C.N.R. de arbitraj și judecată. Era, de asemenea, prevăzut și un Comitet Politic, ce se dorea a fi o punte de comunicare între organul central al C.N.R. și organele sale regionale. O atenție deosebită a fost acordată unui Cerc de Studii, cu secțiuni în toate secțiile regionale ale Consiliului<sup>33</sup>. Acest cerc, stipulat chiar în cuprinsul Statutului, era compus din persoane cu experiență în cercetarea problemelor românești, atât din punct de vedere politic, economic, cât și social și cultural, în corelație cu contextul internațional în care se manifestau. Scopul acestui cerc a

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<sup>32</sup> Informație în conformitate cu cele consemnate de președintele de la acea vreme al secției Franța a C.N.R., Ion Miloe, „Dezmințire sau punere la punct,” în *Lupta Românească*, anul III, nr. 1-2, aprilie 1983, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> Un astfel de cerc de studii a fost înființat, de exemplu, în RFG – „Rumanischer Studienkreis” – înregistrat la Wiesbaden. Acesta a fost condus de D.C. Amzăr. Titlul primului simpozion organizat de acesta a fost „Fascism, socialism și comunism în România.”

fost acela de a concentra, prelucra și coordona materiale necesare pentru elaborarea unui program de realizări în România după prăbușirea regimului comunist, cu accent pe politica externă a statului român.

### **3. Activități desfășurate de Consiliul Național Român**

Prima manifestație publică a C.N.R. a constat în celebrarea unui serviciu religios în memoria victimelor comunismului în România. Evenimentul a avut loc la Biserica Ortodoxă Română din Paris, la care regele Mihai nu a participat, transmițând un mesaj ce a fost citit de preotul Vasile Boldeanu.

De-a lungul anului 1980, activitatea C.N.R. s-a remarcat în mod deosebit prin trei acțiuni. Prima, între 24-28 iulie 1980, în contextul vizitei lui Nicolae Ceaușescu la Paris, când membrii Consiliului din Franța au întocmit un dosar cu informații despre situația României sub regim comunist. În cuprinsul acestui material au fost abordate următoarele chestiuni: situația generală a muncitorilor, a intelectualilor și a sindicatului liber; persecuțiile religioase; internările în spitale și sanatorii de psihiatrie; situația deținuților politici, precum și aspecte referitoare la economie. Materialul în cauză a fost multiplicat în 1000 de exemplare și a fost distribuit deputaților, senatorilor, miniștrilor, ambasadurilor, universităților, sindicatelor, presei din Paris și din provincie, radio televiziunii franceze, UNESCO, Adunării Parlamentare (devenită din 1986 Parlamentul European), Amnesty International, Ligii Internaționale a Apărării Drepturilor Omului, președintelui Franței, precum și altor personalități franceze. Cea de-a doua acțiune a constat în participarea președintelui C.N.R., Ioana Brătianu, la 22 iulie 1980, în cadrul conferinței de presă

organizate de Comisia Franceză pentru Apărarea Drepturilor Omului în România. În timpul intervenției sale, aceasta „a denunțat manevrele întrebuintate de regimul din România pentru a devia lucrările Conferinței de la Madrid de la deciziile luate la conferințele de la Helsinki și Belgrad și nerespectate, spre o primejdioasă și falsă dezarmare.”<sup>34</sup> Cea de-a treia acțiune s-a concretizat prin participarea reprezentanților C.N.R., Nicolae Penescu și Nicolae Guguianu, la Conferința pentru Securitate și Cooperare în Europa (C.S.C.E.), ce a avut loc la Madrid în noiembrie 1980.<sup>35</sup> Membrii C.N.R. au elaborat un memorandum, pe care l-au multiplicat în 300 de exemplare, distribuindu-l participanților la această întrunire.<sup>36</sup> În timpul petrecut în capitala Spaniei, Nicolae Penescu a expus tezele Memorandului C.N.R., a stabilit contacte cu ambasadorul Franței și cu cel al Canadei, precum și cu un consilier al ambasadei SUA, și a luat legătura cu Grupul de Apărare a Drepturilor Omului și cu Comitetul de Acțiune pentru grupul de la Helsinki European-Zürich, din care făcea parte și Paul Goma și la care C.N.R. a aderat, devenind

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<sup>34</sup> Nicolae Guguianu, „Activitatea Consiliului Național Român,” în *Lupta Românească*, anul I, nr. 1, februarie 1981, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> Despre activitatea C.N.R. la C.S.C.E., a se vedea pe larg Cicerone Ionițoiu, *op.cit.*, p. 59-61.

<sup>36</sup> Textul memorandumului a fost publicat în *Lupta Românească*, anul I, nr. 1, februarie 1981, p. 13-19. Memorandumul C.N.R. a fost distribuit împreună cu 1000 de exemplare dintr-un număr special al publicației religioase a exilului românesc postbelic, *Catacombes*. Aceasta din urmă a fost editată în limba franceză și a apărut vreme de 21 de ani (1971-1992) atât în Franța, cât și în alte țări din Europa, precum și în America de Nord și America de Sud, scopul său fiind acela de a prezenta informații și documente despre persecuțiile creștine din țările comuniste.



membru al acestei organizații.<sup>37</sup> De asemenea, Penescu a susținut o conferință de presă în fața ziariștilor străini, în care a abordat tezele Memorandumului C.N.R., ce făcea referire la problema: condamnaților pentru opinii politice, sociale și religioase; internaților politici în spitale psihiatrice; interzicerea asociațiilor libere și a dreptului la grevă al muncitorilor; persecuțiilor religioase contra diferitelor confesiuni; și a situației economice îngrijorătoare, pe care a prezentat-o astfel:

Situația economică actuală a României este disperată, ceea ce dă naștere unui dezechilibru social. Traiul este foarte anevoios în această țară atât de bogată odinioară. Lipsa de alimente a împins, ca și în Polonia, la constituirea unui sindicat liber. Dar a urmat o severă represiune. Occidentul a tăcut. Situația economică este special de alarmantă pentru țărănime, căreia trebuie să se substituie armata pentru a aduna recoltele. Țărănimea refuză să muncească un pământ care nu-i mai aparține și după munca căruia ea nu culege niciun beneficiu. O revoluție a țăranimii și a muncitorilor (...) va pune într-o zi sfârșit dominației comuniste din România.<sup>38</sup>

În plus, Penescu a acordat și un interviu postului de radio „Europa Liberă,” transmis la 8 ianuarie 1981, în care a atras

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<sup>37</sup> „Scrisoarea d-lui Nicolae Penescu către Biroul Executiv Central,” în *Lupta Românească*, anul I, nr. 1, februarie 1981, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Extras din conferința de presă a d-lui Penescu publicat de El Alcazar, în *Lupta Românească*, anul I, nr. 1, februarie 1981, p. 12.

atenția asupra nerespectării în România a Actului final de la Helsinki, susținând faptul că guvernul de la București adoptase o „politică-spectacol”<sup>39</sup> și nicidecum una de reală independență față de URSS. Pe acest fond, Nicolae Penescu sublinia importanța unui reale și imediate implicări a țărilor occidentale în vederea respectării drepturilor omului în România:

(...) Occidentul are mijloace politice și economice pentru a face să se respecte Acordul de la Helsinki; trebuie numai să o vrea. El poate ajuta popoarele din Europa Centrală să se libereze ele însele, după cum s-a început în Polonia. Și numai în interesul lui. Soarta Europei de Apus ar putea depinde de aceea a Europei Centrale.<sup>40</sup>

De-a lungul existenței sale, C.N.R., prin diferitele sale secții regionale, a desfășurat o activitate diversă. A inițiat sau s-a implicat într-o serie de acțiuni de ajutorare a refugiaților români internați în lagărele din Austria (Traiskirchen) și Italia (Latina), pentru aprovizionarea acestora mai ales cu mâncare și îmbrăcăminte, dar și cu presă a exilului pentru a-i ține la curent cu realitatea acestuia. De asemenea, a acordat sprijin unor refugiați români pentru reunirea familiei, prin prezentarea cazurilor

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<sup>39</sup> „Tezele expuse în interviul de la Radio Europa Liberă din 8.1.1981 și la conferința de presă din 28.11.1980 de la Madrid,” în *Lupta Românească*, anul I, nr. 1, februarie 1981, p. 10-11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

acestora în presa și la televiziunile locale sau străine, la postul de radio „Europa Liberă” și autorităților țării gazdă.

C.N.R. a contribuit, alături de Comitetul Națiunilor Captive, la organizarea unor manifestații care aveau loc în cadrul Săptămânii Națiunilor Captive, în cadrul cărora, în esență, milita pentru dreptul la autodeterminare al popoarelor aflate sub regim comunist și, în cazul României, pentru eliberarea teritoriilor pierdute: „Să fim alături de țara noastră subjucată și mutilată și de cei aflați în teritoriile răpite: Basarabia, Bucovina și ținutul Herța.”<sup>41</sup> Au existat și alte contexte în care C.N.R. a manifestat pentru teritoriile românești pierdute, printre care s-a numărat și o demonstrație organizată în fața misiunii sovietice de la ONU. O altă activitate desfășurată în cadrul Săptămânii Națiunilor Captive, la care C.N.R. a luat parte, a constat în participarea unor membri ai Consiliului – Dan Cernovodeanu, Remus Radina, Nicolae Evolceanu – la manifestația anticomunistă de pe Esplanda Trocadero din Paris, unde au fost aproximativ 100 de refugiați: români, polonezi, maghiari, cambogieni, vietnamezi, afgani. În aceeași ordine de idei referitoare la Comitetul Națiunilor Captive, Alexandru Bratu, președintele secției SUA a C.N.R., a fost autorul textului cântecului Națiunilor Captive – „Liberty for All” – pentru care a primit o diplomă omagială din partea Frontului Mondial Anticomunist (WACAF).

C.N.R. s-a alăturat luptei muncitorilor polonezi, printr-o scrisoare transmisă Rezistenței Poloneze din Paris. Totodată, Consiliul, prin secția din Canada, s-a solidarizat și cu persoanele de origine poloneză care făceau greva foamei în fața consulatului sovietic din Montreal pentru reunirea familiei, acțiune ce a fost

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<sup>41</sup> „Chemare,” în *Lupta Românească*, anul I, nr. 2, iulie 1981, p. 20.

organizată de Congresul Polonez în perioada 15-18 februarie 1984. În plus, C.N.R., împreună cu Asociația Vietnameză și Congresul Polonez au răspândit în centrul Montrealului mii de manifeste cu informații despre lagărele de concentrare din URSS.

În aceeași ordine de idei, C.N.R. s-a solidarizat cu lupta dusă de președintele Carter pentru eliberarea ostaticilor din Iran, cu protestul împotriva agresiunii URSS din Afganistan, precum și cu acțiunea foștilor deținuți politici anticomuniști și cu grupul luptătorilor anticomuniști refugiați din Cuba în vederea formării Frontului Mondial Anticomunist. Între 25-26 aprilie 1981, C.N.R. a participat la lucrările convenției organizației „World Anti-Communist Active Front” (WACAF), iar în perioada 2-3 mai același an, la întrunirea organizației „American Friends of Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations, Inc.”

În altă ordine de idei, C.N.R. a luat parte la manifestația organizată în fața Ambasadei României la Paris în contextul dispariției lui Virgil Tănase, ocazie cu care a distribuit câteva mii de materiale explicative în limba română și franceză referitoare la evenimentul în cauză. De asemenea, C.N.R. a participat și la manifestația împotriva comunismului organizată cu ocazia vizitei lui Gorbaciov în Franța, la 2 octombrie 1985. Tot la Paris a participat și la protestul desfășurat la Ambasada României împotriva arestărilor făcute în contextul revoltei de la Brașov, din 1987, precum și la protestele pentru respectarea drepturilor omului în România. Pe teritoriul SUA, la Washington mai exact, C.N.R. a participat la manifestația din 15 mai 1987, la care au luat parte aproximativ 300 de oameni. Din partea C.N.R. au fost, alături de preotul Gheorghe Calciu Dumitreasa, Mia Braia, Grigore Caraza, Ion Rusu, Ion Dumitrescu, Liviu Butura, preotul

Dumitrescu, Traian Andreescu, români din SUA, Canada și Australia. Scopul acestei demonstrații a fost acela de a atrage un semnal de alarmă asupra abuzurilor comise de comuniști în România, insistând pe nerespectarea drepturilor omului, înfometare, frig, arestări, teroare, precum și pe dărâmarea unor biserici și monumente istorice. Tot în SUA, la New York, membri ai C.N.R. au manifestat și în fața Consulatului României, dând foc steagului URSS în semn de protest față de amestecul sovieticilor în treburile interne ale statului român.<sup>42</sup>

În scopul de a face cunoscută situația internă din România, C.N.R. a participat și la conferința europeană pentru drepturile omului și autodeterminarea popoarelor, desfășurată la Muri (Berna), în perioada 1-2 septembrie 1986.

Printre activitățile C.N.R. s-a numărat și trimiterea a o serie de memorii, memorandumuri, scrisori, mesaje-protest și telegrame către: autoritățile elvețiene;<sup>43</sup> semnarii pactului de la Helsinki; ministrul american al apărării, Weinberger (împotriva vânzării către România a echipamentului de control sateliți); ministrului de justiție al SUA;<sup>44</sup> Departamentul de Stat și Senatul

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<sup>42</sup> Acest moment a fost consemnat de Grigore Caraza, președinte al C.N.R. din SUA, în cartea sa de memorii, *Aiud însângerat*, Editura Conta, 2009, disponibil online la <http://www.procesulcomunismului.com/marturii/fonduri/gcaraza/aiud/>, accesat la 27.12.2016.

<sup>43</sup> Textul memoriului, semnat de președintele C.N.R., Horațiu Comanicu, și vicepreședinte, Cicerone Ionițoiu, poate fi consultat în *Lupta Română*, anul V, nr. 1, martie 1985, p. 53-54.

<sup>44</sup> În memoriul către ministrului de justiție al SUA, C.N.R. solicita încetarea „uneltirilor și acuzațiilor nejustificate” împotriva episcopului Valerian Trifa și în cuprinsul căruia argumenta faptul că guvernul de la București încerca „prin cele mai abjecte mijloace, să distrugă rezistența românilor refugiați și să compromită biserica și pe slujitorii ei care se opun dominației comuniste.” Pe larg, vezi

American; președintele Ronald Reagan<sup>45</sup> și secretarul de stat american, George Pratt Shultz;<sup>46</sup> fostul ambasador al SUA la București, David Funderburk; președinții Franței, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing<sup>47</sup> și François Mitterand; Lech Walesa; Papa Ioan Paul al II-lea (cu ocazia asasinării pr. Popieluszko de către comuniștii polonezi). În esență, materialele în cauză prezentau situația din România, cu accent pe nerespectarea drepturilor omului și pe nefolosirea pentru îmbunătățirea nivelului de trai al populației a ajutoarelor financiare, creditelor și împrumuturilor acordate României de Franța sau de alte state occidentale, solicitând sprijin în vederea autodeterminării poporului român. Documentele adresate americanilor erau mai complexe, abordând problema

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Nicolae Guguianu, „Activitatea Consiliului Național Român,” în *Lupta Românească*, anul II, nr. 1, august 1982, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> În 1981, pe fondul alegerii ca președinte al SUA a lui Ronald Reagan, și cu speranțe crescute ale românilor din exil, C.N.R. i-a transmis la 1 decembrie 1981, când se aniversau 62 de ani de la Marea Unire, un memoriu. În cuprinsul său, președintelui Reagan îi era prezentată situația din România comunistă, cerându-i-se înscrierea problemelor sale pe ordinea de zi a discuțiilor de la ONU. Cererea era fundamentată pe principiile Chartei Atlanticului și pe „Declarația asupra Europei eliberate” de la Yalta. Pentru mai multe detalii, a se vedea Cicerone Ionițoiu, *op.cit.*, p. 67-68.

<sup>46</sup> Textul memorandumului a fost semnat de Cicerone Ionițoiu (vicepreședinte), Nicolae Evolceanu (secretar) și Grigore Caraza (membru al Biroului Executiv Central al C.N.R.), fiind transmis în contextul desfășurării Summit-ului Est-Vest, care a avut loc la Geneva, la 19-20 noiembrie 1985.

Memorandumul a fost publicat în *Lupta Română*, anul VI, nr. 1-2, ianuarie-aprilie 1986, p. 35-36.

<sup>47</sup> Scrisoarea a fost semnată de Radu Câmpeanu, Cornel Crișan, Doru Ienciu, Petru Indrieș, Jean Miloe, Nicolae Penescu, Claudiu Petruc și Dinu Zamfirescu. Ea a fost trimisă președintelui Franței în anul 1978, în contextul anunțării unei vizite a sa la București. Textul acestui material a fost publicat în Delia Cornea, *Recuperări istorice: Asociația Foștilor Deținuți Politici Români de la Paris*, București, Editura CNI Coresi, 2010, p. 46-48.

clauzei națiunii celei mai favorizate. În acest sens, C.N.R. se declara împotriva acordării acestui statut României, arătând că de avantajele sale nu se bucura decât guvernul de la București, ele nefiind întrebuințate pentru ameliorarea condițiilor de trai ale poporului român – „acești bani nu sunt repartizați pentru bietul român, ci pentru îngrășarea călăului acestuia”<sup>48</sup>: „Este de neînțeles și absolut condamnat ca poporul american să ajute un regim de dictatură comunistă, subvenționând astfel pe cei care se înarmează pentru a asigura, mai curând sau mai târziu, victoria mondială a comunismului.”<sup>49</sup>

De asemenea, în 1984, C.N.R. a cerut Secretariatului General al ONU ca problemele României să fie înscrise pe ordinea de zi a dezbaterilor din cadrul său, anexând cereri în cauză și un material documentar referitor la situația reală din România. Tot în 1984, C.N.R. a adresat un material informativ conducerii RFG, cancelarului federal Helmut Kohl, în contextul vizitei lui Nicolae Ceaușescu pe teritoriul vest german, la Bonn, și al vizitei cancelarului la București, anunțate pentru octombrie 1984, respectiv pentru primăvara lui 1985. Materialul realiza o radiografie a situației din România, cu accent pe teroarea, starea de demoralizare și subalimentare din țară: „În consecință, îl rugăm pe Excelența Voastră să binevoiască a-l lumina pe domnul Ceaușescu cu prilejul schimbului de vizite că în interesul stabilității în Europa și al său propriu, este imperativă destinderea

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<sup>48</sup> Grigore Caraza, „Demonstrația din 15 mai la Washington a românilor din America,” în *Lupta Română*, anul VII, nr. 2, aprilie-iunie 1987, p. 22.

<sup>49</sup> Nicolae Guguianu, „Activitatea Consiliului Național Român,” în *Lupta Românească*, anul II, nr. 1, august 1982, p. 8.

în regimul intern din România, începând cu eliberarea tuturor deținuților politici.”<sup>50</sup>

În acest context, trebuie menționat faptul că nu au fost doar elaborate și transmise materiale, ci au existat și contacte directe între reprezentanți ai C.N.R. și anumite oficialități. De exemplu, în cursul anului 1984, o delegație a Consiliului, formată din Cicerone Ionițoiu, Nicolae Evolceanu și Dumitru Ionescu a fost primită de Peter Sager, directorul Institutului Elvețian de cercetări asupra țărilor din Estul Europei, consilier deputat în Parlamentul de la Berna și deputat în Consiliul Europei de la Strasburg. Scopul acestei întâlniri a fost acela de a prezenta situația politică și economică din România, o atenție deosebită fiind acordată distrugerii de biserici și monumente istorice, fapt pe care C.N.R. l-a denumit „genocid cultural”: „Într-un cuvânt, genocidul la scară națională făcut de acești anticriști, cu scopul de a ne ucide ca națiune.”<sup>51</sup> Un alt exemplu în acest sens este prezența unei delegații a C.N.R., compusă din Liviu Butura, Grigore Caraza, Valeriu Mânzicu, Vasile Popescu, în audiență la Senatul American, timp în care s-a discutat despre problemele României și în care au fost înmânate unui număr de 130 de kongresmeni cărțile *Drama României*, varianta în limba franceză, și *Cartea neagră a României*.

Mai mult, C.N.R., prin reprezentanții din RFG, a derulat și acțiuni de sprijinire a preotului Gheorghe Calciu Dumitreasa, sesizând cazul său unor personalități și asociații germane. În plus,

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<sup>50</sup> Alexandru Bidian, Paul Morcov, „Excelenței Sale Helmut Kohl, cancelarul RFG,” în *Lupta Română*, anul IV, nr. 3, octombrie 1984, p. 47-48.

<sup>51</sup> Grigore Caraza, „Demonstrația din 15 mai la Washington a românilor din America,” în *Lupta Română*, anul VII, nr. 2, aprilie-iunie 1987, p. 22.



la venirea în exil a preotului, stabilit pe teritoriul SUA, acesta a fost așteptat la aeroportul din New York și de un reprezentant al C.N.R., Grigore Caraza.<sup>52</sup>

Schimbând registrul, C.N.R. a participat la pelerinajul care se desfășura anual la mormântul soldaților români de la Cimitirul Soultzmatt, Franța, acesta fiind un eveniment-tradiție al exilului românesc postbelic, la care lua parte și familia regală. A sărbătorit și o serie de zile naționale precum: unirea Principatelor Române, independența României, 1 decembrie și 10 mai.

C.N.R. a construit un monument dedicat victimelor regimului comunist din România. Inițiativa a aparținut lui Cicerone Ionițoiu și s-a concretizat prin contribuția unor arhitecți și sculptori români din exil. Consiliul a pus bazele și unor albume foto cu cei care au desfășurat activități politice și au murit în exil, acestea fiind depuse la biblioteci din străinătate. În plus, a tipărit în limba franceză broșura *Drama României. 40 de ani de teroare comunistă (Le Drame de la Roumanie. 40 ans de dictature communiste)*, ai cărei editori au fost Cicerone Ionițoiu, Nicolae Constantinescu, Ion Ovidiu Borcea și care a apărut la Editura Coresi, Freiburg im Breisgau, în 1984. Materialul prezenta o hartă a închisorilor politice și a lagărelor de muncă forțată din România, precum și o listă provizorie a persoanelor care și-au pierdut viața

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<sup>52</sup> Grigore Caraza (1929-2014), fost deținut politic, a plecat în exil, în SUA, în 1980. S-a implicat într-o serie de activități ale exilului românesc. Între 1984-1989 a fost, mai întâi, secretar și apoi președinte al secției America de Nord a C.N.R. Totodată, a fost și vicepreședintele pentru SUA al Asociației Foștilor Deținuți Politici, cu sediul la Geneva. În 1986 a obținut cetățenia americană. În 2004 și-a publicat cartea de memorii *Aiud însângerat*, disponibilă și în variantă online

la <http://www.procesulcomunismului.com/marturii/fonduri/gcaraza/aiud/>, accesat la data de 27.12.2016.

acolo. De menționat în acest context este și faptul că C.N.R. a avut o tipografie proprie – Tipografia Coresi, Franța – înființată cu scopul de a publica lucrări a căror apariție nu era posibilă din lipsă de fonduri, cărți „menite a ține vie în conștiințe crunta dramă a neamului românesc.”<sup>53</sup>

C.N.R. a avut trei publicații: *Lupta Românească/Lupta Română*, *Azi spre Mâine* și *Blick in die Zukunft*. *Lupta Românească/Lupta Română* a fost organul oficial de presă al Consiliului, prevăzut în Statut, și a apărut în perioada 1981-1990, la Paris.<sup>54</sup> Publicația *Azi spre Mâine* a fost organul de presă al Secției Europa Centrală și de Nord a C.N.R., apărând în perioada 1981-1987, la Freiburg, RFG<sup>55</sup>. *Blick in die Zukunft* (în traducere *Azi spre Mâine*) a apărut tot la Freiburg, fiind o publicație în limba germană, adresată în mod expres conducătorilor politici și opiniei publice din acest spațiu. Acestea au apărut la intervale semnificative de timp, motiv pentru care *Lupta*

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<sup>53</sup> *Lupta Română*, anul IV, nr. 4, decembrie 1984, p. 59.

<sup>54</sup> În paginile publicației *Lupta Românească/Lupta Română* au publicat, de-a lungul anilor, nume precum: Anna Maria Tudury, Ion Varlam, Alexandru Bratu, Grigore Dumitrescu, Nicolae Guguianu, Constantin Cesianu, Cicerone Ionițoiu, Paul Morcov, Andrei Crăciun, Nicolae Penescu, Radu Budișteanu, Constantin Ghika, Constantin Dumitrescu, Dionisie Boboc, Gheorghe Buznea, Nicolae Constantinescu, Nicolae Evolceanu, Horațiu Comaniciu, Vasile Florea, C.I. Untaru, Eugen Popescu, Nicolae Budur, Ion Ovidiu Borcea, Sava Gârleanu, D.C. Amzăr, Lidia Ionescu – Stăniloae, Dumitru Horia Ionescu, Alexandru Augustin Bidian, Constantin Mohole, Constantin Macri, Cornel Crișan, Dorina Gabor, Brad Coriolan, C.I. Mohole.

<sup>55</sup> Comitetul de redacție a fost asigurat de Mihai Fotin Enescu, responsabil de redacție, Dumitru Cristian Amzăr, Grigore Dumitrescu și Augustin Alexandru Bidian. Pe lângă aceștia, au publicat în paginile revistei nume precum: Nicolae Penescu, Horațiu Comaniciu, Paul Morcov, Sava Gârleanu, Constantin Mareș, Radu Roșeanu, Radu Budișteanu, Radu Enescu, Nicolae Constantinescu, Alexandru Micle, Florin Secanu, Ion Ion și Cașin Popescu.

*Românească/Lupta Română* a apărut în doar 19 numere, în timp ce *Azi spre Mâine* a însumat 15 numere. După cum nici C.N.R. n-a beneficiat de o sursă de finanțare, alta decât cea provenită din cotizațiile membrilor, nici publicațiile sale n-au avut un alt venit decât cel din abonamentele lunare, cu excepția revistei *Lupta Românească/Lupta Română* ale cărei resurse materiale proveneau și din contribuția lui Nicolae Constantinescu, din Italia.<sup>56</sup> În esență, aceste publicații aveau o tematică diversă. Fiind o publicație a exilului românesc postbelic și, mai ales, un organ de presă al unei organizații a acestuia, o parte însemnată a articolelor prezentau, pe de o parte, situația exilului, cu accent pe starea de dezbinare a românilor din afara granițelor țării, făcându-se, în permanență, îndemn la unitate în lupta pentru aceeași cauză:

Români suntem cu toții. Români buni! Să luptăm deci împreună ca lumea întreagă să afle situația îngrozitoare în care se zbat cei lăsați în urmă, cei rămași în Țară, și astfel să-i ajutăm prin fapăturile noastre, fapte care trebuiesc să fie cu totul altceva decât aruncare de noroi peste tot pe unde a trecut unul dintre noi. Această veșnică împrășcare nu servește țărilor pe care noi vrem să le atingem, intereselor pe care suntem datori să le apărăm căci ele sunt interesele Țării, interesele României, interesele Neamului nostru în primejdie.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Lupta Românească*, anul I, nr. 3, decembrie 1981, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Anna Maria Tudury, „Unde e trădarea?”, în *Lupta Românească*, anul II, nr. 1, august 1982, p. 12.

Pe de altă parte, era prezentată activitatea C.N.R., precum și tensiunile din interiorul său și atacurile împotriva sa. Celelalte articole se împărțeau în două categorii mari, de analiză a situației politice și economice din România și de radiografiere a contextului internațional al vremii.

#### **4. Critici la adresa Consiliului Național Român**

Încă de la lansarea inițiativei de a se pune bazele unui Consiliu Național Român, în anul 1976, în cadrul exilului românesc au apărut unele critici în acest sens. Spre exemplificare, l-am ales pe cel mai vocal, care, de altfel, a persistat și după formarea Consiliului, până în 1989. Este vorba despre poziția lui Ion Rațiu, inițial cu privire la ideea unui nou organism politic al exilului. În 1976, pe fondul invitației lansate în exil de concertare a energiilor în vederea constituirii unui Consiliu Național Român, Ion Rațiu, în numele Asociației Culturale a Românilor din Anglia (A.C.A.R.D.A.), pe care o conducea, a afirmat că ideea nu era „rea, ci neînțeleaptă.”<sup>58</sup> Argumentele sale țineau, în primul rând, de faptul că, spre deosebire de Comitetul Național Român, Consiliul nu avea la bază factorul constituțional, regele neexprimându-și la acel moment punctul de vedere,<sup>59</sup> și nici

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<sup>58</sup> A.B.R.F., Fond Texte documentare/1547, „A.C.A.R.D.A. și organizarea exilului. Extrase din cuvântări, comentarii și intervenții scrise,” Londra, 1976, ff. 6-10.

<sup>59</sup> Motivul neconstituționalității demersurilor întreprinse de C.N.R. provizoriu a fost invocat și de avocatul român stabilit la Madrid, Gheorghe Antoniadă, în august 1978, care susținea că în lipsa acordului regelui cu această inițiativă, C.N.R. nu respecta constituția din țară: „Dacă nu ar fi așa Comitetul ar fi tot atâta de ilegal ca și Guvernul din București pe care pretinde, pe bună dreptate, să-l combată. Deoarece singur Regele deține puterea executivă, este logic să

reprezentanți autorizați ai partidelor democratice, ci erau alcătuite, în viziunea sa, din „oameni care s-au autoales, deși unii dintre ei sunt categoric denunțați de foștii lor colegi de partid aflați și acum în țară.”<sup>60</sup> Cel de-al doilea argument al lui Ion Rațiu ținea de includerea legionarilor în componența Consiliului, ceea ce, considera el, „va avea consecințe incalculabile pe care abia le putem întrezări (...).”<sup>61</sup> În aceeași ordine de idei, Rațiu semnala ca fiind o problemă lipsa resurselor financiare ale organizației și respingerea fondurilor occidentale, chiar și dacă le-ar fi primit, după cum susținea apelul pentru constituirea Consiliului. Astfel că A.C.A.R.D.A., prin intermediul lui Ion Rațiu, își exprima dezacordul cu această inițiativă, în forma propusă, considerând că va fi sortită eșecului. Cu această ocazie, erau, de asemenea, ridicate câteva întrebări: de ce grupul de inițiativă a Consiliului, ai cărui membri erau catalogați drept „buni patrioți,” în lipsa unui mandat, insistau să se autoimpună ca reprezentanți ai românilor?; dacă Consiliul se va bucura de respectul organizațiilor importante ale exilului sau va fi ignorat ori contestat?; pe ce baze financiare și cu ce program își va desfășura activitatea? Concluzionând că „această inițiativă va crea mai multe probleme decât putea să rezolve,” Rațiu sublinia că dacă totuși românii din afara granițelor țării îi va accepta, el va face „mea culpa.” Însă dacă acest lucru nu se va întâmpla, se întreba el: „Vor avea ei generozitatea sufletească și patriotismul să considere, în mod serios, drumul

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deduci că faptul de a crea un Consiliu (...) care nu au aprobarea Regală sunt tot atât de nelegale.” *apud* Florin Manolescu, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

<sup>60</sup> A.B.R.F., Fond Texte documentare/1547, „A.C.A.R.D.A. și organizarea exilului. Extrase din cuvântări, comentarii și intervenții scrise,” Londra, 1976, f. 6-10.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*.

nepretențios, dar eminentemente practic, propus de ACARDA?”<sup>62</sup> Soluția A.C.A.R.D.A. pentru reprezentarea românilor în cadrul unor societăți democratice era aceea a unei organizații compuse din „indivizi care-și aduc obolul lor din dragoste de patrie (...)” entitate care să fie decisă în urma unei adunări a românilor,<sup>63</sup> acțiune pe care, susținea Rațiu, a transmis-o „grupului Penescu.” În ceea ce privește poziția lui Ion Rațiu, într-un context mai amplu, referitor la exilul românesc, dar și cu referire la acesta, Neagu Djuvara afirma despre Rațiu că „oricine voia să fie președinte al românilor din străinătate, îi făcea umbră lui.”<sup>64</sup> Câțiva ani mai târziu, Ion Rațiu și-a concretizat ideea, organizând un congres al românilor din afara granițelor țării, în urma căruia s-au pus bazele unei alte organizații politice a exilului, Uniunea Românilor Liberi, devenită ulterior Uniunea Mondială a Românilor Liberi. Au fost trimise invitații de a participa la una dintre întrunirile nou formatei organizații și către membrii C.N.R., căreia cei din urmă i-au dat curs, participând, printre alții, Horațiu Comănicu, Paul Morcov, Nicolae Evolceanu, Petre Vălimăreanu: „(...) ne-am dus ca la o organizație frățească (...) să ne sprijinim reciproc și să acționăm în comun în lupta contra comunismului.”<sup>65</sup>

Reacției lui Ion Rațiu la ideea înființării unui Consiliu Național Român și, în general, celor care erau sceptici în această privință, le-a dat replica, printre alții, și Dinu Zamfirescu, unul

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>64</sup> Interviu cu Neagu Djuvara realizat de Sorin Gabriel Ioniță – „Noi, reprezentanții vechiului exil, aveam convingerea că peste patru-cinci ani ne întoarcem în România” – publicat în *Caielele INMER*, anul VI, nr. 14, martie 2009, p. 24.

<sup>65</sup> „Congresul Uniunii Românilor Liberi,” în *Lupta Română*, anul VII, nr. 2, aprilie-iunie 1987, p. 25.

dintre membrii fondatori ai C.N.R., printr-un articol publicat în *Buletinul de Informații al Românilor din Exil (B.I.R.E.)*. În cuprinsul său, autorul, pe de o parte, atrăgea atenția asupra faptului că formarea C.N.R. nu trebuia privită drept un scop, ci ca mijlocul cel mai potrivit pentru o acțiune eficientă, și pe de altă parte, lansa un îndemn și, totodată, se întreba retoric: „Să încercăm să ne dăm mâna toți cei care simțim românește (...). De ce să considerăm că unii care au greșit în trecutul mai apropiat sau mai îndepărtat nu se pot amenda sau nu s-au amendat chiar?”<sup>66</sup> Patru ani mai târziu însă, după alegerile din mai 1980 din cadrul C.N.R., pe care le-a catalogat drept „parodie,” Dinu Zamfirescu avea să se exprime în termeni critici la adresa Consiliului. Motivul acestei schimbări de atitudine era legat, în accepțiunea sa, de lipsa unor rezultate concrete ale Consiliului și de prezența „masivă” și „exagerată” a legionarilor în componența sa. Despre primul aspect, cel al unor „rezultate nule sau în orice caz nu departe de această noțiune,” Dinu Zamfirescu considera că:

Domnul Penescu n-a dorit, de la crearea CNR să ia în considerare fixarea unor obiective clare și precise ale acestuia și atunci când ele au fost propuse, a blocat orice discuție în jurul lor. De asemenea, domnul Penescu nu a acceptat în cadrul CNR luarea unor poziții împotriva lui Ceaușescu atunci când ele au fost propuse. De ce? Sau îi lipsește capacitatea

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<sup>66</sup> Dinu Zamfirescu, „Un refugiat român care se găsește în exil de mai puțin un an vorbește despre reorganizarea politică a exilului românesc,” în *B.I.R.E.*, nr. 638, 01.06.1976, articol reprodus în volumul lui Dinu Zamfirescu, *Și noi am condamnat comunismul: din exilul parizian*, București, Editura Paideia, 2008, p. 116-117.

perceperii lor și atunci – e grav, sau poate mai degrabă – trist, nu acceptă ca alții, în afară de el, să aibă idei.<sup>67</sup>

În continuare, acesta se arăta dezamăgit de ponderea legionarilor în cadrul C.N.R. și de faptul că se ajunsese la o linie de dictat în interiorul Consiliului, deși la început legionarii au fost acceptați deoarece s-a crezut într-o renunțare la principiile lor totalitare. Pe acest fond, autorul articolului sublinia faptul că acest organism politic ajunsese să nu mai facă o politică națională, ci una partizană, ceea ce, considera Dinu Zamfirescu, a determinat neînscrierea în Consiliu a unui număr semnificativ de români, ori scopul principal al C.N.R. era acela de a strânge în jurul său un număr cât mai mare de români aflați în afara granițelor țării. Concluzia era aceea că C.N.R. se transformase în „Consiliul domnului Penescu,” acuzându-l pe Nicolae Penescu de iresponsabilitate în sprijinirea prezenței preponderente a legionarilor în cadrul său: „Cui ar sluji un astfel de organism dacă nu regimului care înăbușe astăzi esența condiției umane a românilor?”<sup>68</sup> De altfel, tensiunile create între membrii Consiliului au determinat-o și pe Ioana Brătianu să demisioneze din funcția de președinte în 1981. Despre retragerea sa, Cicerone Ionițoiu a reținut faptul că „la Paris, Consiliul Național Român și-a continuat activitatea cu mai multă vigoare după plecarea Ioanei Brătianu, care mai mult stingherea activitatea, din dorința de a nu

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<sup>67</sup> Dinu Zamfirescu, „Consiliul domnului Penescu,” în B.I.R.E., nr. 728, 01.07.1980, publicat în *ibidem*, p. 134.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 135.



face nimic, împărtășită și de cei ce o manevraseră.”<sup>69</sup> Statutul de președinte a fost solicitat de Emil Ghilezan<sup>70</sup>, întrucât Nicolae Penescu era bolnav și preocupat de reluarea activității P.N.Ț. în exil.<sup>71</sup> În cele din urmă, a fost ales președinte Horațiu Comănicu, prin vot secret, în 1983, rămânând în funcție până în 1989.

## Concluzii

Consiliul Național Român a fost, așadar, una dintre organizațiile politice ale exilului românesc postbelic, alături de altele, precum Comitetul Național Român, Liga Românilor Liberi sau Uniunea Mondială a Românilor Liberi, constituită cu scopul de a reprezenta românii din țară, aflați sub teroarea unui regim comunist, precum și pe cei din afara granițelor sale, în cadrul unor societăți democratice, în scopul de a face cunoscută adevărata situație din România, încercând să determine o intervenție a occidentalilor pentru îndepărtarea comunismului. A avut de partea sa „ca armă cuvântul și argumentul”<sup>72</sup> utilizate în vederea îndeplinirii funcției de informare a Occidentului despre drama României comuniste. Așa cum se poate observa în subcapitolul dedicat activității C.N.R., acest organism politic a întreprins o serie de acțiuni în cadrul exilului. Acestea n-au fost însă extrem de numeroase sau întotdeauna cu un ecou important, însă au abordat subiecte de esență: nerespectarea drepturilor omului în România, dărâmarea de biserici și monumente istorice, clauza națiunii celei mai favorizate acordate statului român, principiul autodeterminării

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<sup>69</sup> Cicerone Ionițoiu, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 78-79.

<sup>72</sup> „Consiliul Național Român. Program de activitate,” în *Lupta Română*, anul IV, nr. 1, martie 1984, p. 9.

al popoarelor. În sens mai larg, Consiliul a prezentat Occidentului situația politică și economică din România anilor `80.

De-a lungul existenței sale, s-a confruntat cu o serie de probleme reprezentate de: lipsa unei subvenționări, respectiv a unei recunoașteri a Consiliului din partea occidentalilor, așa cum se întâmplase în cazul Comitetului Național Român; neîncrederea în Nicolae Penescu, unul dintre fondatorii săi, catalogat de unele cercuri ale exilului drept colaborator al regimului de la București; inițial, neacordarea sprijinului regal și, după 1981, retragerea acestui ajutor, care practic îl legitima; prezența într-un număr semnificativ a legionarilor în rândul său; ezitățile unor personalități ale exilului de a se alătura C.N.R. și, implicit, lipsa unor adeziuni numeroase ale românilor la acest organism; tensiunile între personalitățile exilului și continua neîncredere a românilor între ei înșiși, fiind omniprezentă teama ca printre ei să nu fie infiltrați oameni ai Securității; prezența în exil a unor persoane care au desfășurat activități de dezbinare a românilor, având în acest sens misiuni clar trasate de poliția politică de la București; lupta pentru funcții de conducere și pentru afirmare a unor români din exil, ceea ce a determinat înființarea a o serie de organizații al căror scop era, în esență, același; și, în general, lipsa de unitate a românilor aflați în afara granițelor țării, care a caracterizat exilul postbelic pe toată durata sa. Deși o unire a românilor din exil a fost unul dintre dezideratele C.N.R., acesta nu s-a concretizat, rămânând la stadiul de ideal, atât al Consiliului, cât și al altor organizații și personalități ale exilului românesc postbelic.

**DRAGOȘ URSU**

**DEMONSTENE ANDRONESCU, MARTOR ȘI  
MEMORIALIST AL REEDUCĂRII. STRATEGII DE  
SUPRAVIEȚUIRE SOCIO-PROFESIONALĂ ȘI  
CULTURALĂ ÎN (POST) COMUNISM<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** The study approaches the conjunction between biography and History (“la grande histoire”) and between memoirs and historical writing within the larger context of (post)communist Romania. Starting from the destiny of Demostene Andronescu, survivor of the communist prisons, in his double status of witness and memoir writer of the late re-education from the Aiud prison, our analysis follows several major themes: the impact of communist repression on an individual level, through the biographical exploration of a former political prisoner who served 11 years of detention; the civic and ethical implications of the memory endeavour initiated by the survivors of the Gulag; the relation between the political identity of the author-witness and his written memoirs; finally, the context of elaborating the memoirs as a support for understanding the author’s memorial motivations and political intentions.

**Keywords:** Communism, memory, biography, history, Romania

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Comunismul a reprezentat, în primul rând, apologia crimei ca instrument politic. Alături de genocidul împotriva adversarilor construiți ideologic, regimurile comuniste au practicat și „memoricidul,” ce viza eliminarea principalului obstacol în calea construirii „omului nou” – memoria, ca vehicul identitar. Suferința produsă de comunism, la fel ca memoria acestei suferințe, s-a manifestat, în primul rând, la nivel personal. Astfel, analiza Gulagului românesc trebuie să privilegieze biografia, experiența directă, nemijlocită, personală, ca vectori de înțelegere și asumare a trecutului traumatic comunist.

Studiul își propune să abordeze destinul lui Demostene Andronescu, supraviețuitor al temnițelor comuniste, în dubla sa ipostază de martor și memorialist al reeducării târzii din închisoarea de la Aiud. Sondarea unui asemenea subiect deschide o multitudine de planuri. În primul rând, impactul represiunii comunistă la nivel individual prin radiografierea biografiei unui fost deținut politic care a făcut 11 ani de închisoare. În al doilea rând, descoperim un supraviețuitor care-și asumă datoria mărturisirii, a cărei lucrare memorialistică este una de referință despre tema reeducării de la Aiud. În al treilea rând, avem ocazia de a analiza relația dintre identitatea politică a supraviețuitorului/autorului și lucrarea memorialistică. Nu în ultimul rând, se relevă importanța recuperării contextului în care a fost redactate memoriile pentru a înțelege în profunzime resorturile memoriale și intențiile politice ale autorului.

Prima parte a studiului este dedicată biografiei<sup>2</sup> lui Demostene Andronescu, reconstituită, în principal, din surse

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<sup>2</sup> Reconstituirea biografică se va focaliza doar asupra acelor aspecte relevante pentru destinul lui Demostene Andronescu în timpul regimului comunist.

inedite,<sup>3</sup> dosarele din arhiva fostei Securități,<sup>4</sup> aflate în custodia CNSAS. Apelul la surse documentare este argumentat și de faptul că Demostene Andronescu în lucrarea sa memorialistică, *Reeducarea de la Aiud*,<sup>5</sup> nu face decât referiri episodice la propriul destin carceral, aspect ce individualizează lucrarea sa în peisajul general al literaturii memorialistice despre Gulagul românesc și care oferă o intrigă suplimentară demersului de față.

### **Demostene Andronescu și reeducarea la Aiud**

Născut la 3 decembrie 1926 în comuna Panciu, județul Putna (Vrancea), Demostene Andronescu ia contact cu politica în 1947<sup>6</sup> când se înscrie în Frățiile de Cruce, organizația de tineret a Mișcării Legionare. Anii de după cel de-al doilea război mondial au fost marcați de reacțiile societății românești la efortul Partidului Comunist de preluarea a puterii politice cu ajutorul armatei roșii. În acest context își desfășoară activitatea zeci de organizații studențești al căror scop principal este tocmai opoziția față de instaurarea comunismului, și care sunt inspirate sau își desfășoară activitatea sub influența Mișcării Legionare, preluând de la aceasta modelul de organizare și acțiune. În acest sens, trebuie înțelese ipostazele distincte de asumare și apartenență la legionarism a celor pe care represiunea comunistă i-a etichetat și condamnat ca legionari. Astfel avem de-a face cu un „mozaic

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<sup>3</sup> Având în vedere caracterul inedit și fragmentar al acestor surse, îmi asum eventualele inexactități factologice și aprecieri istorice.

<sup>4</sup> Dosare de urmărire informativă (I 180001, I 137701, I 163173) și dosare penale de grup ( P 1536 și P 1562) alături de dosare din fondul Documentar (D 13341).

<sup>5</sup> Demostene Andronescu, *Reeducarea la Aiud*, București, Christiana, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (ACNSAS), fond *Penal*, dosar 1536, vol. 2, f. 153.

legionar,” de la comandați ai Bunei Vestiri, la legionari cu grade și funcții în statul național-legionar, septembriști sau studenți care au făcut parte din organizații anti-comuniste de nuanță legionară. Conștientizarea acestor intensități diferite de manifestare a identității legionare reprezintă un delimitare conceptuală necesară în efortul de înțelege resorturile represiei și rezistenței față de regimul comunist, regim care și-a construit în mod ideologic adversarii politici pentru a justifica eliminarea acestora.

În acest cadru se plasează și afilierea inițială a lui Demostene Andronescu la organizația de tineret a Mișcării Legionare, opțiune determinată în primul rând de dimensiunea anti-comunistă a FDC-ului.

Deși în toamna anului 1949 Demostene Andronescu încetează activitatea în FDC, un an mai târziu, în 1950,<sup>7</sup> pe când era student la Facultatea de Istorie, o reia la propunerea lui Traian Anderca, alături de Valeriu Turtudeanu, Ion Dima, Dumitru Simion, Gheorghe Mogoș, Vasile Boroneț, Ștefan Barbu, Dan Bârsan, Ion Zamfirescu și alții.

În primăvara lui 1952 membrii grupului sunt arestați, Demostene Andronescu fiind ridicat de Securitate la 20 mai pe când era student în anul IV.<sup>8</sup> După aproape doi ani de anchetă și interogatorii violente, Demostene Andronescu este condamnat, pe 7 mai 1954, la 5 ani de temniță grea, de către Tribunalul militar București.<sup>9</sup> Recursul condamnaților a fost respins la 22 martie 1955<sup>10</sup> de către președintele Tribunalului Militar București,

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 400.

<sup>10</sup> ACNSAS, fond *Penal*, dosar 1562, vol. 5, f. 153.

cunoscutul Alexandru Petrescu, director al Direcției Penitenciarelor sub regimul antonescian, iar apoi judecător în procesul lui Iuliu Maniu. Își continuă detenția în penitenciarul Jilava, de unde este transferat la închisoarea Gherla pe 18 aprilie 1955, pentru ca în 10 noiembrie 1955 să fie eliberat, în baza decretului de grațiere 421/55.<sup>11</sup>

După eliberare se înscrie la Facultatea de Filologie Clasică, unde-l cunoaște pe Marcel Petrișor, cel care-i va rămâne prieten apropiat întreaga viață. Este rearestat la 11 noiembrie 1956,<sup>12</sup> fiind acuzat că a înființat alături de Marcel Petrișor, Valentin Dimitriu și Dionisie Stoenescu Partidul *Frontul Național Republican*.<sup>13</sup> La percheziția domiciliară, alături de obiecte personale, Securitatea a găsit la Demostene Andronescu o bibliotecă bogată, printre care se număra o „*Gramatică a limbii grecești* și două caiete cu scrieri în limba greacă.”<sup>14</sup>

Noul val represiv era un răspuns prin care regimul încerca să anihileze orice influență a revoluției ungare din 1956 și de a demonstra Moscovei stabilitatea regimului comunist de la București. De aceea, Securitatea a inventat vinovății fictive, precum înființarea acestui partid de către Demostene Andronescu și ceilalți, motivul real fiind condamnarea anterioară.

Cercetările penale asupra grupului au fost conduse de temutul Gheorghe Enoiu,<sup>15</sup> locțiitorul șefului Direcției Anchete Penale a MAI. Deși dosarele Securității nu redau torturile anchetelor, ne putem da seama de violențele extreme la care a fost

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 9, f. 11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 1, f. VII.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 94.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 2, f. 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 1.

supus Demostene Andronescu analizând două declarații consecutive date în fața lui Enoiu. Dacă în 11 noiembrie 1956, chiar în ziua arestării, Demostene Andronescu declară „că nu a desfășurat nici un fel de activitate contrarevoluționară alături de Marcel Petrișor,”<sup>16</sup> cinci zile mai târziu, pe 16 noiembrie, acesta își schimbă declarația, afirmând ceea ce dorea Enoiu să audă. Faptul că declarația este dată sub presiune, sau doar semnată de Demostene Andronescu, se reflectă și în limbajul utilizat, care respectă frazeologică comunistă, „în octombrie 56 mi-am reînceput activitatea contrarevoluționară. După ce am văzut ce se întâmplă în Ungaria, împreună cu Petrișor am început să ne organizăm și să instigăm elemente dușmănoase dintre studenți să treacă la acțiuni contra-revoluționare.”<sup>17</sup>

După finalizarea cercetărilor în martie 1957,<sup>18</sup> sentința este pronunțată de către Președintele Tribunalul București, Emil Hirsch, la 10 mai 1957, Demostene Andronescu fiind condamnat la 20 de ani muncă silnică.<sup>19</sup> După un parcurs prin închisorile Uranus și Jilava, acesta ajunge la Aiud în octombrie 1957.<sup>20</sup> Încarcerat în Celularul mare până în 1963 este transferat apoi în Fabrica penitenciarului.<sup>21</sup>

Pe tot parcursul detenției la Aiud Demostene Andronescu este pedepsit cu 44 de zile de izolare pentru diverse „abateri” de la regulament: o primă pedeapsă o primește chiar în decembrie

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 21.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 25.28.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 423-442.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 3, f. 123v.

<sup>20</sup> ACNSAS, fond *Informativ*, dosar 137701, f. 20.

<sup>21</sup> ACNSAS, fond *Penal*, dosar 1562, vol. 5, f. 10.



1957,<sup>22</sup> când este surprins „că bătea la morse, comunicând că este izolat.” Apoi, de-a lungul anilor, este pedepsit pentru „statul întins în pat,”<sup>23</sup> deținerea unui ac de cusut,<sup>24</sup> „scrierea într-o limbă străină pe peretele camerei”<sup>25</sup> sau discuția cu alți deținuți la geamul celulei.

Din februarie 1963 Demostene Andronescu este transferat în Fabrica penitenciarului, unde totalizează 317 zile de muncă până în iulie 1964.<sup>26</sup> În toată această perioadă nu a beneficiat de favoruri din partea regimului, „deoarece a fost scos la muncă numai din februarie 1963 și nu s-a evidențiat în muncă sau pe linia activității cultural educative,”<sup>27</sup> cum era denumită în documente reeducarea.

Înainte de surprinde care a fost poziția lui Demostene Andronescu în cadrul reeducării de la Aiud, trebuie înțeles contextul mai larg al reeducării și care au fost obiectivele și rezultatele acesteia. Reeducarea, ca metodă represivă, a debutat în forma cea mai violentă prin experimentul Pitești și s-a extins în alte spații de detenție comuniste, precum Gherla, Canal, Târgu Ocna, Ocnele Mari, Târgșor ș.a. „Metodologia” reeducării a corespuns practicilor represive utilizate de regim în procesul de restructurare al societății, având rolul de a instituționaliza și generaliza teroarea și frica.

Fenomenul reeducării de la Aiud, ultimul episod de acest gen din universul carceral comunist, este expresia represiunii

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 29.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 16.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 18.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 20.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 13.

declanșate după revoluția din Ungaria, când la nivelul Direcției a III-a a Securității se ia decizia inițierii unor acțiuni reeducative, coordonate de Serviciul Independent din această direcție și de Serviciul Serviciului Cultural - Educativ din Direcția Generală a Penitenciarelor și Coloniilor de Muncă.<sup>28</sup>

Încadrată temporal între anii 1959-1964 și adresată în principal deținuților considerați legionari,<sup>29</sup> reeducarea este expresia fidelă a regimului politic din anii '60, dominat de stabilitate. În acest context, metodologia se rafinează, dar scopurile rămân aceleași. Regimul urmărește dincolo de scopul declarat al reeducării - distrugerea organizației legionare - anihilarea politică a deținuților și compromiterea acestora tocmai prin participarea la reeducare. Pentru îndeplinirea acestor obiective s-a permanentizat violența psihică (izolarea în Zarcă, camera nebunilor), demascarea publică și radicalizarea tensiunilor dintre deținuți.

În acest efort, regimul valorizează la maximum uzura anilor de detenție asupra deținuților. Foametea, frigul, izolarea, bătaile, mizeria, lipsa contactului cu familia, omniprezența morții au diminuat capacitatea de rezistență a deținuților.

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<sup>28</sup> Mihai Demetriade, „Descompunere și reabilitare. Elemente cadru privind activitatea Grupului Operativ Aiud”, în Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, *Caietele CNSAS*, anul II, nr. 2 (4), Editura Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, București, 2009, p. 266.

<sup>29</sup> În februarie 1958 se ia decizia la nivelul conducerii Direcției a III-a ca în Aiud să fie concentrați deținuți legionari. Din acel moment numărul legionarilor închiși în Aiud crește simțitor. Astfel, dacă în februarie 1958 în Aiud erau 800 de legionari, la 15 octombrie 1959 numărul acestora ajunge la 1955. În martie erau 3089 deținuți din care 2786 legionari, iar în noiembrie 1961 erau încarcerați 3262 deținuți legionari, dintr-un total de 3632 deținuți. (ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosarele 13483, 13484, 12609).

Se construiește un cadru organizațional, fiind înființat în martie 1959<sup>30</sup> un Grup Operativ sub conducerea colonelului Gheorghe Crăciun, întregul proces decizional fiind structurat și controlat eficient, de la nivelul conducerii de partid și minister până la ofițerii politici din închisoare. Munca cultural-educativă (cum era denumită eufemistic reeducarea în documentele Securității) era dublată de o intensă muncă informativă.

Munca informativă, cu instrumentarul specific Securității (note, rapoarte, agenți, tehnică operativă), reprezentând motorul prin care Grupul Operativ a coordonat reeducarea, a vizat obiective multiple: documentarea activității deținuților; stabilirea „comandamentului” legionar; deschiderea de acțiuni informative asupra liderilor legionari și a deținuților „fanatici”; crearea, instruirea, infiltrarea și camuflarea agenturii; descoperirea și exploatarea disensiunilor dintre legionari; compromiterea deținuților „refractari”; monitorizarea muncii cultural-educative.<sup>31</sup>

După 3 ani de pregătiri, îndeosebi pe linie operativă, reeducarea debutează public în 1962 în cadrul ședințelor de club, unde deținuții sunt chemați să susțină deschis declarații auto-demascatoare, ce aveau următorul tipic: desolidarizarea de organizația legionară și condamnarea acesteia; demascarea propriei activități politice și incriminarea liderilor legionari și a cunoscuților; asumarea încadrării în noul regim;

Deși studiul de față nu-și propune să evalueze pozițiile deținuților, care au format o paletă foarte largă de opțiuni și

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<sup>30</sup> ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 3463, f. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Dragoș Ursu, „Reeducare și viață cotidiană în penitenciarul Aiud”, în *Între transformare și adaptare. Avataruri ale cotidianului în regimul comunist din România*, Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc, Volumul VIII, Polirom, Iași, 2013, p. 101.

atitudini<sup>32</sup>, de la cei care au refuzat deschis reeducarea, asumându-și orice risc, până la cei care, puțini la număr, și-au asumat deplin rolul de reeducatori ai propriilor colegi de detenție, trebuie accentuat contextul în care a avut loc reeducarea. În primul rând, situația politică a României care la începutul anilor 1960 se afla în contrast evident cu România de după război, ruinată, ocupată de trupele sovietice și dominată de represivitatea regimului. De asemenea, sub aspect material, România din vremea reeducării „beneficia” de peste un deceniu de efortul modernizator al comunismului, care reușise să înlăture distrugerile războiului. Aceste realități, alături de soliditatea regimului, care se bucura de un oarecare sprijin popular, confirma oricărei minți lucide că soarta organizației legionare era pecetluită iar reluarea luptei împotriva comunismului imposibilă.

Revenind la poziția lui Demonstene Andronescu în cadrul reeducării, odată cu debutul public în 1962 al „muncii cultural-educative,” acesta a intrat și el sub radarul Grupului Operativ. Poziția lui, materializată în 4 declarații, deschide spre o dezbatere referitoare la condiția deținutului și gradul de asumare al reeducării.

În prima declarație, din decembrie 1962, acesta se menține pe o poziție „refractară, asumându-și identitatea creștină, în detrimentul celei legionare: „Ca și concepție de viață sunt creștin. Ca stil de viață, mă străduiesc să-l realizez pe cel creștin.

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<sup>32</sup> Grupul Operativ i-a avut în atenție și a desfășurat o presiune mai mare asupra celor pe care i-a identificat ca lideri ai deținuților și pe care i-a supus unor practici represive și persuasive mai intense cu scopul reeducării acestora. În schimb, în cazul mării mase a deținuților, aceștia au trebuit doar să-și asume, în mod formal, o declarație de desolidarizare de trecutul politic și de fidelitate față de regimul comunist.

În măsura în care concepția și stilul de viață creștin se întâlnește cu cel legionar sau comunist, în aceeași măsură sunt legionar sau comunist. Despre atitudinea politică, declar că politică nu fac. Fără să fiu de acord cu orânduirea socială și cu regimul actual, așa cum religia mă învață – Dați Cezarului ce-i al Cezarului – mă voi supune acolo unde voi fi. Aceasta este poziția mea actuală. Menționez, pentru că s-ar putea ca peste o săptămână să spun altfel. S-ar putea ca pierzându-mi mințile să bravez sau să susțin enormități. S-ar putea în libertate să iau o atitudine ipocrită.”<sup>33</sup>

Faptul de a renunța la identitatea legionară, nu-l transformă pe Demostene Andronescu într-un trădător sau înfrânt, caracterizările colonelului Crăciun de la finalul reeducării indicând contrariul. Detașarea și condamnarea organizației legionare în procesul reeducării era, în mod paradoxal, firească. Era principalul aspect pe care regimul îl cerea de la deținuți, deși era conștient de formalitatea actului. Iar apoi, pentru orice deținut rațional, în acel context extrem, în care regimul părea indestructibil și susținut la nivel popular, mișcarea legionară era cu capitol istoric încheiat, fără posibilitatea renașterii, aspect pe care evoluțiile istorice ulterioare aveau să-l confirme.

Celălalt plan, al realizărilor regimului și încadrării în ordine socială, pozițiile deținuților erau non-invazive. România anilor '60 arăta cu totul transformat, sub aspect material, față de țara distrusă de război de la sfârșitul anilor '40, când mare parte din deținuți au fost încarcerați.

Pasul, incriminabil într-o oarecare măsură, pe care Demostene Andronescu nu-l face niciodată este condamnarea și demascarea celorlalți deținuți. Astfel, în declarația din 25

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<sup>33</sup> ACNSAS, fond *Informativ*, dosar 137701, ff. 33-34.

septembrie 1963, acesta afirmă cu tărie: „nu mă mai consider legionar și nu mai vreau să am nimic comun cu fosta organizație legionară. Ceea ce nu am însă posibilitatea sufltească să fac este aceea de a nu putea acuza și insulta pe nimeni dintre cei care m-au dus pe drumul acesta. Nu sunt de acord cu concepția filosofică marxistă. Cu consecințele sociale sunt de acord. Fac această precizare, deoarece am declarat că sunt creștin și ca atare nu pot împărtăși concepția filosofică marxistă. Dar aceasta este o problemă personală, nu fac din ea o formă de luptă. Cu această rezervă înțeleg să mă încadrez cinstit în această ordine.”<sup>34</sup>

În ultima declarație, din martie 1964, Demostene Andronescu este obligat să respecte formatul standard al declarațiile auto-biografice din ședințele de club ale reeducării. Plecând de la detalii biografii, deținutul trebuia, în stilul determinismului marxist, să-și analizeze întreaga viață, părinții, mediul social, educația, averea ca fiind aspecte care l-au împins să devină legionar și dușman al poporului. În final, totul se încheia cu o poziție fermă de condamnare a mișcării legionare și încadrare în noua ordine socială și politică. Merită subliniată nuanța pe care Demostene Andronescu o aduce acestui exercițiu impus: „Acestea fiind concluziile la care am ajuns, sunt hotărât să merg pe drumul care mi-a fost indicat, **însă voi face acest lucru așa cum am mai specificat, în felul meu** (s.n.).”<sup>35</sup>

Dincolo de poziția publică manifestată în ședințele de club, Demostene Andronescu, asemenea celorlalți deținuți, afișa o atitudine total diferită în fața colegilor din celulă. Astfel, în plină reeducare, în aprilie 1964, o notă informativă relevă starea de

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 27.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 24.

spirit a acestuia. Informatorul, fost coleg de liceu, rezumă în nota sa evoluția în timpul reeducării a lui Demostene Andronescu: „A avut o atitudine foarte refractară față de reeducare. Primul lucru pe care mi l-a spus: orice afirmație negativă se face aici în club despre legionari și Mișcarea Legionară, noi trebuie să le respingem ca neadevărate. În plus îi părea rău că acceptase să rămână în club. Mai târziu a făcut declarația publică că a fost și încă mai este dușman al regimului din țara noastră, dar că așteaptă ca acumulările lente cantitative să ducă la saltul calitativ. El spunea că nu mai este legionar, însă rămâne un mare adversar al comunismului. Pe măsură ce afirma că nu mai este legionar, începea să accepte ca adevărate informațiile despre crimele legionarilor. Mi-a spus că el este naționalist, dar nu vede în asta suprimarea celorlalte naționalități conlocuitoare, nici măcar suprimarea drepturilor politice. Mi-a spus că nu-i e rușine că a fost legionar. În iarnă și-a făcut analiza, arătând în mod sincer toată activitatea legionară pe care a avut-o, cel puțin cât cunosc eu. Am discutat despre morală. Eu am afirmat că morala nu aparține unei religii, ci ea s-a născut din necesitatea oamenilor de a trăi în comunitate. Mi-a răspuns că nu este de acord cu mine și că părerea lui este că omul se naște cu anumite principii morale care-i sunt sădite în suflet de divinitate.”<sup>36</sup>

Relatarea informatorului este confirmată de colonelul Crăciun în caracterizarea pe care i-o face lui Demostene Andronescu la eliberarea din detenție în iulie 1964, caracterizare ce reprezenta prima piesă a dosarului de urmărire informativă deschis de Securitate după eliberare: „În detenție este cunoscut ca un legionar care nu a renunțat la vechea mentalitate, a întreținut

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 17-18.

relații apropiate cu legionarii fanatici, fiind semnalat că se manifestă dușmănos. Față de munca culturală, a avut o atitudine ostilă, dând declarație scrisă că el „nu acceptă sub nicio formă să-i fie constrânsă conștiința. El este legionar și așa vrea să trăiască.” Ulterior, în urma discuțiilor organizate în clubul FDC, sub influența unora care s-au rupt de Mișcarea Legionară, a fost determinat să revină asupra primei declarații și să accepte participarea la activitatea culturală. Cu ocazia prezentării poziției, nu a luat atitudine critică față de organizația legionară, afirmând doar că nu mai este legionar. Activitatea sa culturală a fost limitată, cu ezitări și rețineri. Datorită legăturilor sale în rândul legionarilor și a nehotărârii manifestate, este pretabil reluării activității legionare.”<sup>37</sup>

După eliberare, Demostene Andronescu este urmărit permanent de Securitate pentru legăturile pe care le avea cu părintele Gheorghe Calciu, Marcel Petrișor, Iosif Iosif, Constantin Găbudeanu sau Horia Drăghici. Punctul maxim al supravegherii este atins în noiembrie 1983 – ianuarie 1984, când asupra lui Demostene Andronescu „se inițiază un complex de măsuri: neutralizare, compromitere, descurajare, percheziție domiciliară și anchetă.”<sup>38</sup> După o percheziție în noiembrie 1983,<sup>39</sup> când i-au fost ridicate poezii în manuscris și lucrarea *Apostrofa unui teolog*, în ianuarie 1984 Demostene Andronescu, acuzat fiind de colportarea știrilor de la Europa Liberă despre Aurel State sau Petre Țuțea,<sup>40</sup> este anchetat și avertizat de Securitate. Șicanele din partea poliției

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 2.

<sup>38</sup> ACNSAS, fond *Informativ*, dosar 163173, f. 5.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 9.



politice au continuat, o ultimă declarație din cadrul unei anchete, ce apare în dosar fiind datată – 15 iulie 1986.<sup>41</sup>

### **Reeducarea de la Aiud în memoria(listica) Gulagului**

Acțiunile de reeducare ale deținuților de către regimul comunist au creat răni nu numai în rândul deținuților, dar și la nivelul literaturii memorialistice. Dacă în cazul reeducării de la Pitești, violența extremă și unicitatea fenomenului absolvă în întregime deținuții care au fost acolo, în schimb, la Aiud, aparentul umanism al administrației, regimul de detenție și metodele folosite au creat tensiuni între deținuți. Atitudinile și pozițiile atât de diverse, precum și gradele diferite de acceptare sau refuz ale reeducării au spart unitatea memoriei. Astfel, în cazul reeducării de la Aiud - unde se poate sesiza o tensiune la nivelul literaturii memorialistice - nu avem o memorie unitară a reeducării, ci multiple povești ale memoriei despre reeducare.<sup>42</sup>

Despre reeducarea de la Aiud s-a scris încă dinainte de 1989, fragmente relevante regăsind în memoriile foștilor deținuți politici, pe care aceștia le-au scris asumându-și riscurile perchezițiilor și ale posibilelor incriminări penale din partea Securității. Însă prima lucrare dedicată reeducării de la Aiud a apărut în 1972 la New York, fiind semnată de Ion Cârja,<sup>43</sup> el

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 28.

<sup>42</sup> Dragoș Ursu, „Memoria reeducării din penitenciarul Aiud”, în Valeriu Antonovici, Claudia-Florentina Dobre (editori), *Prezentul Comunismului: memorie culturală și abordări istoriografice*, Ratio&Revelatio, 2017, Oradea, p. 22.

<sup>43</sup> Ion Cârja, *Amintiri din infern*, vol. 2, Acțiunea românească, New York, 1972.

însuși supraviețuitor al reeducării, care-și propune prin demersul său să înfățișeze Occidentului ororile din temnițele comuniste.<sup>44</sup>

Pentru cel care-și scrie memoriile în România comunistă, contextul politic influențează motivația și conținutul scrierii. Înainte de 1989, memorialistul e conștient că scrie pentru posteritate, nu credea că amintirile îi vor fi publicate în timpul vieții. Astfel, paradoxal sau nu, el este mai detașat. În primul rând, demersul este lipsit de miză politică, de vreme ce în acel context orice discuție despre legionarism era periculoasă. Apoi, nu există o dezbatere despre reeducare, martorul nu se raportează la ce au scris ceilalți, ci la posteritate.<sup>45</sup>

În acest cadru se plasează memoriile lui Ioan Ianolide<sup>46</sup> și Aurel State<sup>47</sup>, doi dintre deținuții pe care chiar Grupul Operativ Aiud îi considera „refractari,” respectiv cei care refuzau reeducarea. Poziția lor în reeducare, detașată de lupta politică, s-a transferat și la nivelul scrisului memorialistic, cei doi autori accentuând mecanismul represiv al reeducării fără să condamne,

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<sup>44</sup> Lucrarea lui Ion Cârja impresionează prin bogăția de detalii și rigoare factologică. Un aspect foarte important, care se va dovedi esențial în polemica legată de reeducare, e identitatea politică a martorului, iar în cazul lui Ion Cârja, faptul că acesta nu era legionar s-a răsfrânt în paginile sale memorialistice, din care transpare detașarea sa legionarism și accentele critice față de liderii legionari.

<sup>45</sup> Dragoș Ursu, „Memoria reeducării din penitenciarul Aiud”, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> Ioan Ianolide, *Întoarcerea la Hristos: document pentru o lume nouă*, Christiana, București, 2006. Finalizate în 1984, Ioan Ianolide își exprimă dorința testamentară ca memoriile să fie publicate după moartea acestuia, care survine în 1986.

<sup>47</sup> Aurel State, *Drumul Crucii: amintiri de pe front și din lagăr*, Editura Fundației „Sfinții închisorilor”, Pitești, 2013. O primă ediție a lucrării lui Aurel State a apărut la Freiburg în 1983.

dar nici să absolve, pozițiile oscilante și capitulările celorlalți deținuți.

Un caz special îl reprezintă Nistor Chioreanu, unul din liderii al legionarilor din Aiud în timpul reeducării. Scrise înainte de 1989, confiscate în primă instanță de Securitate în 1978 și publicate mai apoi în 1992, memoriile lui Chioreanu izvorăsc din intenția martorului de a răspunde reeducării. Din rândurile lucrării *Morminte vii*<sup>48</sup> se degajă imaginea unui lider politic învins, care încearcă să-și justifice acțiunile politice și să-și cauționeze camarazii de suferință.

Căderea comunismului a fost urmată de un puternic val recuperator al memoriei deopotrivă încarcerate și carcerale. Literatura de și despre detenție, mărturiile orale au inundat dezbaterile publice după 1989, ca urmare a demersului de regăsire identitară prin care trecea societatea românească.<sup>49</sup> Pentru supraviețuitorii Gulagului, experiența în Aiud și mai ales în Zarcă – închisoarea închisorilor, devine un certificat al suferinței și rezistenței împotriva comunismului. Acum se profilează și ceea ce s-ar putea numi *tensiuni ale memoriei*, determinate de trei cauze majore care se intersectează: contextul și motivația discursului memorialistic, dublate de poziția autorului în reeducare.

Anii 90 au fost caracterizați de încercările, care s-au dovedit falimentare, de reafirmare politică a ideilor legionare. Astfel, supraviețuitorii Gulagului doreau, prin apelul la memoria suferinței, să justifice noile acțiuni politice. În acest cadru se plasează și discursul despre reeducarea de la Aiud, care era văzută ca un front al confruntării dintre regimul comunist și organizația

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<sup>48</sup> Nistor Chioreanu, *Morminte vii*, Institutul European, Iași, 1992.

<sup>49</sup> Dragoș Ursu, „Memoria reeducării din penitenciarul Aiud”, p. 19.

legionară. Foștii deținuți politici sunt, pe de o parte, motivați de intenția de a-și „apăra” camarazii de suferință care s-au reeducat, iar pe de altă parte de a răspunde la culpa generală care plana asupra Mișcării Legionare. Aceștia își apără astfel propria identitate politică, granița dintre cele două motivații fiind permeabilă, iar tensiunile găsesc, în doze diferite, în memorialistica reeducării de la Aiud.<sup>50</sup>

În acest registru se situează memoriile lui Tiberiu Hentea<sup>51</sup> și Grigore Caraza.<sup>52</sup> Intransigența din reeducare a acestora s-a transferat în rândurile mărturiilor, autorii fiind categorici și față de deținuții care au acceptat reeducarea, dar mai ales față de aceia pe care-i consideră responsabili de impactul reeducării în rândul deținuți și asupra cărora transferă întreagă vinovăție, tocmai cu intenția de disculpa responsabilitatea liderilor legionari.<sup>53</sup>

Reeducarea de la Aiud a generat și o altfel de memorie – memoria Securității. Este vorba de cartea-interviu a jurnalistului Viorel Cacoveanu,<sup>54</sup> de la ziarul *Făclia* din Cluj, cu colonelul Crăciun, comandantul închisorii Aiud. Prin demersul său,

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35.

<sup>51</sup> Tiberiu Hentea, *De la Cotul Donului la Aiud*, Gordian, Timișoara, 1996.

<sup>52</sup> Grigore Caraza, *Aiud însângerat*, TipoMoldova, Iași, 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Pentru Grigore Caraza, responsabili pentru reeducare sunt doar Cristofor Dancu și Valeriu Anania, Caraza menționând expres că din cei 64 care au format comitetul de reeducare, vrea să rămână scris că „primul dintre cei 64 este Valeriu Anania, iar ultimul Cristofor Dancu.” (Grigore Caraza, *op. cit.*, p.146).

<sup>54</sup> Viorel Cacoveanu, *Satanizarea României*, Obiectiv, Craiova, 2006. Lucrarea face parte din colecția *Exploziv*, în care au mai apărut *Extratereștrii în România*; *Adevăruri explozive – evrei, masonerie; Revanșa Daciei; Oculta mondială*.

Cacoveanu vrea să răspundă Luciei Hossu-Longin, al cărei serial îl cataloghează ironic „Manipularea durerii.”<sup>55</sup>

Cartea, în care sunt compilate pasaje din interviul cu Gheorghe Crăciun, rezumate și analize ale lui Cacoveanu, urmărește să justifice comunismul românesc. Pentru Cacoveanu, care reia temele Securității, autorii represiei și ai abuzurilor sunt sovieticii, comuniștii români „urmărind să se desprindă de sovietici și pentru asta aveau nevoie de consensul societății și de aportul deținuților politici.”<sup>56</sup>

Dincolo de erorile factologice majore, lucrarea lui Cacoveanu ne prezintă o mistificare a reeducării, un peisaj bucolic al închisorii Aiud, în care un comandant binevoitor nu se simțea confortabil în postura de torționar, creând un regim de detenția umanizat prin care dorea să-i câștige pe deținuți în favoarea cauzei comunismului românesc.<sup>57</sup>

În acest context al dezbatelor memoriale despre reeducarea de la Aiud se încadrează și demersul lui Demostene Andronescu. Publicată în serial în revista sibiană *Puncte Cardinale*, între anii 1993-1996, analiza fenomenului reeducării este motivată prin dorința autorului de a explica contextul represiv și mecanismele psihologice ale înfrângerii, dar, mai ales, pentru a-i apăra pe cei „înfrânți,” care nu au avut șansa să moară eroic, de cei care n-au cunoscut urgia comunismului și pentru care vinovații sunt tot victimele și nu călăii, „regizorii” genocidului comunist.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, coperta I.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 30.

<sup>57</sup> Dragoș Ursu, „Memoria reeducării din penitenciarul Aiud”, p. 34.

În activitatea publicistică<sup>58</sup> Demostene Andronescu nu se rezumă doar la episodul reeducării din Aiud, ci analizează, comentează provocările prezentului, ale unei tranziții permanente, dovedindu-se un polemist percutant, „spectator” implicat pe scena culturală și politică a României post-decembriste. Articolele lui Demostene Andronescu transmit „spiritul reacționar” al unui om de dreapta, dezamăgit de naufragiul politic al dreptei în post-comunism și care dă glas așteptărilor foștilor deținuți politici ca genocidul comunist și victimele acestuia să se bucure de aceeași atenție precum Holocaustul și victimele sale.

După aproape 15 ani de la serialul dedicat reeducării în *Puncte Cardinale*, Demostene Andronescu dezvoltă subiectul, utilizând noi surse documentare și memorialistice. Apare astfel în 2006 la editura Christiana volumul *Reeducarea de la Aiud*, devenit normativ pentru cercetătorii și publicul interesat de fenomenul carceral din România comunistă.

În primul rând trebuie menționat că volumul *Reeducarea de la Aiud* nu e un volum memorialistic propriu-zis, în care martorul-supraviețuitor relatează experiența carcerală. Demostene Andronescu, asumându-și smerenia suferinței, nu vorbește despre sine, ci despre ceilalți, subiectul cărții nefiind propria experiență, ci fenomenul dramatic al reeducării.

Volumul pendulează între memorialistică și istorie, fiind greu încadrabil, deoarece autorul utilizează și alte surse, memorialistice sau documentare, și îngreunează astfel efortul cititorului sau al cercetătorului de a localiza experiențele

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<sup>58</sup> Articolele publicate în revista *Puncte Cardinale* au fost editate în volumul Demostene Andronescu, *De veghe la cumpăna vremilor*, Christiana, București, 2011.

personale ale martorului de ceea ce a (re)povestit din experiențele altora.

Istoric de formație, Demostene Andronescu își dă măsura priceperii profesionale, propunând publicului o grilă de lectură coerentă asupra unui subiect vast, imposibil de cuprins în toate detaliile și implicațiile istorice și umane. De altfel, autorul nu-și propune să epuizeze subiectul, nici măcar să-l descrie în amănunt, ci tratează marile teme, oferind o viziune unitară asupra reeducării: autori (conducerea PCR, MAI, Securitatea, colonelul Crăciun); metode (izolare, presiune psihologică, urmărire, demascări, procese-publice); scopuri (neutralizarea organizației legionari și compromiterea deținuților prin participarea la reeducare); figuri eroice (George Manu și Alexandru Ghica) etc.

În demersul zugrăvirii universului reeducării, istoricul utilizează surse documentare diverse. În primul rând, lucrările memorialistice ale celorlalți supraviețuitori, precum Ion Cârja, Liviu Brânzaș, Nistor Chioreanu, Petre Pandrea sau chiar volumul justificativ al lui Viorel Cacoveanu care, în dialog cu Gheorghe Crăciun, încearcă să dilueze vinovăția acestuia, creionând, în mod „surprinzător,” imaginea unui comandant grijuliu, preocupat de recuperarea și binele deținuților. În plan documentar, Demostene Andronescu folosește documente din arhiva fostei Securități, precum propriile declarații din reeducare și raportul final despre reeducare ale colonelului Crăciun, care sunt și atașate ca anexe la corpul lucrării.

Condiționată de calitatea surselor, pe care istoricul le validează indirect integrându-le în experiența martorului, analiza lui Demostene Andronescu reflectă nivelul de cunoaștere din anii '90, dar mai ales contextul politic, dominat de tentativele, eşuate

ulterior, de renaștere a dreptei interbelice. Se deschide o dezbatere interesantă, despre identitatea politică a martorului și consecințele asupra textului memorialistic, una din temele mari spre care ne trimite demersul lui Demostene Andronescu, alături de multe altele, precum relația arhive-memorie, martorul ca istoric, întâlnirea victimă-călău, asumarea trecutului.

Deși afiliat Mișcării Legionare, Demostene Andronescu n-a făcut parte efectiv din organizația legionară, el intrând în *Frățiile de Cruce* abia în 1947. Asumarea identității legionare se produce în detenție unde, prin disponibilitatea sa sufletească, Demostene Andronescu sintetizează din contactele cu legionarii ceea ce el își reprezintă ca fiind valoros, un impact major având pentru deținutul Andronescu valorile universal-umane care i-au caracterizat și pe aceștia în închisoare: solidaritatea, demnitatea, spiritualitatea creștină, educația.

Identitatea politică a martorului Demostene Andronescu s-a reflectat în analiza istoricului, care a încercat să disculpe, uneori fără argumente solide, vinovățiile organizației legionare, precum asasinarea lui Nicolae Iorga sau guvernarea legionară dezastruoasă, pe care Demostene Andronescu le pune pe seama infiltrării agenților sovietici în Mișcarea Legionară cu scopul de a o compromite, un astfel de agent KGB fiind și Traian Boieru, liderul echipei care l-a împușcat pe Nicolae Iorga.<sup>59</sup>

Dar și aceste interpretări pot fi înțelese în contextul recuperator al anilor 90, când foștii deținuți politici încercau să reabiliteze un trecut ocultat, incriminat și falsificat de propaganda comunistă.

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<sup>59</sup> Demostene Andronescu, *Reeducarea de la Aiud*, p. 22.



În altă ordine de idei, prezumția că rezistența legionară deschisă față de comunism în anii '45-'48 ar fi putut schimba desfășurarea evenimentelor sau, cel puțin, ar fi consolidat eroismul victimelor, nu trebuie judecată cu măsura zilelor noastre, la aproape trei decenii de la căderea comunismului și 70 de ani de la evenimente, ci înțeleasă în contextul dorinței legitime a autorului, pentru care a plătit cu închisoarea, ca România să fi avut alt destin.

## Concluzii

Prin intermediul Demostene Andronescu avem ocazia să înțelegem deopotrivă destinul unei personalități care și-a asumat opoziția față de comunism, cât și activitatea publicistică și efortul memorialistic al unui fost deținut politic care a vrut să conștientizeze opinia publică de ororile temnițelor comuniste.

Demostene Andronescu ne oferă exemplu rezistenței și supraviețuirii personale în fața comunismului, atât în spatele gratiilor, unde deținutul Andronescu depune mărturia demnității manifestate cu simplitate, cât și după eliberare, când străbate un sfert de veac comunist fără compromisuri cu puterea politică.

De asemenea, prin intermediul lui Demostene Andronescu descoperim importanța contextului și a motivațiilor care fundamentează demersul memorial, alături de identitatea politică și resorturile interioare ale martorului, toate aceste aspecte reprezentând instrumente obligatorii pentru înțelegerea modului cum s-a construit, după căderea comunismului, discursul memorialistic referitor la Gulagul românesc.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**DORIN-GABRIEL POP**  
**SUSANNAH RADSTONE, KATHARINE HODGKIN (ED.),**  
***REGIMES OF MEMORY*, ROUTLEDGE, LONDRA, NEW**  
**YORK, 2003, 224 P.**

Statutul înalt pe care memoria îl ocupă în cadrul discursului și al dezbaterilor academice contemporane, ca urmare a recalibrării discursului istoriografic în vederea unei recentrări asupra individului în istorie, precum și resurgența evenimentului, acel *retour de l'événement* observat și analizat de François Dosse, au determinat o serie de lucrări teoretic-reflexive asupra relațiilor dintre memorie și timp, reconfigurările memoriei în diverse contexte ideologice<sup>1</sup>, precum și asocierile acesteia cu locurile, cu identitatea, cu fanteziile specifice omului și chiar cu mass-media.

Un astfel de demers reflexiv, ancorat mai degrabă într-o perspectivă epistemologică asupra memoriei îl reprezintă și lucrarea de față, care propune o analiză asupra memoriei în conceptualitatea sa sau asupra modalităților în care aceasta „produce” sau emană subiectivitate, dar și asupra metamorfozelor memoriei, a manierei în care aceasta este tratată, augmentată sau redusă la tăcere de diferite regimuri de putere, în timpuri și spații diferite. Lucrarea analizează astfel aceste „regimuri ale memoriei”, produse ale produselor memoriei, dacă este să ducem

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Luisa Passerini (ed.), *Memory and Totalitarianism*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick (U.S.A.) and London (U.K.), 2008.

mai departe metafora lui Edward Casey<sup>2</sup>. Colecția de studii pornește de la o plasare a lucrării în interiorul studiilor despre memorie, cartând istoriile acesteia și tehnologiile reprezentării, de la relația dintre memorie și limbaj, așa cum era ea reprezentată de gânditorii moderni, până la analiza memoriei dintr-o perspectivă organică, ca o structură materială, palimpsestică, care reține dar poate și scrie în plus<sup>3</sup>. În ceea ce privește abordările post-structuraliste și postmoderniste asupra memoriei, editorii volumului consideră că principalul atu al memoriei, privit din această perspectivă, a fost acela de a fi capabilă să „spargă” narațiunile hegemonice ale Istoriei, să destabilizeze istoria scrisă cu majusculă și să o readucă la statutul de istorii, subliniind rolul deosebit de important al memoriei ca expresie a personalului prin excelență, o celebrare a unei subiectivității vii, extrem de interesante.

Mai mult, perspectiva postmodernă ține cont și de mutațiile psihologice postbelice, care au determinat regimuri memoriale nemaîntâlnite, în care memoria devine purtătoarea a ceea ce nu poate fi exprimat discursiv sau nu poate fi reprezentat, ipostază din care memoria devine un și mai puternic contestatar al regimurilor publice ale Istoriei, devine un regim *sui generis*. Exagerările teoretice care pretindeau faptul că memoria e mai puțin mediată decât istoria au fost rapid cauterizate de o suită de demersuri venite din zona istoriei orale, care celebrau memoria,

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1987, p. 11, *apud* Susannah Radstone, Katharine Hodgkin (ed.), *Regimes of Memory*, Routledge, Londra, New York, 2003, pp. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Aici referința se îndreaptă mai ales către metafora freudiană a „carnețelului magic”, ale cărui pagini pot fi șterse, reținând, în același timp, și informația scrijelită anterior.

dar care ofereau și mecanismele epistemologice și interpretative pentru utilizarea acesteia, livrând, în același timp, exemple care să susțină ideea conform căreia memoria este și ea mediată, doar că într-o manieră diferită de istorie<sup>4</sup>. Cu toate acestea, Luisa Passerini conceptualizează și argumentează existența unor memorii i-mediate, nealterate, autentice, care continuă să „supraviețuiască” în interstițiile memoriei reduse la tăcere, suprimate, care rămân încastrate în gesturi și mișcări corporale<sup>5</sup>. Originile acestei perspective interpretative asupra memoriei traumatizate pot fi regăsite în viziunile medievale asupra mnemotehnicii sau a funcției mnemotehnice a artelor, sugerând existența unei memorii senzoriale, care înregistrează mărcile fizice ale unui eveniment, fără a lua o formă narativă. Astfel, reprezentările artistice evocă trauma, ne transpun în spectatori ai sentimentelor, ai trăirilor, ne fac parte ai unei memorii profunde, senzoriale, non-discursive<sup>6</sup>. Evenimentul este astfel simțit, mai degrabă decât văzut, iar în cazul transpunerii acestei memorii senzoriale în artă, nu se vorbește despre, ci din interiorul unei memorii sau experiențe, din interiorul unui organism care simte.

Meritul principal al lucrării este acela că deschide o serie de perspective interpretative asupra memoriei, pornind de la

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<sup>4</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The cultural experience of the Turin working class*, Cambridge University Press, 1987; Alessandro Portelli, *Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, Suny Press, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Luisa Passerini, „Memories Between Silence and Oblivion”, în Katharine Hodgkin, Susannah Radstone (ed.), *Contested Pasts: The politics of memory*, Routledge, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Random House, 1992; Jill Bennett, „The Aesthetics of Sense-Memory. Theorising trauma through the visual arts”, în Susannah Radstone, Katharine Hodgkin (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 27-39.

nevoia unei temporalități a memoriei sau de nevoia de a medita asupra temporalității memoriei, continuând cu o reflecție asupra relației dintre memorie, autenticitate și recunoaștere, discuție în cadrul căreia Janet Waker problematizează această relație, observând faptul că o memorie poate fi fidelă unei experiențe trăite, fără a fi neapărat veridică din punct de vedere istoric. În același regim memorial postmodern, Richard Terdiman compară comunicarea contemporană cu memoria, capacitatea ambelor de a comprima spațiul și timpul, subliniind dificultatea de a teoretiza memoria din perspectivă spațio-temporală.

Lucrarea aduce în discuție și felul în care regimurile istorice și sociale participă la nașterea și dezvoltarea unor regimuri memoriale. Tony Bennett urmărește modalitatea în care muzeele evoluționiste apărute în secolul al XIX-lea au influențat maniera de raportare și înțelesurile oferite memoriei în secolul XX, cu precădere cea organicistă sau arondată memoriei organice, în care trecutul este interpretat drept o forță care s-a depozitat într-un organism uman. De la discuția referitoare la corp, lucrarea se deplasează înspre spațiul privat, analizând relația dintre memorie, subiectivitate și sfera publică, context în care cea dintâi poate fi circumscrisă unui spațiu sau unei spațialități care conține obiecte imaginare. Originile acestei viziuni se regăsesc în aceeași *ars memoriae* invocată mai sus, în cadrul căreia spațiul imaginar creat era populat cu precepte etice și politice care trebuiau să servească unei vieți liniștite. Astfel, putem disjunge două descompuneri sau direcții asupra memoriei: prima, în care memoria apare ca o scriitură internă, în suflet sau în inimă și cea de-a doua, în care memoria apare ca depozitar al ceea ce trebuia rememorat, astfel încât omul să poată duce o viață publică liniștită.

Cea de a treia parte a lucrării introduce perspectiva psihanalitică asupra memoriei, de pe pozițiile neuro-psihanalizei care stabilește faptul că memoria operează în două moduri, declarativ și procedural. În studiile reunite aici, Paul Antze și Constantina Papoulias realizează o critică a regimurilor memoriale contemporane, livrând ideea conform căreia există o alteritate intrinsecă omului, inconștientă, care înregistrează, într-o manieră hieroglică, experiențele și evenimentele traumatice și care zguduie, din când în când, asemeni titanilor îngropați de zei sub munți, cotidianitatea. Capitolul Constantinei Papoulias, dedicat memoriei sociale, resuscitează moștenirea sociologică a lui Maurice Halbwachs și o corelează cu teoria lui Clifford Geertz referitoare la sistemele simbolice de referință și noile abordări psihanalitice, rezultatul fiind o perspectivă asupra memoriei în care aceasta devine una din schemele practice despre care vorbește Pierre Bourdieu, un inventar de mișcări sau practici corporale prin care anumite credințe și obiceiuri sunt transmise până în prezent. Astfel, în viziunea Constantinei Papoulias, lumea interioară a individului se formează prin sedimentarea obiceiurilor, dispozițiilor și tiparelor de acțiune prezente la nivel social<sup>7</sup>. Memoria devine așadar un proces care stabilește și menține legăturile din interiorul grupului social, printr-un șir de negocieri și circulații ale unor povești sau povești colective și printr-o serie de practici colective, vorbirea sau oralitatea fiind cea care conferă memoriei caracterul social. Tangența cu psihanaliza survine atunci când în cadrul acestor povești sunt atinse subiecte

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<sup>7</sup> Constantina Papoulias, „From the Agora to the junkyard. Social memory and psychic materialities”, în Susannah Radstone, Katharine Hodgkin (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 114-130.

care țin de memorii sau povestiri traumatice, context în care corpul devine o „matrice”, un purtător al comunicării, deschis către celălalt.

Ultima parte a lucrării este dedicată relației dintre istorie, memorie și timp, mai cu seamă relației, atât conștiente, cât și inconștiente, dintre timpul istoriei și cel al memoriei, autorii fiind de părere că istoria își poate lărgi câmpul analitic și comprehensiv îmbrățișând o temporalitate a memoriei, odată ce va hotărî să nu se mai retragă în fața complexităților temporale ale memoriei.

Bill Schwartz consideră, de pildă, că memoria sau timpul memoriei poate reprezenta un al patrulea nivel în schema braudeliană a timpului, fiind alocat vieții interioare, ca timp trăit al istoriei exterioare. Memoria este în măsură să spargă sensul uni-direcțional al temporalității istorice clasice, aducând împreună trecutul și prezentul, amestecându-le, forțând istoria să accepte interpretările inovative care vin dinspre filosofie, fenomenologie și psihologie care au ca subiect de reflecție temporalitatea.

Nu în ultimul rând, lucrarea de față are meritul de a prezenta un regim al memoriei extra-european, opus viziunii modern-occidentale, și anume cel al populației Sakalava din nord-estul Madagascarului, care reproduce trecutul prin intermediul a trei regimuri: activități performative sau practici spirituale, prin narațiuni despre regii din trecut și prin rămășițele materiale ale acestora (arhitectură, artefacte, oseminte)<sup>8</sup>. Un rol important în perpetuarea conștiinței istorice a comunității îl au mediile, care dau voce trecutului, întrupând foști monarhi, care vin să ofere sfaturi oamenilor prezentului. Astfel, această experiență spirituală

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Lambek, „Memory in a Maussian universe”, în Susannah Radstone, Katharine Hodgkin (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 202-216.

sau șamanică semnifică o conștiință a istoriei, dar, fiind localizată subiectiv, poate fi catalogată și ca memorie.

În concluzie, colecția de studii editată de Susannah Radstone și Katharine Hodgkin livrează o analiză conceptuală asupra memoriei, privită mai cu seamă dintr-o perspectivă non-psihiologică, oferind, în același timp, o perspectivă diacronică asupra regimurilor memoriale sau asupra condițiilor în care un anumit regim discursiv, ideologic sau politic produce memorie. Totodată, lucrarea semnalează unul din marile lipsuri ale scrisului istoric contemporan, atenuat însă de la apariția lucrării, și anume constanta reticență cu care istoricii privesc și se raportează la memorie.