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INSTITUTUL DE ISTORIE ORALĂ – CLUJ-NAPOCA

Str. Napoca nr. 11
Tel./Fax: 004-0264-597633
www.istoriaorala.ro e-mail: contact@istoriaorala.ro
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Editor's Note

The present issue of the *Annual of Oral History*, no. XIX/2018, focuses on the history of gold mining in the Apuseni Mountains resulting from a project called *History of Gold Mining in the Apuseni Mountains* supported by a grant of Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS – UEFISCDI, number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2016-0874, within PNCDI III, contract no. 150/2017. The project, directed by professor Doru Radosav, is innovative both in what regards the method(s) and the topic, with impact on socio-economic and cultural development of the area under scrutiny and of the entire Romanian society. The topic of gold mining in the Apuseni Mountains is extremely salient for nowadays Romania, due to virulent debate raised by the emergence of the ecologic – and not only – question launched by the prospective cyanide gold extraction by Gold Corporation at Roșia Montană which started in 1996 and ended in 2015, as result of massive street protests in Romanian main cities. This project offers a possible escape route out the politicized polemic around this issue and will cover a wider time-line and space in order to (re)construct a complete image of the gold mining craftsmanship across history.

With the aim of collecting oral history testimonies in the Apuseni Mountains area, in the so-called “golden quadrilateral,” the project covers the mining communities of Brad, Gura Barza, Luncoiul de Sus, Căinelul de sus, Valea Ruzii, Baia de Arieș, Băița, Crișcior, Crăciunești, Baia de Criș, Lupșa, Ribița, Rișca, Rișculița, Săcărâmb, Hondol – Certejul de Sus, Abrud

area, Almaş (including Almaşul Mare), Zlatna, Bucium, and Valea Dosului. Oral history is the only way of having access to first hand testimonies about the profession of miners and its impact on social groups shaped around it. In addition to this particular motivation, it is easy to observe that worldwide mining and especially mining craftsmanship/profession is going through a systemic crisis as symptomatically illustrates the well-known UK miners' strike in the mid-1980s, during Margaret Thatcher's mandate. The latest economic crisis challenged further the nation-state systemic foundations and raised fundamental questions about the future of traditional crafts and sustainable development in economically underdeveloped areas. This crisis hints at the mining craftsmanship as traditional occupation of local people and therefore there is a need for preserving its immaterial cultural heritage for future generations.

The project aims at connecting the research on history the gold mining across different époques to recent analytical key instruments employed by recent historiography: (im)material cultural heritage, gender roles in practicing the profession/craftsmanship as well as in miners' communities, the relationship between different centers and periphery, modernization, minorities, environment and landscape, resistance, and migration. It will try to clarify the terminology used by the scholars, as for example, there is a surprisingly interchangeable use of *craftsmanship* (*meşteşug*) and *profession* (*meserie*). The research methodology is both based on oral history interviews, combined with media and archival research available in different archives such as National Archives,

including those in Cluj, Alba, Hunedoara counties, CNSAS and the National Bank Archive.

The masterwork on using oral history for illustrating the mining profession is Alessandro Portelli's oral history research on Kentucky about the articulation of working class identity: *They Say in Harlan County. An Oral History* (Oxford, 2011). In order to record the interviews, the researchers are using the oral history methodology as it was employed by Alessandro Portelli in this book, which "attempts to paint a huge canvas, covering the whole swath of U.S. history with the pointillist detail of microhistory – and to do so by relying on the inherently redundant medium of orality." Portelli's work is an excellent illustration of a monographic depiction of the miner profession in a specific US area, which overlaps our interest in traditional professions. Therefore, semi-structured interview guide will be applied by our researchers, with a core of common questions (e.g. mining technics, work security, emergency response, relations at work, professional training, relations with the authorities, gender relationship at work and in private life, free time, private life etc.), to be addressed to all our witnesses. Each answer received by the interviewer will generate follow-up questions according to the dialogue constructed between the interviewee and interviewer. The interviews started with community key members, such as the local priests and/or the mayor, local political leaders, who will lead us to the oldest miners or miners' family in the respective local communities. Different members of the same miner's family will be interviewed, men and women in order to collect complementary perspectives on mining

profession/craft and the generational memory of the families. Other members of local mining communities, such as administrators, teachers, politicians, policemen, housekeepers etc., will be interviewed as well, the focus being on the oldest people that will be willing to share their experience with us.

This AOH issue opens with an article entitled “The Price of Gold: the Life of Miners from the Gold Quadrilateral Prior to the First World War,” written by Luminița Ignat Coman, analyzes miners’ daily life in the gold quadrangle, pointing out their professional identity and the way in which national and professional identity intertwine. The political context, that Transylvania, a multiethnic and multicultural province, was in the 19th century part of various political entities and then, after 1868, of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was able to strongly influence miners’ lives. There are a number of common elements that shape a strong professional identity: working in dangerous conditions, very low incomes on the brink of subsistence, lack of living alternatives, miners’ beliefs and superstition. The conclusion of the article is that what most miners working in these conditions had in common was, above all, poverty, a paradox given that gold has always been the most expensive metal.

Given miners’ poverty, solidarity became important by setting up the first mutual aid fund, the *pisetal fund*, considered the oldest form of helping the miners. The article analyzes in detail the statutes and the reason for its establishment and existence. The difficult living conditions led to a high crime rate in the area, especially gold thefts from the mines which were common even though there

was a strong policy to prevent them by introducing harsh punishments. Another issue approached by the author is miners' beliefs and superstitions. In their irrepressible need to believe, the miners did not enter the mine without praying and without making the sign of the cross, but, along with religious beliefs, there were also superstitions. The most common were beliefs in the spirit of the mine, a mythological creature that guided miners to places where gold was to be found.

In the article "Illicit trade in gold in the interwar period - between history and memory" Călin-Andrei Olariu uses a history from below perspective based on the methodology of oral history. He thus investigates the phenomenon of illegal gold trade in gold in the Apuseni Mountains in the 1920s-1940s. The author uses several oral history interviews, recorded during two field campaigns in 2014 and 2018, in the city of Abrud and neighboring towns, in conjunction with archival documents from the Archive of the National Bank of Romania, CNSAS Archives, and Cluj County Branch of the National Archives.

After 1918, the golden region of the Apuseni Mountains came under the administration of the Romanian state, which through various legislative and administrative measures tried to regulate, modernize and, implicitly, to control gold mining. As a result of the adoption of the mining law in 1924, the Romanian state became the owner of all resources under Earth surface, having the right to exercise itself the mining property or passing it on to others. Thus, the gold obtained in mining operations could be sold exclusively to the state which, through the National

Bank of Romania, would buy it. However, the price paid by the bank throughout the period was significantly lower than the price of gold traded on the open market, which favored the emergence of smuggling.

The main conclusion of the research is that in the Apuseni region gold smuggling appeared not only as a result of the possibility of making substantial profits by those who practiced it, but also as a form of daily resistance by miners to a number of legislative measures taken by the Romanian state after 1918, which endangered the traditional forms of organization of these communities.

Ioana Ursu, in the article “The Auriferous Mining Universe in the Apuseni Mountains: The Oral History of a Profession,” uses oral history interviews in order to analyze the universe of the gold mining profession. The article tackles topics such as: mining working conditions, risks and accidents, occupational diseases, but also the perceptions and beliefs of the miners, evolutions and local peculiarities of gold mining before and during communism, fragments of biographies and daily life.

The fourth article is written by Lavinia S. Costea, entitled “The obsession of surveillance in the communist regime: control in the gold mines in the Apuseni Mountains.” It is an analysis of how the state controlled, by all means at its disposal, the production, possession and distribution of gold obtained from mining operations during communist period. Oral history testimonies converge on an image of an abusive state that has invented humiliating methods of controlling, especially corporally, all those who worked in the gold mines.

Following the model imposed by other oral history publications across the world, this AON issue is complemented by an oral history interview conducted by Oana Ometa with professor Peter Gross, which focuses on his life-experience as emigrant pursuing a professional career as professor and journalist speaking and writing about recent history of Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, Dorin Pop wrote an interesting review of a book by Patrick Hutton about memory and its influence on contemporary historical writing, which connects the academic interests of Romanian researchers to the international historiographical trends. Finally, AHO provides several field work photographs meant to offer visual support for some of the interviews quoted in the articles.

The present issues was possible to a strong collaboration of all project team members, coordinated by professor Doru Radosav and the support of local people in the gold mining communities who opened their houses and told their life stories as to be communicated further. In this regard, special thanks go to Dr. Livia Coroi, history teacher in Brad, an oral history passionate and practitioner, and a trustfully collaborator of the Oral History Institute, and to Mr. Nicolae Pantea, a former miner who both got personally involved in identifying people to be interviewed and sometimes, even bringing the research team to remote areas to record interviews with people with exquisite life experiences.

The Price of Gold: the Life of Miners from the Gold Quadrilateral Prior to the First World War¹

Abstract: The article discusses the working and living conditions, organisation, and behaviour of miners in the gold mining area known as the ‘gold quadrangle’ in Transylvania, in the modern era. Given that in this period Transylvania was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the article points out the ethnically-based division of labour and economic inequality. In spite of the fact that Romanian mineworkers extracted this precious metal in difficult and dangerous working conditions, they lived in extreme poverty. Another interesting aspect that the article discusses is the creation of a miners’ solidarity fund (in Romanian: *fondul pisetal*) meant to improve the medical services provided to the miners and their families. Finally, the article deals with the miners’ beliefs and superstitions as well as the gold thefts from the mines which occurred mainly due to the poverty of

¹ This work was supported by a grant of Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2016-0874, within PNCDI III, contract no. 150/2017.

mineworkers and their large families in spite of the steadily rising price of gold.

Keywords: gold mining, Transylvania, 19th century, everyday life, social life, solidarity, superstitions.

The gold mines of the Apuseni Mountains, well-known since antiquity for their wealth, have become, in the modern period, the ground of large mining operations. The political context, Transylvania being a multiethnic and multicultural province, part of the various political entities in the nineteenth century and then, after 1868, of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, strongly influenced the life and livelihood of the miners from the so called “golden quadrilateral.” This article focuses on the work and everyday life of miners, investigating how their professional identity is intertwined with the ethnic identity as well as the common elements shared by those who embrace this profession, capable to shape a strong professional identity: working in dangerous conditions, very low income to the limit of subsistence, lack of alternatives, their beliefs and superstitions. We can therefore speak of certain peculiarities that define the way of life and some general characteristics shared by all miners that extract gold: poverty is the most obvious and paradoxical condition, a constant in this area where the mountain, except for its underground, did not offer many resources for living. “*Munții noștri aur poartă/Noi cerșim din poartă în poartă*” [*Our mountains are rich in gold/yet we beg from door to door*], it is perhaps the most used

saying referring to this region, hinting at the poverty of the inhabitants of an area that has so much to offer from the point of view of underground riches. The qualities of people living here are influenced by the environment, chief among which, hospitality, diligence, cleverness, inventiveness, derive from the daily living environment. The vulnerabilities of the gold industry both before and after the war are, at least in part, a consequence of the standard of living: illegal gold miners (holoangării, miners less willing to work, familiar with the mines from where gold was extracted and then sold) can be well documented during this period, while illicit trade in gold and smuggling are often mentioned. Other constants of the miners' life in the gold quadrilateral are the difficulty of working in the mine, the heavy working conditions being amplified against the background of immobility in the face of the emergence of technology.

From a geographic point of view, the so-called gold quadrilateral is an impressive picturesque area, “full of varied landscapes worthy of an artist's pen.”² Its particular aspect is given by the many excavations in the mountain, on the search for the precious metal:

All Roșia Montană surroundings, which, like most mining towns, are in a deep valley, have a desolated, desert-like and wild appearance because all the mountains you

² Valeriu Stinghe, “Decăderea Roșiei Montane. Stări dinainte și de după război” [The Fall of Roșia Montană. Before and After the War] in *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, no. 120, 17 November, 1926, p. 2.

meet at an hour's distance from this small town contain, to a greater or lesser extent, gold, being pierced on the surface, in all ways, by numerous mine wells. [...] ³

This savage aspect is maintained in much of the area, where only the hovels [half underground houses], specific to the mountainous area, animate the surroundings: “In a beautiful morning, at eight and a half, I started with my guide towards Abrud (...) Nothing but isolated hovels [inhabited] by Romanians, who live here due to gold exploitation, enlivened the isolated, almost creepy land.”⁴ Yet, the wild appearance and the traces left by the excavations did not alter the beauty of the landscape: “The valley and the view of the village lie against the backdrop of magnificent mountains (...)”⁵

³ *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, Serie Nouă, vol. I (1801-1821) [Foreign Travellers about the Romanian Principalities in the 19th Century. New Series, vol. 1 (1801-1821)] Paul Cernavodeanu (editor), coordinated by by Georgeta Filitti, Beatrice Marinescu, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, Maria Stroia, Editura Academiei Române, Bucharest, 2004, p.213.

⁴ *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, Serie Nouă, vol. al II-lea (1822-1830), [Foreign Travellers about the Romanian Principalities in the 19th Century. New Series, vol. 2 (1822-1830)] coordinated by: Paul Cernovodeanu și Daniela Bușă; autori: Paul Cernavodeanu, Cristina Feneșan, Georgeta Filitti, Adriana Gheorghe, Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, Șerban Rădulescu Zoner, Marian Stroia, Lucia Taftă, Raluca Stroia, Editura Academiei Române, Bucharest, 2005, p. 207.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 209.

The gold mines of the Apuseni Mountains were concentrated in the Mureș Valley, the Arieș Valley and the Criș Valleys, forming the famous metallic triangle of the Roșia Montană Gold Mountains, Brad, Săcărâmb.⁶ Austrian geologist Fratissek Pošepný described this area in the middle of the nineteenth century as the “golden triangle of the Apuseni Mountains.” It established a --territorial delimitation of the areas where the richest deposits were located, but also the most important exploitations. The triangle was defined as follows: the North-Eastern vertex was in Hălmagiu, the North-Eastern vertex was on the Criș Valley, in Baia de Arieș (in the Arieș Valley), and the South vertex was in Săcărâmb (on the edge of the Mureș Valley).⁷ Roșia Montana is the richest gold-mining region and the mining center of the Apuseni Mountains.

“Our mountains are rich in gold/yet we beg from door to door”

Poverty was the most obvious and paradoxical condition for the inhabitants of the gold quadrilateral. The miners, despite their extremely hard work and the high value of the gold they extracted, were a poverty-stricken category in a region with very few opportunities, where there were few alternatives to make a living. Under these circumstances, the life of miners was a struggle for survival

⁶ Pompiliu Cioban, “Producția aurului și problema monetară a statului român” [Gold Production and The Monetary Issue of the Romanian State] in *Țara Noastră*, 7th year, no. 46, 1926, p. 1349.

⁷ Francisc Ulrich, “O excursiune la minele de aur din Munții Metaliferi ai Ardealului” [A trip to the Gold Mines of the Metaliferous Montains of Transylvania] in *Arhiva Someșană*, no. 6, 1926, p. 18.

and was so bleak that it was assimilated to an inferno: “The hardship of such a life, in the inaccessible savage mountains, force miners not only to endure themselves the difficult conditions in the mine, but to push their children to live in poverty as well.”⁸ Mining could not even ensure subsistence.⁹ Efforts, savings, and spending cuts were the characteristics of the miners’ lifestyle. In order to survive in this wild and hostile environment, they needed compensations.¹⁰ They compensated, first of all, through diligence, which “(...) makes them capable of strains that often are not rewarded. Restricted in a circle of action, they know nothing but to drill, blast, process and watch over pestle stamps, and without the genius of their hands, they are unable to force the nature to give them shelter.”¹¹ In this area, miners worked to make a living, having limited resources for subsistence.

Several particularities define gold extraction from mines in modern days: ethnic stratification of labor was obvious in this field of activity where most miners were Romanian, whereas civil servants, and the elite in general, consisted of people of different nationalities (German and Hungarian predominantly). Finally, gold seekers in the sands of river bands were mostly Roma. This division, however, was not absolute. The poverty of miners and gold seekers contrasted with the lifestyle of mine owners and

⁸ *Călători străini despre Țările Române* ..., vol. I, p. 214.

⁹ Petru Râmneanțu, “Capitalul om din Munții Apuseni” [The Human Capital in the Apuseni Mountains] in *Buletin eugenic și biopolitic*, vol. IX, no. 9-10, sept.-oct.1978, p. 272. See, also, *Albina*, nr. 47, 1937.

¹⁰ *Călători străini despre Țările Române*..., vol. I, p. 214.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 214.

officials, and economic differentiation was also defined by ethnicity. Technological immobility put its mark on how work developed with rudimentary and empirical methods.

Miners, most of them Romanians (although miners were brought either from Germany: “miners are brought in from Saxony and other parts of Germany with special privileges among others for mining plants,”¹² or from Hungary (“the more skilled metal miners brought from the cities with Hungarian metallic mines and placed in the Zlatna region”)¹³ did not represent a monolithic group, considering the work experience, the differences resulted from the particularities given by the type of mine in which they were operating. There were three types of mines during this period, namely the mines of the Fiscal Administration exploited by the state, private mines exploited by individuals or companies, structures that operated under the direct control of mining authorities and small businesses less controlled by authorities, most of which were in the possession of direct producers such as serfs (dependent peasants).¹⁴ By reconstructing the way of working especially in these small-scale exploitations, one will see that all family members, including women and children, were involved: the father worked in the mine, the

¹² *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol.VIII, [Foreign Travellers to Romanian Principalities, vol. 8] coordinated by Maria Holban (editor in chief), Maria Matilda Alexandrescu Dersca Bulgaru, Paul Cernavodeanu, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1983, p. 620.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 621.

¹⁴ Radu Lungu, *Aurul la români*, [The Gold in Romanian Tradition] Editura Paideia, Bucharest, 2014, p. 71.

children carried the ore, and the mother waited them at home, at the press where the ore was crushed.¹⁵ For women from these traditional families, this work was an extension of the range of duties, thus experiencing part of the work carried on by their spouses, in addition to their household responsibilities. Children, on the other hand, were expected to attend school, since this type of work exposed them to dangerous situations and a lack of access to basic needs. And the fact that women and children were greatly involved in mining labor is even more obvious if we take into account the existing stipulations in the province's legislation from this period, where certain conditions were set for these categories. For example, the *Austrian General Mining Act* adopted on 23 May 1854, valid also in Transylvania, provided in Article 200 that:

Each exploitation enterprise shall draft a service regulation regarding the relations between the supervisory staff and workers, which, upon careful review by the mining authority with the expert's sanction and formal approval, shall be brought to the attention of the staff. This regulation shall contain provisions on the categories of workers and supervisors as well as various provisions on the functions of women and

¹⁵ Justin Sava, “Problema salvării moșilor din mizeria trecutului” [The Attempt to Save the Moși from Past Misery] in *Societatea de mâine*, an 16, nr. 2, 1939, p. 53. See, also, Valeriu Stinghe, “Decăderea Roșiei Montane. Stări dinainte și de după război” [The fall of Roșia Montană. Before and After the War] in *op.cit.*, p. 2.

children, taking into account their physical strength and the school that children must attend.¹⁶

Therefore, in miners' families, women and children alike undoubtedly had a much harder life than their counterparts of other families in that period. It thus becomes clear that living under such harsh conditions required the combined effort of all family members to ensure subsistence. All miners, regardless of the type of mine where they worked, had to cope with other types of challenges and difficulties specific to this line of work, most common being the large distances from their home to the mining site and the difficult roads leading to mines. The large distance between home and the exploitation site was crossed by foot, which was an even greater effort for them, and an additional amount of time spent on the job. The route was often so difficult that even animals were struggling, since they had to climb three or four times a day the mountain and then to carry the ore in the valley to be crushed.¹⁷ The difficulty was increased, due to the fact that part of the road was covered by water, miners having to go through "many hundreds of yards in ankle level water in order to earn a bitter income."¹⁸

¹⁶ "Legea minieră austriacă" [The Austrian Mining Law] in *Legiurile din ținuturile alipite până în 4 iulie 1924* [The Laws of the Lands Annexed until 4 July 1924] edited and classified by Gheorghe Stoian and Vasile Gheorgiade, Institutul de Arte Grafice "Eminescu," Bucharest, 1925, p. 130-131.

¹⁷ *Călători străini despre Țările Române ...*, vol. II, p. 211.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 204.

Thus, the actual time spent working in the mine was doubled by the time spent on the commute, and if we add the difficulty of the route to be crossed, we have the full picture of a job requiring great sacrifices:

Besides working eight hours in the mine, it takes them four to five hours to travel from home to the mining site. This is because, on average, they live at 6-8 km from the mine, to which an additional distance is added from the mine entrance to the actual workplace (...), this long absence from home, the long roads walked almost only by foot – it should be added that even when they travel by carriage they are used to travelling more by foot, alongside the horses or oxen — the weather, the lack of resting spots, the insufficient and uncontrolled meals, are circumstances which create special conditions (...) ¹⁹

Other difficulties endured by all miners were caused by the lack of food, i.e. the frugal and insufficient food, as already outlined above, the diseases to which they were exposed by working in such an environment, as well as other types of daily challenges, insecurities and dangers, under the conditions of a high frequency of accidents. As such, working in gold mines, a brutal and dehumanizing system was an exhausting routine, extremely difficult and

¹⁹ Petru Râmneanțu, “Capitalul om din Munții Apuseni,” *op. cit.*, p. 274.

badly paid, and children had little chance to a different destiny.

A special category consisted of individuals seeking gold in the sands of auriferous rivers, mostly Roma.²⁰ These were the so-called *zlătari*, who usually lived in tents around auriferous rivers.²¹ Although they collected only a few grams of gold per month, they opted, by virtue of their habits, to wash auriferous sands in the valleys of the rivers, especially in the Abrud Valley, the Arieș Valley and the Ampoi Valley.²² The Roma and the Romanians dealing with gold washing hand over about 6-8 quintals of washed gold each year.²³ Gold washing required knowledge considering that “(...) if it is not handled by a skilled washer, it is easily lost during the process.”²⁴ Initially, gold seekers found it either by sifting the sand with the help of a wool cloth, or with the help of a wooden bowl.²⁵

²⁰ Virgil Șotropa, “Minele rodnene” [The Mines of Rodna] in *Arhiva Someșană*, nr. 8, p. 5-6.

²¹ Justin Sava, “Problema salvării moșilor din mizeria trecutului,” *op. cit.*, p. 53.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 53.

²³ *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, Serie Nouă, vol. al III-lea (1831-1840) [Foreign Travellers to Romanian Principalities, vol. 3] Daniela Bușă (coordinator), authors: Paul Cernavodeanu, Cristina Feneșan, Georgeta Filitti, Adriana Gheorghe, Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, Șerban Rădulescu Zoner, Marian Stroia, Lucia Taftă, Raluca Tomi, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2006, p. 278.

²⁴ *Călători străini despre Țările Române...*, vol.VIII, p. 623.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 626.

There are several types of documents dating back to those times which provide details about gold washers. *Approbatae and Compilatae Constitutiones* makes no distinction between Romanians and the Roma; they are cited having the same status, according Title 16, Article 4: “Romanians and Gypsies and other men without masters who earn their income from searching gold shall be punished if they fail to present the gold to the prince.”²⁶ The provided punishment for this offence was death or “other punishment according to one’s deed.”²⁷ Another document from those times, the Abrud Roșia-Montană Mining Region Statute, which came into force on August 1904, provides that it was necessary for gold washers to obtain an authorization from the mining authority, a permit to be presented prior to starting their activity to the competent administrative authorities. *Article 14* stipulates that “once given the authorization to wash gold there is no need to concede a certain land area unless it is separately demanded.”²⁸

Because washers were, obviously, a category of extremely poor people and could not afford subsistence based on their weekly income, it had been proposed that married people of this trade receive two loaves of bread whereas unmarried people one loaf of bread, according to a record regarding the work carried out at the Rodna

²⁶ *Constituțiile Aprobate ale Transilvaniei (1653)* [The Transylvanian Approved Constitutions (1653)], edited and foreword by Liviu Marcu, Editura Dacia, Cluj Napoca, 1997, p. 96.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 96.

²⁸ *Statutul Regiunii miniere Abrud-Roșia Montană* [The Abrud-Roșia Montana, Mining Region Status] in George Stoian, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

(Bistrița) mines on 20 May 1731, called *Actum Rodnau den 20 May 1731 in Praesentia des Herrn Bergmeisters Holzberger und andern Officianten*.²⁹ Gold washers were clearly the poorest category since their job, which required certain abilities, and implying a great deal of insecurity, brought them insufficient and uncertain earnings.

The leading positions of the Metaliferi Mountains mines were almost exclusively held by non-Romanians: Germans, Hungarians and a significant number of Slovaks.³⁰ Essentially, officials were “gold redemption administrators, protectors of royal metallurgical factories, assessors of the rulers’ income.”³¹ German officials were seen as superiors to Hungarians, due to their work conduit. Officials, especially Hungarians, were less entrepreneurial and involved: “there is nothing noteworthy in the way in which Hungarian officials improved the exploitation. Throughout the enterprise reigns a natural simplicity and the gold, the most expensive metal, is extracted by a very poor class.”³² Officials, on the other hand, were much more involved and wiser, skillfully managing the exploits they controlled:

16 shares of the mining exploitation were owned by the Vienna Court which managed the exploitation through its officials. Because of this there was a systematic unity

²⁹ Virgil Șotropa, “Minele rodnene,” in *op. cit.*, nr. 8, p. 6.

³⁰ Francisc Ulrich, *op. cit.*, p. 29-30.

³¹ *Călători străini despre ...*, vol. I, p.211.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 214.

and a wise economy in terms of high spending...there was profit due to (their) good management.³³

In conclusion, the work of gold extraction done by Romanians seems to be a kind of inferno without hope and exit for miners and their families. And clearly, the technological immobility and the use of primitive means and empirical methods were could not ease this situation. However, these working conditions were not likely to affect gold production. In order to have an idea of what the Transylvanian gold production meant at European and global level, we can use 1911 as a reference year, when around 3000 Kg of gold was produced, accounting for 43% of the European gold production and about 0.4% of global production.³⁴

The miserable livelihood of most miners was reflected in two other aspects of their lives: their lifestyle and their wardrobe. In terms of habitation there are great differences between the poor (simple mine workers) and the rich (mine owners). The former category lived in isolated *bordeie* in small spaces where “we found in an intimate relationship men, women, child, dog and pigs,”³⁵ whereas the latter category were at the opposite side of the spectrum: they lived in large and extremely spacious houses where one could notice the passion for comfort,

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

³⁴ D. Rotman, “Aurul și argintul” [Gold and Silver] in *Natura. Revistă pentru răspândirea științei*, nr. 2, decembrie 1922, p. 23-24.

³⁵ *Călători străini despre...*, vol. II, p. 207.

even luxury and more sophisticated decorations. Generally, they were adapted from the German interior design, wherein there were such decorations as icons, reminiscent of their strong belief in God.

Roșia Montană perfectly illustrates the situation described above. Here, there are beautiful houses belonging to Romanians who made their fortune from mining, their luxury and grandeur being in flagrant contradiction with the inhabitants' traditional clothing.³⁶ Such an example was the house of “the oldest family of moți [the nickname of inhabitants of the region]” from Roșia Montană, the Gritta family.³⁷ The German inspired multi-storey house, belonging to the owner of the town royal gallery, Jurca Gritta had rooms “beautifully decorated in German fashion; everything was polished, beds covered with beautiful silk covers, curtains made of fine perkal. On the walls, however, Romanian icons hung.”³⁸ Another example is Șuba Ioviță's house, considered the wealthiest man in the county. It was decorated with beautiful furniture and expensive objects. A piece of trivia, the 62-year-old had a very young, 19 year-old wife, proving that these habits have old roots and have always been around.³⁹

With the exception of these houses, most of the dwellings were isolated huts, specific to the mountainous

³⁶ *Călători străini despre...*, vol. III, p. 279.

³⁷ Mihăilă Gritta. O icoană din trecutul Munților Apuseni [An Icon from the Past of the Apuseni Mountains] in *Românul*, Arad, 3/16 mai 1912, p. 2-3.

³⁸ *Călători străini despre...*, vol. al II-lea, p. 209.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 209.

area.⁴⁰ Statistically, during this period, 17.5% of the entire Transylvanian population lived in stone houses, 8.4%, had clay brick houses on a stone foundation, and 22.8% had clay brick houses. The remaining 51% had wooden dwellings.⁴¹ In Roșia Montană, a town predominantly inhabited by Romanians, most of the houses were imposing, stone-built, painted in white. There were also five churches here, two Romanian and three for minority communities.⁴²

However, the houses were generally simple and small and usually had a room and a kitchen that were not properly maintained. One could notice also the lack of outhouses, as well as of fruit trees or flowers.⁴³ The town of Zlatna, the mining heart of Transylvania, can be described in similar manner:

The town is small but with a lot of constructed houses, 600 houses with 5000 inhabitants, Hungarians, Germans and Romanians, a Roman Catholic church, an Orthodox church, an Eastern Christian church. The town hosts the mining courts

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 207.

⁴¹ Cristu S. Negoescu, *Ardealul nostru: Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul din punct de vedere geografic, economic, administrativ și mai ales financiar*, [Our Transylvania: Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, Maramureș from a Geographical, Economic, Administration, but mostly Financial Point of View], Tipografia Gutenberg, Joseph Göbl, București, p. 377.

⁴² Valeriu Stinghe, *Decăderea Roșiei...in op. cit.*, p.2.

⁴³ Petru Râmneanțu, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

and a mining and metallurgical headquarters. <There are> three golden bowls, a gold exchange and analysis enterprise, a large melting installation that on the outside resembles a small palace and on the inside has columns and galleries, Dr. Reinbold's mineralogy collection.⁴⁴

Although an important identity item, the traditional costume has been gradually replaced. With regard to what miners wore, it can be noticed that they have gradually left the traditional predominantly white clothing, for practical reasons. Instead, they dressed in dark, grey or black colored clothes, sewed in urban fashion. This dress code change has most likely been influenced by their extremely difficult life.⁴⁵

The solidarity of miners from the Gold Quadrilater. The *Pisetal Fund*

One of the symbols of the Apuseni miners' community is also the oldest mutual aid institution for miners in need and their families, the so-called Abrud-Roșia Montană *Pisetal Fund*, which attests to their good organization and the fact that they were a solidary community. The fund was intended both for miners working in public mines and for private mine workers. Its purpose was to provide miners with healthcare and medicines, support for mining institutions and for miners

⁴⁴ *Călători străini despre...*, vol. III, p. 277.

⁴⁵ Petru Râmneanțu, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

unable to work, granting loans to those who had the means to return them, aid for the maintenance of lakes, ponds and roads to mine galleries.

The *Pisetal Fund* (the name derives from *piseta*, a coin, the equivalent of a penny and half the price of one gram of gold), operated from 1790 until the Second World War. The fund's statute was approved on 3 April 1790, by Decree No 2347, which also set the contributions of two fillers for each gold measure (one measure = one imperial gold coin), both from the gold production and from the value of the gold exchanged into money at the Abrud Office.⁴⁶ The statute changed by successively increasing the contribution in 1810, on 1 November 1858 and again in February 1902. Until 1848, the fund had been managed by the Caesar-Royal Office for Metal Exchange, whilst the Abrud magistrate and city council had auditing and decision powers. After this date a committee was set up, the so-called Pisetal Fund Committee, which took over these duties. Tax collection and management were taken over by the office for metals exchange under the state's supervision. The raised funds were mainly intended to support miners and their families from a social and medical point of view, namely the payment of two doctors and a midwife in Roșia Montană, two doctors and a midwife in Bucium, also the payment of pensions for the deceased mountain miners' widows, for doctors and midwives, medicines for sick miners, and support for a hospital in Roșia, and also for the unfit to work miners and their

⁴⁶“Districtul montan Abrud-Roșia VI” [The Abrud-Roșia Mountain District], in *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, anul LXXIII, nr. 46, 1910, p. 3.

widows and orphans.⁴⁷ The statute also provided that if the fund reached a certain revenue (fixed at 400,000 crowns), then it would be bound to support a mountain school, a large hospital, and to set up a grocery store for miners.⁴⁸

The fund was created upon initiative of Empress Maria Theresa, who commissioned the magistrate of Abrud to do it, following which the state required, through legislation, that workers (industry and mining) be insured.⁴⁹

Given the context, the ethnic division is also seen in the composition of the Pisetal Fund, considering that, in 1902, the election of a Romanian ethnic, Alesandru Bordia, as physician of the Pisetal Fund in Abrud was regarded as a victory.⁵⁰ Another Romanian member, Iosif Ciura, a vicar, was also a member of the Roșia-Abrud Pisetal Fund committee where he held the position of secondary mountain doctor for Bucium with an annual salary of 1860 crowns.⁵¹

Generally, the *Pisetal Fund* can be regarded as one of the first forms of solidarity in a poverty-stricken area, wherein a number of social problems existed, the purpose being to protect miners and their families. It is the precursor of reunions (economic, cultural and religious)

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p.3

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p, 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ “Din Munții Apuseni” [From the Apuseni Mountains] in *Telegraful român*, nr. 19, Sibiu, 1902, p. 76.

⁵¹ “Iosif Ciura. Paroh greco-catolic deficient” [Iosif Ciura. Deficient Greek Catholic Vicar] in *Unirea. Foie bisericească-politică*, an X, nr. 20, 1900, p. 170-171.

which became very popular in Transylvania in the modern period.

Crimes: thefts from mines

The harsh living conditions led to crimes. There is a high number of crimes reported in the period researched. In fact, an obvious policy regarding gold extracting miners is to offer an income which would discourage poverty-driven thefts.⁵² Particularly for Romanian miners, this policy was convenient since they preferred a small, but safe salary, not knowing how to speculate the price of gold. Two offenses are frequently mentioned, and they also represented the vulnerabilities of the mining industry in the Apuseni Mountains and everywhere else: thefts from the mine and gold smuggling. Along with the primitive processing of ore and the waste of noble metals, these were ‘wounds’, the dark side of mining in the gold quadrilateral.⁵³

Thefts from mines were frequent even though there was a clear policy to prevent them by introducing harsh punishments. Various preventive measures were put in place in this respect: the shafts to the galleries and other access points were closed, houses were built for guards who were tasked with supervising mine entrances and exits and to search workers coming out of the mine, including animals. Wherever ore was stored (in over-ground buildings, analysis tables, etc.), there were supervisors tasked with identifying potential thieves.⁵⁴ Punishment for

⁵² *Călători străini despre...* vol. I, p. 216.

⁵³ Francisc Ulrich, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ *Călători străini despre...* vol. I, p. 215-216.

theft was a radical, it consisted of preventing the offender to work in any job in the mine. Additionally, thieves were sentenced with corporal punishment. Nonetheless, gold was extracted illegally from mines through various methods. Among the most imaginative, although miners were highly resourceful when it came to stealing, the following are worth mentioning: digging hidden shafts, hiding bags in the horses' rumps, the polenta they ate was impregnated with powder which was eventually extracted through dripping.⁵⁵ The area owned by the High Zlatna Mining Administration, predominantly inhabited by Romanians, was heavily affected by theft, which had serious sociological and moral implications.

Beliefs and superstitions of miners from the Apuseni Mountains

The imminence of death, the darkness of the mine and insecurity, in general, gave rise to strong beliefs and superstitions among miners. In their irresistible urge to believe, miners refused to enter mines without praying and making the cross sign. But alongside religious beliefs, there were a series of superstitions. The most common were the beliefs in *Vâlva băii*⁵⁶ (in German *berggeist*, in Hungarian

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p.216.

⁵⁶ See Victor Kernbach, *Dicționar de mitologie generală*, [General Mythology Dictionary] Editura Albatros, 1995, p. 655-656. See, also, Ioan Ghinoiu, *Panteonul românesc. Dicționar*, [The Romanian Pantheon. A Dictionary], Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2001, p. 206.

banyazsellem)⁵⁷ or in the *duhul băii*, a mythical creature that led miners gold rich locations.

The perception of *vâlva* was ambivalent: white or black, good or evil. The good *vâlva* was generally depicted as a woman showing up to lead the way towards spots with gold, whereas the evil version showed up to foretell death. One of her peculiarities was that she was a vengeful creature, it was believed that those to whom she appeared had to maintain full discretion regarding the encounter, otherwise they would be killed.

While the good *vâlva* took either the face of a beautiful girl, like a fairy that never grew old, and who “puts her eyes on an able-bodied young boy and when she meets him alone in a slop corner she makes herself seen. The young boy remains amazed by such beauty and cannot utter a word. Then she caresses and fondles him, says that he is dear to her and she will show him where to search for gold ...,”⁵⁸ the evil *vâlva* had a mysterious face or she had the face of animals like goat, sow or buffalo and made various noises similar to these animals.⁵⁹

A male variant, *duhul băilor*, knew the same diversity of appearances: he was either a tall old man with

⁵⁷ Tr. Suci, *Ceva despre minele de aur de lângă Brad și una din credințele deșarte ale “băieșilor noștri”* [A Little Something about the Gold Mines of the Brad Region and One of the Imaginary Beliefs of “Our Miners”] in *Țara Noastră*, an II, nr. 11, 9/22 martie, p. 91.

⁵⁸ Al. Ciura, “Vâlva băii” in *Tribuna*, Arad, 1910, nr. 137, p. 1. See , also, “Aduceri aminte” [Memories] in *Luceafărul*, nr. 9-10, year VII, Sibiu, 1908, p. 214.

⁵⁹ Ion Agarbiceanu, “Duhul Băilor,” in *Răvașul*, an VII, Cluj, 1909, p. 485.

a large white beard surrounded by a bright aura, or simply a stranger who appeared to indicate the same thing, whether there was or there was not gold in a certain mine.⁶⁰

In a comprehensive description, *vâlva* is portrayed as:

A kind of white ghost whose head is never seen, with a human being-like high figure. She is mainly located in places where gold is abundant. She only appears to people with faith that never swear. She avoids evil people. She shows up as flying. The one who sees *vâlva*, has been seen by God. Luck strikes him and he becomes rich, by finding a lot of gold. She often hits the rock with the hammer showing a sign to the boy she chose. She persecutes the one who speaks evil of her, and even throws stones at him.⁶¹

While for most miners the beliefs in *vâlva băii* were central, for a small part, the brutality of working in the mine destroyed any trace of faith, in general. They were joined by the *learned* (see the case of notary Iosif Rodnean depicted in the novel *The Archangels*)⁶² and those who “never descended into the mine,” for whom these beliefs were fantasies.⁶³

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 484.

⁶¹ Tr. Suciu, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁶² Ion Agârbiceanu, *Arhanghelii* [The Archangels], 2 volumes, Editura Universală, Bucharest, 1929.

⁶³ Maria Cioban, “La baie, la împărăție” [In the Mine, in the Kingdom] in *Românul*, an II, nr. 152, Arad, 1912, pp. 9-10.

For those who embraced these beliefs, the great majority of miners, a series of signs predicted the appearance of *vâlva*, different according to its intentions: to discover gold lodes or to foretell the death of miners. Bright signals like a big flame that shines or sound signals embodying beautiful songs indicated the good intentions of *vâlva* who was getting closer to discover gold. On the contrary, signals like: beating clock, a rooster sound or noise, sounds that reminded of animals were signs that predicted death, indicating that *vâlva* intended to take the miner's head.⁶⁴ The intentions of *vâlva* were obvious from the way she dressed: the *vâlva* dressed in white was not as dangerous as the one dressed in black. There was the belief that this one appeared at midnight.⁶⁵

The merging of beliefs with superstitions was apparent in this world where people impregnated their existence with powerful religious meanings. When *vâlva* uncovered new places where there was gold, those to whom she appeared, had the tradition to mark this fact: either by putting a cross, a Christian symbol, at the entrance into the mine, or by donating money and various objects to the church or other charity acts.⁶⁶ A well-known example is that of a very wealthy family from

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p.9-10.

⁶⁵ Maria Ioniță, *Cartea Vâlvelor. Legende din Apuseni* [The Book of Vâlve. Legends from the Apuseni Mountains], Editura Dacia, Cluj, 1982, p. 34.

⁶⁵ Maria Cioban, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p.9-10.

⁶⁶ Maria Cioban, *Despicata*, in *Românul*, anul II, nr. 158, Arad, 1912, p. 10.

Roșia Montană, Gritta family, which, according to a widely spread legend, after vâlva băii showed them the way to deposits of gold, as a token of gratitude, they built seven churches in the town.⁶⁷

Faith in vâlva băii has given way to a genuine mining folklore, either mournful: “Deep down in a mine I roamed / When death arrived and claimed my soul / Yet I beg of you dear brothers / Do not weep and mourn the others / God has taken me to His side / When my hour finally arrived.”⁶⁸ Or, on the contrary, of good humor: “Roses blossoming in mine / Get ready, friend, it’s wedding time!”⁶⁹ or A very famous witch / Gave a purpose to each.”⁷⁰

Conclusions

Considering the political context in Transylvania in the modern period, it is important to emphasize the division of labor according to ethnicity, as well as the economic division based on the same criteria. The extreme poverty of miners, largely Romanians, is the great paradox of working in gold mines and it is in strong contradiction with the value of the noble metal. Miners from the Apuseni Mountains were a professional category at risk due to working conditions, lacking access to resources and basic needs. The life of Transylvanian

⁶⁷ *Idem*, “Mihăilă Gritta. O icoană din trecutul Munților Apuseni” in *Românul*, an II, nr. 98, 1912, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁸ Maria Cioban, *La baie, la ...*, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 54-55.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, 54-55.

miners was undoubtedly simple and very harsh, and their entire life revolved around ensuring subsistence. These extremely difficult living conditions created a special solidarity enabling easier access to medical services, medicines and schools in the modern age. On the other hand, the same condition, made room for speculations or thefts from mines, which were frequent in the areas inhabited by Romanians during this period.

In a professional category as exposed to danger and uncertainty as miners, one can easily notice the strong need to believe in something. Their beliefs are a mix of superstitions and religion. Overall, their life, assimilated to an inferno, was bleak and extremely difficult. This makes us observe that the price of gold was much higher: miners toiled in the mine, and yet they barely managed to make ends meet, wives had to share much of their husbands' burden in addition to traditional household duties, whereas children were deprived of their childhood, and forced to take on adulthood responsibilities, but also assume the risks, uncertainty, loss of parents or poverty.

Illegal Gold Trade in the Apuseni Mountains in the Interwar Period Between History and Memory¹

Abstract: Using a ‘history from below’ approach and applying the methodology of oral history, I shall attempt to investigate the illegal gold trade in the Apuseni Mountains auriferous region during the Interwar period and the first few year of communist rule in Romania. The main finding of the article is that gold smuggling in the region has emerged not only as a means for ensuring substantial incomes, but also as a form of everyday resistance which miners opposed to a series of legal and administration decisions undertaken by the Romanian state after 1918, decisions which menaced their subsistence as well as their traditional community organization norms.

Key words: oral history, gold mining, illegal gold trade, everyday resistance

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Introduction

Following 1918, the control over the Apuseni Mountains auriferous region was taken over by the Romanian state through various legal and administration measures, meant to regulate, optimize and implicitly control gold mining. Subsequent to the adoption of the Mines Law of 1924, the state became the undisputed owner of the country's underground resources, which gave it the right to decide on resource ownership matters (either retain ownership for itself or concede it to third parties). This also gave the state the exclusive right to purchase exploited gold through the Romanian National Bank, at a fixed internationally regulated rate. Despite this provision, the price paid by the Bank throughout the discussed time period was significantly lower than the free market rate. As a result, people began to develop resistance and adaptation strategies. I shall discuss this aspect using oral history interviews conducted in the area of the town of Abrud during two field trips in 2014 and 2018 as well as documents from the Romanian National Bank Archive and the National Council for the Study of the Securitate (CNSAS) Archives.

In this article, although I shall make references to the large scale gold smuggling (for example, gold trafficking abroad) my primary focus is on local peasant gold miners, residents of the villages near the town of Abrud, Alba county, who had traditionally practiced this trade since before 1918 and whose lifestyle had come to a halt as a result of the nationalization law of 1948. Therefore, I shall try to answer the following research questions: What were the main laws regulating extraction,

processing and trading of precious metals between 1924 and 1948? What was the course of gold smuggling: what was the source of gold, who were the smugglers, what smuggling methods were used? To what extent and in what way was the memory of gold smuggling preserved in the former miners' communities around the town of Abrud? What can we learn about the illegal gold trading by using both oral history testimonies and archive documents?

The gold mining legislation

After 1918, one of the main concerns of the Romanian state was to unite legislation insofar as the three Romanian provinces integrated in the Romanian Kingdom had distinct legal traditions. Thus, following the adoption of the new Constitution of 1923, whose purpose was to create the new legal ground for the Romanian state, all former legal provisions were replaced. The fundamental law included provisions regarding the establishment of the new state, the configuration of the powers within the state, the set up and functioning of the electoral system, the regulation of property, etc. Just like in the Constitution of 1866 the right to property was guaranteed, however expropriation policy was elaborated so as to accommodate "public utility needs." In addition, bearing in mind the principle according to which property has a social function „property is, thus, a social function whereas social collective interests must prevail against individual

interests”², the ownership of the underground resources as well as of thoroughfares, atmosphere, navigable waters and other elements of the “public domain” were transferred to the state.

Hence, Article 19 of the Constitution provided that mineral deposits as well as other natural underground resources belonged to the State. A couple of exceptions were retained, such as common rock masses, gravel pits and peat deposits, but without prejudicing the state’s rights according to the previous laws. In the meantime, in compliance with the new Constitution, a special mines law had to be drafted in order to establish the norms and means of capitalizing underground resources, royalties and means to contribute to the exploitation. Last but not least, there were several provisions regarding previously acquired exploitation rights and the methods for granting new royalties. Based on the aforementioned constitutional provisions, on 4 July 1924 a new mines law was passed.³ Article 1 of the law provided that:

All mineral deposits underground, no matter the depth, that may be used for the extraction of metals, metalloids or a combination thereof, as well as fossil fuel deposits, oil shale, mineral water and

² Mircea Baron, *Din istoria mineritului aurifer din România 1918-1948 [A Brief History of Gold Mining in Romania 1919-1948]*, Petroșani, Editura Universitas, 2006, p. 79.

³ The law was amended twice during the Interwar Period, on 28 March 1929 and on 24 March 1937.

natural gases of all types, and any other types of underground deposits shall remain in the property of the state.⁴

Additionally, the Mines Law regulated the relations between exploiters and landlords, the obligations of the mining authority, the rules regarding the safety of personnel, provisions regarding the granting of royalties, the necessary conditions for recognizing the acquired mining rights, etc.⁵ Article 4 of the Mines Law provided that the right to process mineral resources belonged to the state or to third party private entities indicated by the state. Therefore, the law also provided royalty granting rules, exploitation rules as well as mining taxes and fees. The institution in charge of supervising the implementation of the Mines Law was the General Mining Directorate, which functioned within the Ministry of Industry and Trade⁶.

As far as precious metal exploitations are concerned, the mines law provided that “platinum and gold exploiters must hand over to the state all the gold through the appropriate office. No-one except for the Romanian state shall have the right to purchase or to gather these exploited metals. The gold shall be purchased at the appropriate international standard rate”⁷. The pre-emptive purchasing right of gold shall be exerted by the state

⁴ *The Official Journal of Romania*, no.143/ 1924.

⁵ Mircea Baron, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁶ Following the amendments to the Mines Law of 1929, Regional and local Mining Directorates were also created. Baron, p. 62.

⁷ Mircea Baron, *op. cit.*, p.111.

through the Romanian National Bank. The aforementioned decisions have cemented the monopoly of the state on the production and trade of gold in Romania.

With the aim of preventing smuggling, a new law was adopted in 1936 for controlling the trade of gold, silver and platinum, which imposed a number of restrictions to precious metal exploiters. The latter were supposed to sell all precious metals in their possession to the National Bank within 15 days from extraction, without granting them the right to collect them. In addition, all precious metal operations had to be registered in special records complying with indications from the National Bank. A number of restrictions were imposed for the transportation of unprocessed ore and gold and a special warrant was needed to this end.

The National Bank as a representative of the state made several administration decisions for controlling the exploitation of the country's gold resources. Thus, in 1929, a special service was established within the National Bank, the Gold Service, and later, in 1933, a number of Gold Offices of the National Bank were created in the main mining regions for a better collection: Abrud, Zlatna, Deva and, in 1934, in Baia Mare.

As far as the small gold exploiters are concerned, a "Special Rulebook for Small Exploiters of the Apuseni Mountains and the Baia Mare Region" was drafted in 1929. The aim of this rulebook was to solve a contradiction arisen from the provisions of Article 258 of the Mines Law of 1924, which stated that share-based mining associations had to be transformed into public mining companies in compliance with the Romanian Trade Code in order for

mining rights to be recognized and in compliance with Article 19 of the 1923 Constitution which warranted previously acquired mining rights. Virtually, by adopting this rulebook, an already existing practice resulted from a Transylvanian regulation prior to the Union of 1918 was recognized by a law.⁸ Small mining enterprises were defined as “all exploitation enterprises performed by local villagers of the two regions, or by their descendants, regardless of their profession or social status. [...] The Rulebook applied to all gained mining rights, which have been recognized and validated.”⁹

After the Second World War, the first measure undertaken by Petru Groza's government was to adopt Law 638/12 August 1946 enforcing Decree-Law 2488/8 August 1946 regarding the control of precious metal production, processing and trading which intensified the penalties for violating the rules governing the precious metal trading.¹⁰ The law reiterated the control of the National Bank over gold production and trade, as well as the obligation of exploiters to sell precious metals to the National Bank within 15 days from extraction and to register daily production in records drafted according to the Bank's indications. Additionally, the law forbade exploiters to transport gold extracted from other mines than their own as well as to create precious metal deposits.

One of the laws with the highest impact on miners of the Apuseni Mountains was Law 284/14 August 1947

⁸ Mircea Baron, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 110.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 50-51.

regarding the compulsory transfer of gold, foreign currencies and other foreign paying means to the Romanian National Bank, which provided at Article 1 that: “Residents of Romania owning any forms of gold (with some exceptions) must proceed to transferring such possession to the Romanian National Bank in exchange for a payment made in lei, at the official exchange rate, within 15 days from publication.”¹¹ Failure to comply with this law has led to the investigation of all those suspected of having gold in their possession, regardless whether they were mine owners, leaseholders, mine employees or simply individuals suspected of gold smuggling. The oral testimonies regarding these events are an undeniable proof of the crimes committed by the Communist State against its own citizens.

In the end, following the adoption of the new Constitution of 13 April 1948 and of Law 119 regarding the nationalization of the main industrial, banking, mining, insurance and transport enterprises, on 11 June of the same year, the centuries-old regional tradition of individual gold extraction came to an end as the interdiction of individual/share-based exploitation led to the dissolution of miners’ communities. The latter was thus forced to leave their native villages in search for a job in the new socialist economy.

Gold smuggling

It is difficult to assess the full scope of gold smuggling in Romania in the Interwar Period, since various

¹¹ *The Official Journal of Romania*, no. 186/1947.

reports on smuggling make approximate and sometimes contradictory estimates. Nonetheless, it is quite clear that the Romanian state has constantly tried, through administration and legislation measures to put an end, or at least to slow down this illegal activity. Gold smuggling became the target of the gendarmerie and the police, but also of the “Siguranță” secret police (latter the Securitate), since this was not considered a simple economic crime, but a serious threat to national security.

According to the reports drafted by the aforementioned institutions¹², the illegally traded gold had two main sources: theft and the refusal to respect the state’s pre-emptive right on purchasing precious metals. There were several methods used by smugglers to steal gold from mines: in hidden pockets, in lamps, boots, belts, “in special carrying devices hidden between the legs,” in car oil containers, in ore wagons, in lavatory facilities, etc.¹³ A common practice consisted of bribing mine inspection agents lest the packages be discovered.

Also, whenever miners would find a significant quantity of native gold, they hid it inside the mine, and later, they, or an accomplice, would return to pick it up outside their working schedule. The stolen gold came in various shapes and sizes: as ground gold-rich ore, as larger pebbles (1-5 cm) containing pure gold, as a mixture or as various sized burnt gold (1-8 cm in diameter), as

¹² The CNSAS Archives, *Documentary fund*, file no.2646, vol.27, pages 38-57.

¹³ The Romanian National Bank Archives, the Gold Service fund, file 23/1945-1948, page 326.

concentrated ore, etc.¹⁴ The second gold smugglers' source was legally exploited gold by mine owners or leaseholders who failed to comply with the law regulating the circulation of precious metals. The main reason for this was the lower price offered by the Romanian National Bank as compared to the price offered by smugglers.¹⁵ More explicitly, as far as small exploiters were concerned, given their great number, it was impossible for the state to audit production, which means that only a portion of the production was legally sold to the Bank.¹⁶

According to a report of the secret police (Siguranța),¹⁷ gold smuggling was carried out by residents of the gold mines region of the Apuseni Mountains: mine owners, leaseholders, miners or other professionals: pub owners, priests, lawyers, doctors, watchmakers, jewelers. First, the gold would usually be sold to a local smuggler,¹⁸ who, after collecting a certain amount of gold would hand it over to a "collector smuggler" living in one of the major Transylvanian towns: Cluj, Sibiu, Alba Iulia, Turda, etc. Finally, the gold was smuggled by various means outside

¹⁴ The CNSAS Archives, *Documentary fund*, file no.2646, vol.27, page 48.

¹⁵ The Romanian National Bank archives, the *Gold Service fund*, file 2/1932-1945, pages 153-156; 23/1945-1948, page 140; CNSAS Archives, file no.2646, vol.27, page 52.

¹⁶ The Romanian National Bank Archives, the *Gold Service fund*, file 23/1945-1948, p. 231.

¹⁷ The CNSAS Archives, *Documentary fund*, file no.2646, vol.27, p. 47.

¹⁸ The CNSAS Archives, *Documentary fund*, file no.2646, vol.27, p. 10.

the country where it was sold.¹⁹ Transactions were usually intermediated by people who did not raise suspicion among authorities. The report also mentions the various methods employed to conceal illegally transported gold. It would be hidden in intimate body parts, in trousers, in the form of painted or cloth-covered buttons, in hidden chariot cavities, in canes, in packets swallowed by cattle, in cars: in fuel tanks, in various car tools and parts: “non-essential car parts were replaced, however this is where the gold piece was cast in the chosen shape.”²⁰

Gold smuggling in collective memory

The interviews used within this research were conducted in two field campaigns in the villages from Abrud area in 2014 and 2018 respectively. Depending on the age, interviewees may be distributed in two main categories, on the one hand, there are people working in mines/had a direct contact with mining during the Interwar and War periods, and on the other hand, there are people who became aware of various aspects regarding mining in the Interwar period through discussions with older people from the community or simply through reading literary works, for instance, the two stories written by Ion Agârbiceanu²¹ *Fefelega* and *The Archangels*. In both

¹⁹ See also: The Romanian National Bank Archives, the *Gold Service fund*, file 2/1933-1940, p. 41.

²⁰ The CNSAS Archives, *Documentary fund*, file no. 2646, vol.27, p. 49.

²¹ Between the years 1906 and 1910, Ion Agârbiceanu was a priest in the town of Bucium Țasa. Based on his experiences in this mining

interviewees' categories the recalled information is, inevitably, incomplete. It also includes various cultural stereotypes, two such examples being the myth of the Jew (the foreigner) who exploited/exploits the local population, and the myth of the Interwar well-off landlord (chiabur) who exploited the villagers - reminiscing of the post-war communist propaganda.

Nonetheless, the interviewees who actually worked during the Interwar period were able to provide us with rich representations of their experiences, making reference to topics such as: child labor in mines, gold exploitation techniques, working conditions in mines, miners' obligations in the relationship with the state and their discontentment, representations of the significance and importance of gold for the mining communities. For instance, Mr. Narița Dumitru began his life story talking about the fact that ever since the age of 16, being raised in a family with many children, he was forced to find a job as servant to one of the owners of a mine in Mount Corabia.

I was sixteen. I would go every morning with the bulls carrying a crate of one cubic meter, I would go all the way up to Corabia. I would load it, come back through here, on the road to Gura Cerbului, to a well-off landlord. He had machines, I was a servant! You see, I had many brothers and we had to... earn our bread. [...] From the eight

community, he published: *În întuneric* [In the Dark] (1910), *Fefelega* (1908), *Arhanghelii* [The Archangels] (1913/1914).

brothers, I am the only survivor, all the others are now gone. And... after working this and that, I would carry rocks with the wagon from the mine. I would push the wagon, load it in the mine, and then come back and unload. So, they told me, this is where you unload one wagon, there, another one, and another one right there. These were... the people who opened the mine. Because the mine wasn't... it was just this big... The wagon had wooden wheels and was running on wooden tracks! The wood was laid like this [he gestures] at a certain distance and introduced. I would take it out. No matter what, I had to go with the bulls, I had no choice. [...] No choice. Ah, after that... I signed up for the Army. But until I enrolled in the Army, I worked at the mine.²²

Further on, Mr. Narița Dumitru described the very harsh working conditions in the mine, and the difficult living conditions in his childhood caused by the lack of agriculture in the region, which meant that all the food had to be brought in from other parts of the country. He also mentioned that to some degree mining was a temporary and unpredictable occupation. Besides the fact that there

²² Narița Dumitru, Interview conducted by Olariu Călin, audio file no. 1886, Oral History Institute Archive, Cluj-Napoca (hereinafter referred to as OHA), Bucium Izbita, county of Alba, 18.10.2018.

was no certainty in the amount of gold one could extract, in winter and during droughts, the grinding machines didn't work having no water, hence miners had no incomes. Another interviewee, Danciu Teodor, referred to the work carried out by his father in the gallery that he rented out. The interviewee, as a child, sometimes helped his relatives.

My father also had a mine here, beyond this hill, in [unclear: Rendea], I mean a gallery. He would go and drill holes and... He had papers, everything was legal. And... in Abrud he was registered as suitable for purchasing explosives, dynamite and fuse... he would purchase it in order to work. [...] He put it here and the topographer came to draw a sketch. "Right here." This will be called Rendea.²³

Another topic discussed by the interviewees is the gold theft from mines. They speak of the so-called *holoangări* (gold thieves) who risked their lives trying to steal gold ore from mines which presumably had a bigger lode. These testimonies acquire legendary connotations when the interviewees remember notorious gold thieves from the region. Some of them have entered the popular

²³ Danciu Teodor, Interview conducted by Olariu Călin, audio file no. 1888, OHA, Bucium Șasa, county of Alba, 2014.

folklore in the region.²⁴ A special case is that of Mr. Iulian Mârza who revealed a childhood adventure in which he went along with a cousin to steal gold from a mine gallery. Mr. Mârza's older brothers, who were employed by a private mine, had found a richer gold lode, so they sent the younger children to extract the gold outside the regular working schedule.

I was about twelve, my brother, fourteen. And myself... My brothers took me to this mine, to... Its name was Târău. From Sâmbion, from Narița... to the left. The gold lode is richer than that of Roșia. [...] So I went along with my brothers, I had two older brothers -we knew where they worked and that there is gold there. There was very, very much gold in there. We took our tools... our brothers' tools, on a Sunday morning and we met before dawn, because there was a guard there, in the galleries. We followed the guard when he went inside and we got in as well. After we got it, we turned the lamps on and I took him... Because he had never been there before. I was the youngest [laughs] I took him to the exact spot. [taps the table with his hand]. And we took everything we could, the two of us...

²⁴ Lupu Alexandru, *Verșul Buciumanilor: povestire în versuri*, [The Buciuman Verses: stories in verses], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 2015.

on our backs [...] in a bag. So, we brought it and his father processed our load. I don't remember how much money it was worth, but I do remember that it was before Easter and they gave us money to buy, I mean, our parents bought us, because at fourteen we couldn't... at twelve, we couldn't go by ourselves, they bought us clothes, everything... with the money we brought back.²⁵

When asked about how the gold was capitalized, most of the interviewees recounted that legally the gold had to be turned in to the National Bank branch in Abrud,²⁶ but in order to increase their profits, villagers also used to sell gold to local smugglers who exchanged the gold for a better rate than that offered by the National Bank. Even though they do not know all the details regarding how smugglers operated, interviewees often referred to the state's effort to stop these practices: the actions of the regional gendarmerie or the creation of a monopoly on goods which were essential to the mining activity, for instance, explosives.

²⁵ Mârza Iulian, interview conducted by Adrian Boda, audio file no. 1885, OHA, Bucium Izbita, county of Alba, 18.10.2018.

²⁶ In the year 1933, for a better collection of gold the National Bank set up four Gold services with the headquarters in Brad, Abrud, Deva and in Baia Mare (1934).

Firstly, at the state bank. For instance, you couldn't buy explosive unless you were a shareholder. Why shareholder? You took the gold to the state, but the bank only paid half the price. So this is why the others thrived, smuggling... smuggling. Smuggling was... It had existed since I was a child! There were people who exchanged gold. Now, what did this mean? It meant that you extracted gold [taps the table with his hand], you gave it to him, and he gave you money. This is what exchange meant. People used to say: "Where is your husband?" "He went to Abrud to exchange some gold." This is how it went. „²⁷

From our village they went to Roșia Montană, to Baia de Arieș, beyond the hills. They worked here, in Bucium, in Vulcoi, Rodu, here, in the valley, three kilometers from here. And this is how they lived. Private individuals took the gold on Saturdays and took it for... exchange. They would go to the banks, those who had contracts... This is how things were back then, if they had contracts, then they would

²⁷ Simion Narița, Interview conducted by Olariu Călin, audio file no. 1872, OHA, Bucium Șasa, county of Alba, 16.10.2018.

give in the gold, they received explosives and carbide.²⁸

According to the legislation mentioned at the beginning of the article, the Romanian state imposed a significant control on the exploitation, processing and trading of gold, meant to enforce the national interest. In spite of this, just like James C. Scott explains, modern states, in their attempt to consolidate their control over society, simplify reality in order to rationalize it in a series of administration schemes, ignoring, inevitably, the experiences of individuals at the local level - which should be taken into account in order to understand the complexities of the social life in those communities.²⁹ This had led to a dysfunctional administration system during the Interwar and post-war years as far as gold mining in the Apuseni Mountains is concerned, which also explains the daily resistance reactions from miners in the region, materialized among others through illicit gold trade.

By corroborating the information gathered from oral history interviews with archive documents, it can be asserted that the main cause of gold smuggling was the low price offered by the National Bank as compared to the price which could be obtained on the free market abroad (despite some efforts meant to remedy this situation, e.g.

²⁸ Cenar Petru, Interview conducted by Olariu Călin, audio file no. 1889, OHA, Bucium Sat, county of Alba, 2014.

²⁹ James C. Scott, *În numele statului: modele eșuate de îmbunătățire a condiției umane* [*Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*], Iași/București, Editura Polirom, 2007, *passim*.

offering a production bonus starting with 1935). According to several reports drafted by National Bank clerks, miners in the Apuseni Mountains felt deceived by the state and tried to increase their incomes by resorting to illegal gold trade. From this viewpoint, we shouldn't ignore the fact that this profession was a means of subsistence for the majority of small mine owners or leaseholders and not a means for making profits, if we take into account the oral history interviews.

In the meantime, the state failed to consider certain cultural aspects of the Apuseni region, where gold was used as a resource with multiple purposes.³⁰ For instances, gold was included in dowers, it was used for purchasing houses, plots of lands, cereals and even various household objects, or as a form of non-depreciating savings. Therefore, the provisions of the precious metals law, according to which the extracted gold had to sold exclusively to the state within 15 days from extraction, as well as the interdiction to collect it or sell it to intermediaries were in contradiction with local practices.

Furthermore, the creation of the state's monopoly was not followed by enough measures meant to support gold miners in the region. For various reasons, they were unable to sell all the gold in their possession to the National Bank, even if they wanted to do so. For example, because of the season based and unpredictable nature of work, in winter and during droughts, grinding machines were not functional due to the lack of water, meaning that miners

³⁰ Valer Butură, *Etnografia poporului Român [The Ethnography of the Romanian people]*, ed. Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 424-425.

had no income source. However, mines also functioned in winter time as miners stockpiled ore for further processing. The latter required a series of expenses, and since there were no available loans (this is a recurrent discontent in the National Bank reports³¹), people resorted to wealthy individuals who practiced usury. These loans were usually repaid in gold, after processing the ore. Last, but not least, since the price of gold was regulated nationally, during high inflation periods, it was not adjusted in time, which meant that in some situations the price offered by the National Bank did not cover production costs.

The Second World War left a deep scar in the collective memory of the mining communities in the Apuseni Mountains. Many of the interviewees have vivid recollections of the war years, be them about how close family members were mobilized to the Eastern Front, some of whom never to return, or on the passing of the Red Army on their march across the Carpathian Mountains towards Germany. Although we encountered several positive descriptions of the Russian soldiers the majority were negative, people recounting how they engaged in murder, rapes and forced requisitions of livestock.

After the war, in the region of the Apuseni Mountains there emerged several armed resistance groups against the Communist regime. Interviewees from the village of Bucium mention that the Macavei brothers, members of one of the most important groups in the region, were also involved in gold smuggling by describing how

³¹ The Romanian National Bank Archives, the Gold Service fund, file 1/1929-1947, pp. 248-265.

they would offer higher prices for the precious metal than the National Bank, thus violating the law regarding the circuit of precious metals, adopted in 1946. Members of this group, Traian, Alexandru, Viorel, and Nicolae Macavei, originating from the town of Roșia Montană, were the grandsons of Peasant National Party leader Ștefan Ciceo Pop. Nicolae Macavei had been a police officer employed by the Siguranța Statului service. After the regime change, he was expelled from the institution. One of the pretexts of their pursuit was the very gold smuggling activity which forced them to hide in the mountains following a shooting with the gendarmes of the region, in 1948. After taking refuge in the mountains, two of the Macavei brothers contacted major Nicolae Dabija and established the National Defense Front – the Outlaws' structure, in the area of Muntele Mare.

These were shrewd people, with many connections, who took it past the borders, they weren't from here. For instance, there was one man I knew, named Macavei. All his family was like that. He had been a police officer in Bucharest. And once with the change of regimes, after a while, he was expelled, because he was not one of them. He refused to submit to the newly established Communist regime. So they fired him, and because he had connections in the region, he came here. He had a gun and wasn't afraid. There were only two gendarmes here, he wasn't afraid of them.

And he exchanged. He would go to Bucium Poieni, there was a market in Bucium Poieni, to a house and everyone with gold came to him and exchanged it for money. And I don't know how, but he managed to take it abroad. So there were three brothers, one of them was a pilot officer, another one was a lieutenant and he was a police officer. They refused to obey the Communist regime. They continued to exchange up to a point, and then they ran away. In the end, they were all shot dead.

[...]

They took refuge in the mountains! This officer... he was a police officer in Bucharest. He used to be! I just want to mention a case. In involved my mother. His name was Nicula [Nicolae]. "Nicula is in Bucium Poieni and exchanges gold!" There was the National Bank, but they didn't even pay half of what he paid. So then. There were two gendarmes and the station chief... here. And somebody ratted them out. "Look," he said, "Nicula is in a house there." And my mother happened to be there. More of them were there, he measured, he had [unclear] stuff, he put it like this. "How many grams?" "That much." "This is worth that much money." He would give them the money and that was it. And while he was measuring there,

the station chief came along with the gendarme. He said, “Nicula, you’re arrested!” Nicula took out his gun and replied: “I’ll shoot you both.” The gendarmes ran away [laughs].³²

Apart from these examples of violent resistance against the repressive measures employed by the communist state, the memory of the miners on the postwar years is dominated by a sense of hopelessness in front of the changes imposed by the new regime. People talk on how there was nothing they could do in trying to preserve their traditional way of living as whoever opposed the authorities could be labeled as an enemy of the state, be investigated by the Miliție or the Securitate, which eventually led to imprisonment and even death. As mentioned in the first part of the article, according to the Law 284/14 August 1947 regarding the compulsory transfer of gold, foreign currencies and other foreign paying means to the Romanian National Bank, all the residents of Romania owning any forms of gold (with some exceptions) had to transfer such possession to the Romanian National Bank in exchange for a payment made in lei, at the official exchange rate, within 15 days from publication. This, along with the nationalization law had a huge impact on the mining communities. First, the authorities organized a network of informers in these villages. Second, all those who were believed to have undeclared gold, be them former mine owners,

³² Simion Narița, interview...

leaseholders, or any person known to be involved in gold smuggling were investigated by the Miliție and eventually forced to hand over whatever gold they still had. The Miliție men were extremely brutal in their work as they were torturing the people they investigated. The memory of these investigations left a scar in the collective memory of these communities. For example, Mr. Narița Dumitru remembers such an event, the investigation of Dandea, a mine owner from the Bucium area, which led, according to the interviewee, to his eventual death.

They took them, they came here: “You had gold mills, come!” They took these people to the Miliție, they took them to Alba [Iulia], to the canal [Danube-Black Sea Canal]. So they would hand over the gold! Those who had gold, had gold [to hand over], those who did not were beaten until their deaths. (...) After he handed over the gold they still came. Every other month or a few weeks: “Come with us to Alba [Iulia]. He would go: “Hand over the gold! Hand it over, we know you still have some!” They would beat him again. He used to be detained there for two or three days at a time, beaten, then resealed back home. At that time I was working at a mine in Haneș, in Zlatna. He was coming home, I was going to work while he was returning from Alba. We met at the crossroad at Gura Cerbii. When I saw him he said: “Măă.

măăă Dumitre, I can't take it anymore!" "But why?" "I am beaten black and blue!" And while we were taking, while he told me that he was beaten black and blue he fell over. His wife was [a shopkeeper] at the general goods store in Bucium Sat. I told his family what happened. They came and took him home. He only lived two more months after that.³³

Conclusions

To conclude, my research suggests that in the Interwar Period there was a limited degree of negotiation between the mining communities and the state. Miners were allowed to continue to individually mine for gold ore as they did for generations, and in spite of different legislative and administration measures the state could not fully control their work – one of the best example of illustrating this being the illegal gold trade. However, the possibilities of resisting the communist authorities were extremely limited. Apart from the stories about the armed resistance against the communist authorities the witnesses stories are marked by a feeling of helplessness in front of the changes brought about by the new regime. The mines were closed, gold could no longer be extracted by individual owners and severe measures were taken in order to put an end to gold smuggling. Furthermore, these measures, just like in the case of the process of the collectivization of the agriculture, had the additional

³³ Narița Dumitru, interview...

purpose of destroying the former village elites. In order to delegitimize thus reducing their influence in the community they were condemned as enemies of the people and as exploiters (chiaburi) and under the pretext of defending the law brutally beaten, sentenced to prison and even murdered. This led to a resocialization of the mining communities along the lines of the new socialist ideology. The social, economic and cultural changes brought along by the new regime during the late 1940s and 1950s lead to the disappearance of a centuries-old regional tradition of individual gold extraction along with all its particularities: traditional skills, mining tools and machineries, old belief regarding gold mining, traditional community organization norms and the practice of gold smuggling.

The Auriferous Mining Universe in the Apuseni Mountains: The Oral History of a Profession¹

Abstract: Gold exploitation in the Apuseni Mountains has been widely researched by historians and archaeologists in various projects regarding the history of mining in the Apuseni Mountains, since Antiquity (the Dacian and Roman period) up until the interwar period. Regarding the story of auriferous mining, after the fall of communism, archaeologists, medieval and modern historians, anthropologists, economists and sociologists alike have studied the topic, discussing aspects such as depopulation, the decline of the mining industry, risks and vulnerabilities. This article aims at widening the perspective on the auriferous mining profession, highlighting the communist period, from the standpoint of a professional monograph created with the help of life stories.

Keywords: professional monographs, underground exploitation, mining accidents,

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silicosis, mining imaginary, professional solidarity.

“Profession is golden,” a Romanian proverb says. Words go beyond their metaphorical meaning when speaking of auriferous mining: in this specific case, profession truly *is* “golden” because it is *all about* the gold. Aside from the natural difficulties and inherent working conditions of mining — carried out underground, in the dark, far away from daylight and the world — this profession acquires an additional depth due to the intrinsic value of gold as a precious metal, as well as to the imaginary and mythology built around it. This is why the universe of underground gold seeking is very intriguing, whereas the life stories of those who lived within this universe are truly exciting.

Our research tries to follow the multiple dimensions of the gold mine universe and of the people who worked there, having several common biographical aspects and life stories of the people involved in the underground or surface gold exploitation as a starting point: professional paths and biographic motivations, working conditions in the mine, risks, accidents and professional diseases, ethics and professional satisfaction, and last but not least, the imaginary of gold mining. All of the above are seen from the perspective of oral history.²

² The research is based on nine interviews organised by the “History of Gold Mining in the Apuseni Mountains” project team, PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2016-0874, in the towns inside the “auriferous quadrangle” of the

Employment and work in a mine: motivations and professional path

The majority of our witnesses follow a relatively linear professional path in the field of mine work, which includes the fulfilment of military service, employment (sometimes in reverse order), professional life and retiring at a relatively young age, as the calculation of the working years take into account the degree of difficulty of the work performed.

Thus, **Gheorghe Armeana** (n. 1953) from Bucium village, whose father died when he was aged 14 and lived at home only with his mother, following his older brother's marriage, takes on mining since it was a profitable profession, after a preliminary discussion with his mother. Mr. Armeana began his career at Minesfor, within the research department, following which, during 1978-1979 he was detached to the Roşia Poieni pit which was undergoing a stripping process at the time and was in need of mining galleries. Initially a temporary employee, he decided to get transferred here as a regular employee until 1989. The promotion and the good financial status, however, came with numerous responsibilities and pressure, especially concerning the management of explosive materials that were to be used in the mine:

And then, the manager of the explosives warehouse refused to change me, and we had audits so fierce that when I would get

Apuseni Mountains, in the counties of Alba and Hunedoara, in 2017-2018.

back home at night, I couldn't stand even to see my kids, and wife walking around the house. We had so many audits from the Police, we knew that something was going on and we had a hundred of tons of explosives coming in weekly. The load was coming by train from Făgăraș to Turda, from Turda they would unload it on the small train and it would arrive to the Câmpeni train station. From there, they would load it on trucks and bring it to us. And the audits began, and the crates... it used to rain in the carriages and they broke and we had to rebuild everything and... it gave us a lot of headaches because, you know, there were no [unclear] and stuff and this gives you headaches and they refused to relocate me.³

As a result, Gheorghe Armeana decided to return to Minesfor, where he would work as head of building site, coordinating about four hundred people. After the 1989 Revolution, he went on to work in the Corabia, Cucu and Abraham galleries; following some arguments with the management, he left and, following a brief unemployment period, he got hired at the Hydropower Constructions Trust, where he worked at the Valea Șesii settling basin for almost two years; he worked for another four years at

³ Gheorghe Armeana, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1859, OHA, Bucium Izbita, Alba, 19.10.2018.

Roșia Montană Gold Corporation, “where I opened old galleries used by our ancestors so they could extract samples,”⁴ and he retired at the age of 50.

Iosif Boldea (b. 1938) from Valea Bradului was hired by the Barza mine at the age of 18. Although a personal decision, it was influenced by the professional profile of the region: “Not everybody liked to work in the mine! (...) And I’m telling you this: in my case, it was my wish from childhood. I would see miners coming home, they had a hard life, I could see that...”⁵ After four years of work, he left for military service (which he completed in 1961), following which he returned to the same job, and continued working as a miner for thirty years.

Cornel David (b. 1941) from Bucium Șasa also began working at the age of 19, in 1960. Similarly to the majority of the youth of his native village, he was employed either in the area, or on construction sites, relocating together with an acquaintance to the iron mine of Ghelari (1961-1971), following a brief stay in his native area, at the so-called “Zsofi” gallery (1960-1961); after ten years spent in Ghelari, he moved to Mușca, between 1972 and 1973; he got married, then returned to Ghelari, between 1973 and 1974, but interrupted his professional path for four years, when retiring due to illness. In 1978 he returned to the Bucium Izbita mine, where he went on to work for two more years, and finally retired in 1990. He first worked as a trolley technician, then later, after

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Iosif Boldea, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1804, OHA, Valea Bradului, Hunedoara, 25.04.2018.

undertaking additional training in the mine, he became an explosives technician.⁶

Alexandru Duna (b. 1962) from Bucium Izbita began work after graduating from the Mining Highschool of Abrud⁷ and after completing his compulsory military service, he was employed as a mining equipment mechanic (working with extraction equipment, loading equipment, locomotives, ventilators, etc.) in Almaşu Mare from 1983 until 1990, and from 1990 until 1996 in Bucium Izbita. He retired after the shutdown of all the mines in the region.⁸

Candin Răpcău (b. 1961) from Brad graduated from the Mining High-school of Gura Barza, and following an internship in the mine (1978-1979), he attended the Mining Institute from Petroşani (interrupting his studies for 9 months to fulfil his military duty) and worked in parallel in the Petrila mine until 1986. Hired as unqualified worker, he was gradually promoted to all higher steps, reaching in 1984 the position of fifth level miner, and later, in 1986, seventh level miner. He refused a job offer in the Jiu Valley and returned to Gura Barza as team lead and then as

⁶ Cornel David, interview by Ioana Ursu, audio file no. 1878, OHA, Bucium Şasa, Alba, 17.10.2018.

⁷ The Abrud high-school was named “Horea, Cloşca şi Crişan” in 1958. Following the construction of the Copper Mining Plant of Roşia Poieni, the Mining Mount Constructions Enterprise, the Cotton Spinnery of Abrud, the high-school went through a reorganisation process which lead to a number of new specialisations, such as: electric technology, mechanics, ore preparation, constructions, light industry. There were also vocational classes in the high-school. https://scoli.didactic.ro/grupul_scolar_horea_closca_si_crisan_abrud, last visited on 05.12.2018.

⁸ Alexandru Duna, interview by Ioana Ursu, audio file no. 1887, OHA, Bucium Izbita, Alba, 18.10.2019.

sector manager for three years (1986-1988). From 1988 he was hired as objectives manager by the Institute for Mining Research and Design in Deva. Here, he coordinated the mining objectives of Brusturi — with the Luncșoara Plant, the Vața calcite pit — the Ponor calcium carbonate processing plant and pit along with Barza and the Valea Arsului pits. In 1993 he returned to Gura Barza as an Employment protection and environmental officer, position from which he retired in 2005.⁹

After graduating from the compulsory seven-grade primary school, **Nicolae Cosma** (b. 1943) from Bucium Șasa signed up for the three-year miners' vocational school. He qualified as trolley technician and began working as such in the Bucium Izbita mine, a copper mining complex which also incorporated a processing plant. Soon, he ceased his activity in order to fulfil his compulsory military duty, then returned to the mine and in a couple of years he was promoted to the position of miner aide and eventually to the position of miner and team lead: "the team was made up of a miner, a miner's aide and a trolley technician. (...) After returning from the army, I was hired again. This time I got promoted to miner's aide and later I became a miner, namely a team lead, because the miner was the lead of the team."¹⁰

Often times, mining runs in the family: both grandparents of Alexandru Duna, as well as his father

⁹ Candin Răpcău, interview by Ionela Bogdan, audio file no. 1835, AIO, Brad, Hunedoara, 27.04.2018.

¹⁰ Nicolae Cosma, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1868, OHA, Bucium Șasa, Alba, 17.10.20187.

worked in the mine; Gheorghe Armeana's father worked in the mine and died of silicosis when he was 14; Cornel David's father from the village of Bucium Șasa worked with the presses during the interwar Period, but also saw the transition of the mining industry to communism; Candin Răpcău's father along with his brothers (foreman, team lead and explosives technician respectively) all worked in the mine; Iosif Boldea's father did not work in the mine, but his brother was active on the surface sites, working as a locomotive mechanic of the train that would carry the miners underground. Nicolae Cosma's father from Bucium Șasa was also a trolley technician, but died in a mine accident when Nicolae was only eight; in spite of the tragedy, five out of the eight children of the family (the boys) continued to work in the mining sector, having different jobs: miners, technicians, mechanics.

The biographies and professional paths of the interviewees tell the story of how the specificity of a geographical region influences the choice for this profession. The presence of the exploitations in the region, be it gold mines or mixed ore, have, of course, influenced people to work in mining. In some cases, the decision was also influenced by a long family tradition of working in mines, but this was not always a decisive factor. Individual decisions have contributed to a professional migration of people, some of them ending up working in exploitations based in Petroșani and the Jiu Valley. Many witnesses also talk about a wave of workers coming from Moldavia to work in mining, in Brad.

There are also interviewees who initially had not intended to work in mining such as, for instance, **Mircea**

Crișan (b. 1958), who was a veterinary technician, but who did not feel comfortable working in the farming collectives (C.A.P and I.S.A.). And because he also graduated from a highschool specialized in tractors, he managed to get hired as miner by the coal mine of Țebea. After three months in Țebea, he decided to move to Barza; there, he attended the school for technicians, promoting from miner II to miner III, miner's aide, and foreman; he was initially detached to a sector in the Arad county - Brusturi; for three months he relocated to the Jiu Valley, following which he landed in Barza, where he would work until 2000.¹¹

Mining was not the first option for **Mircea Groza** (n. 1952) from Luncoiu de Jos either. After graduating from "Avram Iancu" Theoretical High-school of Brad, he sits the admission exam for the Faculty of History in Cluj. After failing to get admitted, he decides to choose a different path and signs up for the Mining Institute of Petroșani, where he studies to become an engineer aide in mining explorations. After graduating in 1974, he is hired in Barza as an intern engineer aide, where he takes a six month leave for the duration of the compulsory military duty, and then, gradually, is promoted in high level positions (sector manager, division manager).¹²

Despite our initial expectations, the interviews revealed extremely different life stories. Although from a

¹¹ Mircea Crișan, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1826, OHA, Ocîșor, Hunedoara, 24.04.2018.

¹² Mircea Groza, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1821, OHA, Luncoiu de Jos, Hunedoara, 25.04.2019.

retrospective standpoint the professional path of the witnesses should seem linear, it is, in fact, very syncopated and encloses stories about professional migration, particularities of the working environment and of the mining universe, various family contexts, all of which are marked by the decisions made by the interviewees regarding their field of activity, the location etc. It is an expression of their *agency*, exerted within the system's framework (the compulsory military duty, the specialised schools in the region — the mining high-schools of Gura Barza, Abrud, Zlatna; the Faculty of Mines of Petroșani; the decision to carry on the family professional tradition or, on the contrary, to cease it).

Working in the mine: routine, tasks, working environment

Our witnesses recreate the gold mine universe in their own specific way, strictly linked to the nature of their work and their daily tasks. Additionally, every mine has its own specificity which depends on the nature of the extracted ore and on the type of exploitation (underground or surface). Miners working in native or ore gold mines (Gura Barza) may have faced different challenges than miners working in tailings exploitations (e.g. Bucium Izbita), which means that their portrayal of the mining environment differs in terms of the specificity of the exploitation, of the technical solutions employed, but mostly of the work nature and the attributions of each job.

In the meantime, the importance of the Barza mine for the Brad community, its size, organization and specificity are highlighted and reflected by the narratives of

its former employees. Thus, in comparison with other life stories, the interviews based in Brad have many things in common and allow the shaping of a distinct professional identity from that of miners based in Barza.¹³

The image of the gold mine as an underground universe is best illustrated by the peculiarities of the work carried out underground. From the commute and daily transport routine to the “ritual” of stepping in the mine and putting on the work outfit to the six or eight hours of almost continuous work (usually in three shifts), the work of a miner is quite strict and regulated. The professional risks are high and rules must be obeyed.

The workday of a miner began with the commute to the mine. The Mining Enterprise of Barza, for instance, ensured transportation by bus from Brad to Gura Barza, however, this had not always been the case. Iosif Boldea remembers the times when he would cross the snowy and muddy hills in winter to get to the mine. After a time, the mayor approved the construction of a road and for transportation they offered:

A covered pick-up truck furbished with a couple of benches and we would sit on them like that, everybody, and this was how we commuted to the mine for several years. Later on, after a couple of years, they brought several buses and gradually they would come pick us up with buses... There

¹³ This identity is maintained including by the annual meetings of former miners organized by the “Auraria Barza” Foundation.

were many of us in this village who... especially miners who were the pride of the village, we were... those who worked on the surface, everybody would travel with the same vehicles. It was only later that we had proper transportation (...). The conditions were very, very harsh! Very harsh.¹⁴

Next, miners descended in the mine (the Barza Auxiliary Shaft, the deepest in the region, dug between 1960 and 1966, for instance, had a depth of 490 meters¹⁵) and, as they advanced, every 30 meters, there were horizons where working teams were positioned: “they would insert us in the morning, at the exit, with special carts; every cart carried six of us to that point, inside the mine where we would be picked up by others, who would take us to the depth of the Earth with some sort of cages, who were exactly like the lifts that you are familiar with.”¹⁶

Underground, a team was made up of three to five people — an unqualified worker, a miner’s aide, a miner and a team lead. Five to ten teams were coordinated by a foreman. The activity of four-five foremen was coordinated by a lead-foreman. Higher on the hierarchy ladder, a sector manager coordinated the entire activity. A sector was made

¹⁴ Iosif Boldea, interview...

¹⁵ The “Auraria-Barza” Brad Foundation, *Extaz și agonie în mineritul zărandean [The Ecstasy and The Agony of Zarand Region Mining]*, Maestro Tip, 2016, p. 131.

¹⁶ Iosif Boldea, interview...

up of about 300 people, and besides those mentioned, it included a topographer, a geologist and a standardizer. In Brad, there were nine sectors at some point, with about 3000 employees working underground.¹⁷ In addition to the main activity, the mine also included a processing plant, a laboratory (for flotation), a repair workshop for material transporting vehicles.

Nonetheless, the tasks are different according to the profession of the interviewees. Some of them did not interact with the mine as much as miners constantly working underground. For instance, **Niculae Stoica** (b. 1941), a graduate of the Brad Technical Mining Institute of Brad and of the Faculty of Industry, Constructions and Transports Economics of Cluj (attended as distance learning) worked in the white collar division of the Barza mine, which employed, according to his estimations, about 550 people of the overall 6500 workforce of Barza. He recalls the distinction and arguments between the: “so-called (bread) eaters — between mining engineers, mechanics and economists. There were conversations like: *‘You economists only talk about money, money, money!; And you only know how to handle rocks and the sorts’*.”¹⁸ As part of his duties, he would go underground only to carry out audits and analyses; he also had a very important assignment, i.e. clocking the tasks. Since the quantity of gold was not equal to the quantity of ore, the numbers were added, and at the end, the quantity of processed ore was

¹⁷ Niculae Stoica, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1814, OHA, Brad, Hunedoara, 11.11.2017.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

divided as evenly as possible, in order to ensure a fair retribution of ore, because payment was based on the meter of exploited ore, not on the quantity of gold resulted following processing.¹⁹

Regarding the extraction and processing activity in Barza, the time period between 1948 and 1972 was characterized by a growing trend in terms of ore production capacity; major investments were made and the installations dating back to 1938 were adapted to the characteristics of the ore extracted in the aforementioned period²⁰. The production has expanded following the opening of the Musariu deposit, meaning that a network of pure gold-rich ore body developed in an area with a diameter of 500-600 meters and a height of 12-150 meters. After 1948, when the administration of mines was taken over by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, an extended exploitation of the deposit was promoted, with the aim of extracting high quantities of gold, needed for the post-war country reconstruction, over a short period of time.²¹

Mircea Groza discusses directional drilling of ore bodies:

The exploitation is carried out along a coast gallery connected to one or several shafts which through drilling at... a depth, I mean at level zero, 30 meters vertically, a horizon devised through a cross-section gallery,

¹⁹ *Ibidem.*

²⁰ *Extaz și agonie...*

²¹ *Ibidem.*

whose goal is to detect gold rich ore bodies. When the latter meets through the cross-sectional gallery a gold ore body, other types of works are initiated, which are named directional galleries, also known as horizon elevations; the horizon elevation is built from 30 meters below to 0 meters upwards, the air circuit is performed, and the actual exploitation begins through pre-careening elevations, which our miners called *rostogoale* [approximate translation: rollers], and from there the exploitation based on cross section directional drilling begins, by filling the excavated area. This was the traditional method. There were rare cases when the ore body, because ore bodies can be 0.05 meters wide.... but there were also 2-meter-wide bodies, in this case the method employed would be slightly different, or we would employ accumulation because the ore body was wide, so there was a lot of ore. We also employed explosion-based works, by means of dynamite and astrolite, we only used these two. The coal pits also used other methods, they would ventilate the work fronts or recall miners to the surface.²²

²² Mircea Groza, interview.....

The gradual exhaustion of the gold-rich areas of the Barza Musariu deposit led to a permanent drop in production after 1960, which was compensated, however, by the improved performances of processing technologies and the increase of the quantities of extracted and processed ore.²³ This trend was even more striking a decade later. From 1972 until 1989, due to the extensive development of extraction and processing facilities, the auriferous deposits with a high concentration of native gold had run out quite rapidly, which meant that lower-yielding ore was sought for processing at this point. The exploitation was carried out mostly in marginal areas of the deposits, where the content of gold was lower, the transportation of ore was more difficult and work productivity (measured in tons/job) was low.²⁴ As a result of the scarcity of native gold, other exploitation methods were attempted, aiming at increasing productivity and compensating for the decreased gold content by producing higher quantities of ore. Meanwhile, research (prospecting) works were initiated between 1975 and 1985 in order to identify gold resources to be exploited in pits or underground. By 1989, the processing capacity of the plant had been covered by the exploitation of underground deposits and the processing of the old waste piles (in order to maintain the quotas); the quantity of processed material in the plant had been maintained, on the other hand,

²³ *Extaz și agonie...*

²⁴ *Ibidem.*

however, the production of gold gradually decreased, as the auriferous ore resources had dropped.²⁵

The profile of the Izbita mine was different from that of the Brad mine, as mentioned earlier. The former employees of this mine describe in highly technical details their activity in the mine: miner Nicolae Cosma and explosives technician Cornel David from Bucium Șasa explain the work routine: after perforating the front, the explosives technician in cooperation with the miner would load the holes with explosives and detonate it. The material resulted from the explosion had to be evacuated, and the norm was calculated according to the advancing of the front in meters. Professionals manipulating the explosives had a high responsibility and were often audited, as Cornel David recalls:

There were audits, from employment protection — it was their duty to check everything and we had to... write down where we took the explosives from, I had to draft a paper on my name and... how much explosives I would take out and how much I carried, and where I carried it (...) all of this was written down in the records.²⁶

The protection equipment worn in mines was similar, it consisted of a compulsory protection helmet,²⁷

²⁵*Ibidem.*

²⁶ Cornel David, interview...

²⁷ Iosif Boldea, Nicolae Cosma, Mircea Crișan, Petruț Marian.

overalls and a carbide lamp. For maintenance personnel, the uniform was made up of waterproof fabric, mainly rubber, due to the infiltrated water underground.

We only worked in a rubber outfit there. We had some sort of rubber clothes and a sort of big hat, like that, to protect our shoulders and direct the water down. When we would get out, believe me, after eight whole hours of working with your hands in water... I still have signs, look, even now... My blood pressure is affected, this is why it happens. So you can imagine that after eight hours with those rubber clothes on, we were wet to the bone! We had water falling on our head for eight hours straight! Yes... this is how it was, these were the working conditions, you had no choice, no choice!²⁸

The working environment was tough, and for some activities, it was extremely wet. Even for the explosives technicians, the humidity generated by the underground water would sometimes make basic tasks difficult to achieve:

We had the carbide lamp, it had to be ensured, we always had to carry it... in order to see where we were going, what and how he should work, where... and even at the beginning of the film we were given

²⁸ Iosif Boldea, interview...

carbide, the lamp was being prepared... and with the lamp, the lamp had to be lit on all the time because... you know, we had no matches... none. The lamp would die out, often we would be left in the dark, we would get to.../I.U.: If the lamp died out, couldn't you light it up anymore? / C.D.: We had no good matches. Many times, we had a match box, but you could only light up ten of them. They were... they were, you know... and there was also the humidity, you know. And my pockets were getting wet, so...²⁹

Alexandru Duna also remembers the humidity underground. He worked as equipment mechanic in Almașu Mare and in Izbita. He was present during the shaft construction works (in the Larga gallery). These were difficult tasks which implied the opening of horizons.

It is much more difficult to explain the conditions we had to work in: it rained on you... it was an area... a mining area... it rained on you. /I.U.: What do you mean, it rained? /A.D.: Water, water. Somewhere underground there's water. It had to leak somewhere! And it leaked on you! On the walls. The shaft diameter, at sixteen meters. Its diameter, circular, made of concrete. It

²⁹ Cornel David, interview...

was being built. We applied metal all the way down. On 40-meter sections, we were consolidating. Then the electrical team would follow. For the air system. For evacuating the water underground. The pumps, which were running constantly. In order to be able to work, you had to evacuate the water. So, it was much more difficult to... how to put it, to explain to you, what the conditions were. If the pump stopped for ten minutes and there was no back-up pump to take over, you would see the water level grow around you! /I.U.: So, the risks were extreme... /A.D.: And we would go deep underground. The miners would go deep underground. But the mechanical part was part of the works design. To be able to work. Later, we would build the galleries and horizons. And then, there would be other galleries and other works — complex works (...) But water was the highest danger...³⁰

The daily routine in the mine was occasionally interrupted by socialist competitions, either between different enterprises, or between the galleries of the same mine. During competitions, which would span over a certain period of time (e.g. a month), miners were supposed to work faster, in shorter, six hour shifts and were rewarded

³⁰ Alexandru Duna, interview...

with premiums in case of victory. Alexandru Duna recalls the competitions organized in IPEG Deva (The Geological Prospections and Explorations Enterprise of Deva) in the 1980s, the workload and the premium rewards:

I.U.: So you had socialist competitions between different galleries? /A.D.: Between galleries, yes! And between sites, how should I put it? For instance, the Bucium site competed against the Rodu, Roșia Montană site or... / I.U.: And the winners were getting money? /A.D.: Yes, money, I mean premiums. If you got past the 100 and one meters mark, the gallery got past the 100 and one meters, it was, it was... it was 100. But maybe the others also got to the 100 and one meters or maybe the 100 and two meters mark. Everybody would be rewarded, from the master to... /I.U.: And did you manage...? /A.D.: There (in Almașu Mare), we did manage — fast ones! A lot of them, not just one! Mâncăceasca, Brădișor... there are many galleries there with many names... how should I put it... so there were a lot of them. Maybe at 3 meters we would do a site. Maybe at 3 meters. We would work non-stop. On Saturdays, Sundays, non-stop. There was no such thing as interrupting the work due to... materials. Due to the lack of

materials or because something was stopping you.

I.U.: No such thing /A.D. No! You had to be at work! And at the end... We would get there. This was the norm, 100 meters. We would achieve this goal and we would get rewarded. It's true, miners would get more, as well as masters, engineers and those who... who were directly responsible for the work, for the 100 meters. / I.U.: I see, So those responsible were...³¹

During competitions, as much as possible, underground areas were chosen as not to require consolidation work, and this was confirmed by special committees:

A.D.: They would look for an appropriate area. An appropriate area, where no consolidation was needed. Because if it was an appropriate area, you would achieve the goal. If the area required consolidation, it would take more time... /I.U.: It would take more time if consolidation was needed? /A.D.: The consolidation, the support would take time. The support of the gallery. The consolidation took time, and the goal would not be achieved. /I.U.: Yes, it was no longer be achieved.... /A.D.: No, no, no. And then

³¹ *Ibidem.*

it was aborted. If it was, a committee would come — sometimes, there were committees from Bucharest coming in. A Bucharest committee came for the reception once — *yes! Is the gallery appropriate for such a task...* like that.³²

Regarding the technological advancements, as it was recorded by the memory of the interviewees, an important change was the introduction of wet perforation.

We worked in harsh conditions back then, in those days... we didn't have wet perforation. We would work inside... we would use the perforator there and — in order to blow up, to advance in the front we were working in; at the end, when we would finish we were truly like millers. Dust, dust and dust everywhere! And then, after a certain amount of time, someone decided that it is forbidden to perforate in dry conditions in order not to breathe in all that dust resulted from the drill which functioned relentlessly... And we didn't have the necessary equipment, something that could help us during perforation. One of us, because every team was made up of four people — one of us would take the perforator and would put it here, on the

³² *Ibidem.*

shoulder, we had some sort of pillow which we would put on our shoulder and we would push the perforator with our shoulder to drill the wholes. And we would have someone helping us from behind, he would hold the perforator handle, because it was ruining me, my shoulder would hurt, and this is how... year after year, this is how we lived. And then, slowly, conditions started to improve a bit, and then they... You can imagine that until they introduced this entire installation through pipes, this is how they implemented some sort of wet perforation system! And this wet perforation meant that through this perforator, this is how we called it there, through that shaft which led to the rock there, to start drilling the hole, because it had a hole on the inside, and this was its name: wet perforation! And then, with the introduction of wet perforation, they also set up something else: they introduced a support, we no longer operated the perforator, an aid was introduced which operated with compressed air, and we used our left hand to use the compressed air. And while operated it there, the perforator would advance, it advanced further and water was pumped through the hole of the perforator, it had an injection through which it flowed to the iron where it turned in the rock, so we no longer had to inhale all the dust, there

was no more dust! So water flowed through those holes which would go there and... the drill advanced through the water! Through the water jet! And this was our luck, we no longer had to face silicosis. This was the issue with mining. Silicosis was haunting us all, all the dust we worked in we inhaled it and you can imagine, our bodies, lungs and airways, they were all affected by the dust. But then the wet perforation was introduced and then it expanded, and we were no longer allowed to work in a dry environment... so conditions improved, our problem was solved.³³

Working conditions improved some time during the 1970s, according to Iosif Boldea's recollections, and wet perforation was doubled by the air ventilation inside the mine and the installation of an overground powerful ventilator which pulled out the stale air from the mine.³⁴

The costs of working in a mine: accidents and professional diseases

Dry perforation was the main culprit of the best known professional condition of the miners, but it was the same for gravel, quartz, sandstone or granite pit workers, tunnel diggers or workers in the metallurgic industry: silicosis, namely the accumulation of silicon dioxide

³³ Iosif Boldea, interview...

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

particles (sand) in the lungs. Silicosis was, unfortunately, a common aspect, not an exception, of the biographies of miners active before 1970, before the introduction of the aforementioned wet perforation.

There are very few among us, you count them on your fingers, who are still alive, among those who worked in the mine. Many are gone. We had very tough conditions and this was the pattern. You would hear that this colleague was sick. *But why?* and he goes, *He has silicosis*. It was known that he had worked underground and had silicosis. It was so dangerous that it accumulated in arteries in the lungs, on the... and no, it wasn't curable!³⁵

Cornel David also fell ill due to the dust from the mine, so much that he had to retire only 14 years after he was employed, in 1974. After three years in retreat, he recovered and resumed his activity in the mine, which we would continue until his retirement in 1990. Asked about the causes of mortality in the mine, he replied that accidents occurred far less often than disease:

They all died of disease. I had several colleagues here, several friends... they all died before the age of 50. It was because of... They had worked since early

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

childhood, since the age of 17-18, and they worked in those poor conditions: in dust and... you know. All work was carried out manually. There were mechanized sections as well, but not many...³⁶

His illness caused by the mine is also the regret of his wife: "I.U.: What was it like to be a miner's wife? / S.: We had no idea how bad it was for him back then. /I.U: Is this what you regret the most, his falling ill? /S.: Yes. These people had issues... This one, after several years, it would all be over for him, he could no longer work..."³⁷

In Alexandru Duna's family, the grandfather and the father were also miners, but none had reached the age of seventy: grandfathers Gheorghe Duna and Simion Brădean (who were also from Bucium Izbita) died at the ages of 62 and 65, respectively, in 1978 and 1981, also because of mine-acquired silicosis:

It was also because of the silicon that was here, because of the harsh conditions in the mines. They didn't get the chance to work in the improved conditions with wet perforation. They didn't work in modern conditions... They used the chisel and the hammer. They all worked for today and tomorrow.³⁸

³⁶ Cornel David, interview...

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ Alexandru Duna, interview...

Although statistically accidents occurred less often than professional disease, they indicated the risks of working in the mine and had a significant impact on those involved. A dramatic event occurred on 3 January 1973, in Gura Barza; it is this event that Nicolae Stoica mentions:

You know what happened? In the shafts that run down in the mine, one needs to check the cables that hold the cage used for descending. There's a system, where you need to cut a section of the cable and send it to the labs, and once they worked with an open flame on such a cable. And they didn't — this was the explanation — that they failed to take the measures to watch what happens in 24... These were the rules, you had to watch it for at least 24 hours in order to prevent a fire down the shaft. Because a flame can fall 400 meters and you don't know what it could do down there. After it caught — this shaft contains all the electric lines, they all go down there. When that thing ignited, all the electric lines caught fire, and it was out of control. And the shaft burned down and a fire followed... /D.N.: And the people were at work. /N.S.: Yes, they were... the first shift had just come out, and the second shift went in. /D.N.: So you were working in shifts. /N.S.: Yes, we were working in two shifts. And those from the second shift were caught by the fire...

some of them escaped, but the non-smokers were mostly affected. Smokers had better resistance. Yes, there were 10 dead in the mine and one more died outside... some of them managed to escape because they breathed on a canal, because there was a canal on the edge of the gallery which collected the water from the mine. And they breathed close to the canal, where the air was cleaner and yes — they had enough air until the rescuers arrived. One of them was bitten, he got sick because he was bitten by rats. But he survived. I'm not sure he's still alive now, but he was a couple of years back. It was a big tragedy! This was the biggest tragedy! So many dead in one event! And, yes, a couple of days they interrupted work, after that they resumed work in other sectors, but not in this particular one, and then of course they resumed operations there too, eventually.³⁹

Petruț Marian (b. 1967) was an only a child when the Gura Barza accident happened, however, he remembers the impact it had on the community: “In the ‘70s, there was a very big collective accident, very many people were... I don’t remember much, I was a child, but I do know that I attended many funerals in the village with my grandparents, so it was a collective accident, the entire

³⁹ Niculae Stoica, interview...

mine caught fire.”⁴⁰ He wasn’t spared by accidents either when he started working in the mine:

In my case, a rock mass collapsed and it caught me... it didn’t fall on me, because I managed to... you know, but it fell from the back and it broke my tibia and my fibula. There were other deadly accidents, too, when they were buried alive by ore! I’ve seen such accidents myself. But usually, the rock would fall and would catch you underneath. There were some cases of explosives technicians who died because of blasts... but these accidents happened because of their negligence. Mostly negligence. But in the final years, apart from negligence, there was also a lack of materials, so you couldn’t protect yourself... and you needed to consolidate the area because there was always the risk of collapse, but you had to work in order to get your payment at the end of the month, so you would risk it... you knew there were risks, but you had no choice.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Petruț Marian, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1822, OHA, Luncoiu de Jos, Hunedoara, 25/04.2018.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

The risk of rock collapsing is also mentioned by Candin Răpcău as a frequent cause of accidents, which is mostly the case for Barza:

In Barza and right here, there might be cracks in the ore, in the walls and ceiling of galleries or in the work front, or accidents also occurred due to ignorance, because the insulation operations were not carried out properly, so wherever there were cracks and the rock might fall, there was a high risk.⁴²

Another reason could be the detachment of fixtures, as Niculae Cosma explains:

A stone would fall or the fixture would break. We were tempted as well... I mean, we nearly got caught, me and a colleague. Because for instance, as we assembled the railroad, because the carriage would run on the railroad and the loading car would also go on the railroad. And we got behind to take the rail because we made way for the crosspiece, because now you understand, where the rails were set. And when we picked this up, when we picked up the rail, there was a fixture there. We saw how the above beam protrudes down through this pillar. And we heard a squeak, and I say to

⁴² Niculae Cosma, interview...

him ‘Get back!’ and we saw a rock falling from 1,5 meters, the height of the big gallery, on a 10 meters’ distance. It wasn’t a small sized rock, it was a 10-meter-long rock... if it had caught us, we would have been finished. In other parts, it did happen, of course it did.⁴³

The compensations for the injured included medical assistance following accidents; in case of death, funeral costs were partially or fully covered by the enterprise and employment opportunities were offered to family members, if they hadn’t already had a job, Candin Răpcău remembers. As employment protection responsible, he was able to witness such accidents:

At Barza, as I was working for the employment protection department, I went through many situations, for instance, I witnessed an accident in which twenty tons fell on a worker; he was buried, he disappeared, the flesh on his cheek was gone, you could only see his teeth and he hit his head. I tried, I entered there with a colleague and working for employment protection, I was brave, and I also worked in the Jiu Valley. I managed to save him for a short while, but he died after 15 minutes. There were many other cases where I would

⁴³ Niculae Cosma, interview...

go to and pick up the dead bodies. There were many dead, I mean a lot: during my stint as manager, there were nine dead, may they all rest in peace.⁴⁴

Remembering accidents is not easy for the interviewees, since some of those dead were close to them. The ‘pauses’ during interviews are sometimes very suggestive:

C.D: There were accidents, of course there were. /I.U.: Is there anything that stuck in your memory? /C.D.: Yes, there is. I worked in the shafts. A lot. There were accidents... many died in accidents there. They kept dying and... you know. /I.U.: Did you have any colleagues? Close ones who...? /C.D.: Yes, yes. We had colleagues who died, I was there... I saw them... One of them was a young lad, from Moldavia, he fell. He fell down the shaft. When they found him, when they discovered him, he was... without clothes, without shoes, he fell a long way... 100 meters... there... he hit the ground...⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Candin Răpcău, interview...

⁴⁵ Cornel David, interview...

The mining imaginary world: Vâlva Băii

Old legends about *Vâlva Băii* (Mine Ghost) were still circulating during communism in the gold mines. The attitudes of interviewees vary from complete rejection of rumours to their association with accidents or the failure to comply with work safety regulations, going so far as to consider *Vâlva* as the work of evil. Although he confirms people's beliefs, Candin Răpcău is very firm in asserting that he has never seen such 'fabulations'.

C.R.: For as long as I worked there as an employment protection officer, I walked many miles alone during audits. Until I would get to a certain sector. But I was never afraid and I never saw anything like that, these were probably fabulations. / I.B.: But have you heard people talking about such things? /C.R.: Yes, I've heard. There were all these stories that somebody died and *Vâlva Băii* remained on his land... But I, myself, never... I have never heard or seen anything like that.⁴⁶

Cornel David also confirms the continuity of the legends about *Vâlva*:

I.U.: And were there still stories (...) from your parents, legends about ghosts or...?
C.D.: Yes, there were. There were stories

⁴⁶ Candin Răpcău, interview...

about it. You would hear about what happened there and there. /I.U.: And what would people say... were there stories about each mine? /C.D.: That *Vâlva* came and told various things to people. And then... /I.U.: But were these legends or did people tell stories themselves? /C.D.: People discussed among them! That somebody came and told them to go there and there, that there was gold and... these kind of stories (...) There were always stories.⁴⁷

However, Alexandru Duna offers a very interesting perspective, according to which, on one hand, *Vâlva Băii* is considered an omen by those who try to find justification for their own negligence and accidents caused by the failure to comply with safety regulations or by chance, and on the other hand, it subtly suggests that it is the expression of Evil.

I.U: People used to talk, there were legends about *Vâlva Băii*, with ghosts, with...? / A.D: You know how these things are. Everybody has their own version... we shouldn't believe in Evil. The Evil... /I.U.: But the ghosts were bad? Did people consider them bad? /A.D.: How should I say this? There were some who, due to

⁴⁷ Cornel David, interview...

negligence, were caught under collapsing galleries. They were gone, dead. They shouldn't have been there; they shouldn't have acted that way. So it was because of that. We shouldn't look at the dark side of things. With *Vâlva Băilor*... they were all legends. It was said that gold was burning, that it was hidden in some place... all legends... They were not true... Mining accidents... people indeed died in accidents. Some of them died of asphyxiation. The ventilation system was not working properly. But it wasn't because of... it all happened because of negligence! It wasn't meant to be! (...) Negligence was the cause of accidents. It wasn't some kind of revenge of *Vâlva Băii* or that there were spirits underground. /I.U.: But people actually believed that? I mean, they kept telling these stories? /A.D.: Old people told these stories anyway. That they worked... let me tell you. I was working as well in that gallery, and he says: there was someone following me. I wasn't monitoring what was going on in there. Maybe the weather was changing, or the ventilation system was malfunctioning... they found him dead in there, and he said: *Vâlva Băii came and took him*. But this guy... he was not completely sane. They were all legends, stories. /I.U.: I understand that these are

stories and that... But did people...? /A.D.: People believed in this.⁴⁸

Colleagues, professional ethics, passion

The fact that working conditions were identical to everyone — albeit harsh — led to strong solidarity within the profession, resulted from common experiences:

I.U.: How was the mood, how did you get along with your shift partners, how did you collaborate? /A.D.: Everybody went through the same risks, everybody. Be it rain in the gallery, be it dirt, everybody had to transit this section. It may have rained — in a section — along 10 meters, it was pouring down with rain. Or you had to wear rubber clothes. There was water, it would fill your boots in spring. There was water accumulating in the galleries—all that water was flooding, but it accumulated there because — it was spring. Because the water is always underground. Everybody had to walk through these sections. (...) You couldn't say: I want to go to a different section, because it's better there.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Alexandru Duna, interview...

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

The risky environment triggers a high responsibility for work team leads. Iosif Boldea remembers:

Ma'am, a team lead is first of all responsible for the workplace. He has to make sure... the team lead should take care of the life and health of his team. He was tasked with this during the working hours. You can imagine, you are constantly covered by rock, ma'am! The team lead had to control the area, to ensure and to see: *Hey, there are no risks here!*, to not to endanger his peers.⁵⁰

Mircea Crișan also talks about the ethics of the team lead:

And then, after you master your work environment, you get to be a team lead — you had to take a new examination in order to become team lead. As a team lead you are responsible for people working with you! God forbid any of them is injured, because you are responsible, if he dies, you give his children an alimony till the end of time! You are responsible for your actions,

⁵⁰ Iosif Boldea, interview...

there's no workaround! You are responsible for the work place.⁵¹

Last, but not least, trust in the others and the serious attitude towards work determines trust in the responsibility of other colleagues in the underground:

I.U.: What were you thinking about when knowing that you would go underground...? /A.D.: I knew that there were people there. There were people operating the pumps! I knew that they worked there to get the water out!/ I.U.: And you trusted them to.../A.D.: Of course!⁵²

Conclusion

As a conclusion of our research, we shall quote a section of an interview with Cornel David:

I.U.: If you had to start over, would you choose the same path? Would you work in the mine? /C.D.: I did say that it was very dangerous, that mining can destroy you... still, many would go back right now, because there are no jobs and, you know. /I.U.: But did you like it? Did you like working there? /D.: I liked working in the

⁵¹ Mircea Crișan, interview...

⁵² Alexandru Duna, interview...

mine, and... I learned quickly and... you know.

Based on the life and mine stories narrated by direct witnesses, our research aimed at recreating, through multiple dimensions, the universe of gold mines; whether it involved physical (the work environment and the underground conditions), technical (equipment, tools, techniques and procedures) or even non-material aspects (beliefs, values), the gold mine remains an intriguing space. These stories also contributed to the shaping of the documentation of auriferous mining during communism, from the perspective of professional monographs.

According to a Romanian proverb “a work well done is a praise for its master,” which means that the stories mentioned here, apart from the huge contribution and documentation value regarding the physical universe and work experience in the mine, evoke the individual contribution and professional devotion of storytellers, of their professional ethics and attitude towards work, which is seen not just as a means of survival, but also as a value in itself

Surveillance Obsession in Communism: Controls in Gold Mines in the Apuseni Mountains¹

Abstract: This article focuses on how control was exerted in gold mining in Apuseni Mountains, and most importantly how it is remembered by people living and working in the area. It is based on archival research and oral history interviews and it aims at answering questions such as: How totalitarian control impacted a field - gold mining - in which control was a part of tradition? Were there diachronical changes or continuities in gold mining controls following the installment of communism in Romania? How controlling measures are remembered by those who controlled or were controlled? How consistent oral history testimonies and other sources on gold mining controls are? The article provides a short diachronic overview on the general legislation on gold mining, an analysis of local regulations that were applied in order to control the production of gold, and last, but not least, it deals with

¹ This work was supported by a grant of Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2016-0874, within PNCDI III, contract no. 150/2017.

how the implementation of control policies is remembered by those who worked in the mines and their friends and relatives. Thus, it tries to complement the official discourse about gold mining with the microhistorical perspective from below: the past as remembered by those liveth.

Keywords: control, gold mining, Apuseni Mountains, body searches, communist regime, Romania

Controlling: one of the most powerful word, often employed by modern states to “discipline and punish” as Foucault would say.² It became part, to different degrees, of our social and personal becoming as human beings. In the context of totalitarian regimes, controlling was one of the means to impose and preserve power over societies. When it comes to the history of totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, control is one efficient analytical tool scholars use in order to describe and interpret their changes and continuities throughout the 20th century. It became, attached to world famous concept of *resistance*,³ one of the *casus belli* for the debate between traditional and (post)revisionist historians. While

² Michel Foucault, *A supraveghea și a pedepsii. Nașterea închisorii*, Humanitas, 1997.

³ To mention one work that tries to collect and summarise discussions on resistance: Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, Marshall Poe (eds.), *The Resistance Debate in Russian and Soviet History: Kritika Historical Studies*, Slavica, 2003.

traditional historians considered that the control by the totalitarian state was absolute, the revisionists aimed at more nuanced power relations in which different degrees of control were applied by the state over the citizen. But how totalitarian control impacted a field - gold mining - in which control was a part of tradition? Were there diachronical changes or continuities in gold mining controls following the instauration of communism in Romania? How controlling measures are remembered by those who controlled or were controlled? How (in)consistent oral history testimonies and other sources on gold mining controls are? This article aims at answering these questions by providing a short diachronic overview on the general legislation on gold and gold mining. Second, there were several local and institutional regulations that were applied in order to control the production of gold that need to be analyzed. Third and the broadest part of the paper deals with how the implementation of control policies is remembered by those who worked in the mines and their friends and relatives is to be talked by this article.

In what concerns the national legislation on gold production, there was an increasing obsession for the nation-state in the 20th century to possess as much as possible precious metals and gems, and to control how much gold was locally produced to increase the so called *nation's wealth*. While all modern states exhibited preoccupations for their own wealth, in the context of abolishing private property, the Romanian communist state exacerbated this preoccupation focusing particularly on countering gold stealing, illegal gold extractions and gold trafficking. This article uses documents from the National

Bank of Romania Archives, the CNSAS and several oral history interviews recorded between 2017 and 2018 in mining areas in Hunedoara and Alba counties.⁴ All fragments used in the paper belong to male story-tellers who were employed in mines exploitation plants, and consequently were both controlled and controllers. This does not mean that there we no female workers, but their number was significantly smaller than the men. There are mostly male interviewee who described their experiences with controls in mine, while women were less focused on these issues. Oral history brings to the fore voices of people otherwise silent and this article build on the model established by Alessandro Portelli in *They Say in Harlan County. An Oral History*. This extraordinary book about a coal mining community in the U.S. sets high standards for all history of mining worldwide as it “attempts to paint a huge canvas, covering the whole swath of US history, with the pointillistic detail of microhistory – and to do so by relying on the inherently redundant medium of orality.”⁵ Less ambitious, but useful as works about miners and mining and oral history are relatively scarce, is the book by Carrie Papa, *A Mile Deep and Black as Pitch. An Oral History of the Franklin and Sterling Hill Mines*.⁶ Building

⁴ Within the project *The History of Gold Mining in the Apuseni Mountains*, about one hundred interviews were recorded between 2017 and 2018.

⁵ Alessandro Portelli in *They Say in Harlan County. An Oral History*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 9.

⁶ Carrie Papa, *A Mile Deep and Black as Pitch. An Oral History of the Franklin and Sterling Hill Mines*, The MacDonald&Woodward Publishing Company, 2004.

on these examples, this article tries also to complement the official discourse about gold mining with the microhistorical perspective from below: the past as remembered by those liveth.

With a long tradition of gold exploitation that goes back to ancient times, local communities shared with state and nobility the exploitation of gold in the Apuseni Mountains. Since first created, gold exploitation implied a certain degree of control imposed by mine owners, which varied in time and was in accordance with the technology development. In the interwar period, following the integration of Transylvania in the Romanian kingdom, in 1918, the first national legislation on mining was issued in 1924. The Law of the Mines treated gold as any other underground resource, with no special attention. The gold exploitation was to be licensed to different firms or individuals, with the preemption to buy for the state. The regulations mentioned the obligation for concessionaires to keep daily evidence of all gold production. In the context of a rather general lax legislation, the low price paid by the National Bank – in comparison to the free market, and the unpredictable local interpretation of national legislation – as shown above by my colleague Călin-Andrei Olariu – gold stealing, illegal extractions and illegal trading were widespread. In the beginning of the 20th century, mine owners were responsible for their own controlling strategies, with the seldom unpredictable reinforcing by state authorities, mainly the gendarmes. The latter were especially cautious in countering gold trafficking and making sure all mine owners had a correct evidence of gold production to be sold to the National Bank and not on the

black market. The situation remained unchanged after World War II as a decision issued in 1947 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated the right to some private firms – including gold mines – to organize their own guard and protection services.⁷ It displays diachronically a continuation after the 1948 nationalization, as the state became the exclusive owner of all mines and thus, in charge with controlling and protecting its production.⁸ Thus, all controlling instruments – legislation, regulations and implementation – were engulfed by the state. This is, of course, both a consequence of nationalization of mine ownership and the increasing obsession of the communist regime for controlling the state and society in general, and gold production and circulation, in particular. Therefore, the communist regime in Romania imposed successive harder legislation in which step-by-step the state took over the production, manufacture and trade with precious metals and gems, particularly gold and silver.

According both to archival documents and oral history testimonies,⁹ there were strict controlling

⁷ Decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, no. 3280, 8 May 1947, in *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 109, 15 May 1947.

⁸ Law for the nationalization of industrial, banking, insurance, mining and transportation enterprises, no. 119, 11 June 1948, in *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 133 bis, 11 June 1948, available online at http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?id=1575 (last accessed 10.10.2018)

⁹ For example, Mr. Tudor Andrei Kiszely, a former director of the Gura Barza speak about how they were responsible for the elaboration and implementation of controlling and protection regulations. Tudor Andrei Kiszely interview by the author and Ionuț Costea, audio file no. 1815, Oral History Archives (OHA), Brad, Hunedoara, 11.11.2017.

procedures for preventing and countering gold thefts and trafficking. They were usually elaborated by enterprises' specialists, based on previous experience and adapted to daily realities and exploiting technical innovations. These procedures were subsequently approved by the highest governmental authorities, and implemented locally by mine employees. For example, in a document issued by Societatea Mica in 1947, there were twenty five listings of how clandestinely gold ore or nuggets were taken out from mines.¹⁰ From trivial methods such as hiding in one's hand, hat, pockets or boots (most frequent), to more creative ones such as hiding the ore in food, toilet buckets or anus (cartridges with native gold or gold ore), the experience showed where and how the controls had to be made in order to avoid gold stealing. Regularly, the illegal extractions focused on native gold, gold nuggets, or highly concentrated gold ore. The controls were to be made to all access points in the mines as well as in the mines whenever it felt like "needed." Body searches would be made at the exit, by a controller who did not work in the mine, in the presence of a testimony, "preferably a worker's representative." The document confirms that the control was made by civilians, employees of the mine, with no interference from the outside, including the authorities whom were to be involved only after the theft was

¹⁰ The Romanian National Bank Archives, *Instrucțiuni pentru percheziția în mină și la ieșirea din mină. Regulament privind controlul în mină, valabil pentru exploatările și uzinele de prelucrare ale Societății Mica*, Brad 17 iulie 1947, Gold Service Fund, File 23 (1945-1948), pp. 326-331.

discovered. Thus, those caught with gold nuggets or ore, were investigated by the mine's leaders and subsequently put at the disposal of the police. Sometime an over-body control was imposed, in the presence of worker's and authorities' representatives, in a special room, when an employee looked suspicious. This kind of control was meant as well, to highlight the efficiency of regular controls. This regulation document the existence at least since 1947 of a X-Ray detector, operated by a radiologist, for identifying gold inside miners' bodies. Those suspected, would go in a special room under the supervision of two workers' delegates and two gendarmes, until they would defecate in order to prove if they had or not gold. Mine trains would be specially supervised, as well as ore samples which would be accompanied by a document proving its provenience. Finally, there has been acknowledgeable that all mines had vulnerable places, where the access could have been made from the outside. Therefore, it was stated that all mines would have to have specialized personnel for controlling these vulnerable points. All access points in the mine will be assigned a trustworthy clerk. As final observation, the controllers who failed to find hidden gold would be judged as accessories to crime.¹¹

Albeit elaborated before the nationalization, this document contains basically most aspects salient to gold mining controls during the entire communist timespan, with variations in violence intensity employed by authorities. New regulations for controlling gold

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 331.

production were issued in 1952 (Decision no. 2269 by the Ministry of Metalurgic and Chemical Industry), and in 1956, while gold mining was administered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.¹² Compared to most areas of public and private life in which the totalitarian regime in Romania imposed its control, when it came to gold exploitations, the authorities brought sophisticated “improvements” to interfere in the lives of mining communities in the Apuseni Mountains.

Archival documents reveal the control regulated by national legislation and local regulations which are mirroring in oral history interviews. In order to systematize, I consider three levels of control explicit in official documents, synchronically applied in the mining process: the individuals, the mining tools and the places as are reflected in oral history interviews.¹³

Oral history interviews provide an image of extreme violence expressed by the communist authorities on real or imagined gold thieves and/or traffickers. An interesting aspect of oral history narratives is that few mention the nationalization process which generated lots of resistance, seldom manifested in hiding the gold produced in former private mines. For example, one interviewee spoke about those who refused to give up their gold after the nationalization:

¹² CNSAS, *Nota-raport a Oficiului Tehnic Minier* – regulament de controlul producției, no. 6885, 14.03.1956, Ministry of Internal Affairs fund, file no. DJ 3614, vol. 1, p. 473-512.

¹³ Because of extensive dimension of all controlled elements, for this article I choose to focus on how control procedures were applied on individuals, leaving the two others to future research.

[They] were brought to Turda [...]. They [the Securitate] would bring them by jeeps to Turda Police station, put them in water up to the chest, got them out after 12 hours. They beat them as to tell where the gold is hidden. They kept them for three days, then when they let them go, they brought them up on Feleacu Hill with the jeeps and told them: "If I find you on the road, we will roll you over, with the jeeps." So, they had to come back home not on the road, but walking over the big mountain. From Feleac they would cross to Iara, and from Iara, over the big mountain, they would come home on foot paths, not on the road. Now imagine: there is a day and a night walking from Feleac to Bucium. My father was beaten, my father's brothers, the godfathers and all...God! [...] They were afraid for their kids! Not to be beaten as they were! They were much persecuted, because there were the ignorant Securitate people. It was one, Pescaru who came from Alba [Iulia]. That one would beat you up until he would get the command to stop! And he took advantage of women. He would beat them, then took advantage of women, beaten again, abused again. Then he would bring all policemen and securitate men to take advantage of these women.

This happened to my father's sister-in-law.
My aunt.¹⁴

It is remarkable that most interviewees assign authorities with negative features, generally called “they,” seldom collapsing all Militia men, Securitate officers and informants in one singular and violent category. Rarely, names of precise Securitate officer were mentioned interviews, as Mr. Gheorghe Armeana does when speaking about the mistreatments of women. His testimony is unique in this regard, showing how women were abused during investigations. In fact, even if supervision was exerted on mining tools, including transportation vehicles and places, such as digging spots, for example, human bodies were highly instrumentalized in the controlling policy of the communist state. Another interviewee, Mr. Ioan Han gave, in his interview, a pictographic description of how body searches were organized, by constantly highlighting the difference between older time when the searches were more invasive and the time he was employed:

The chief of the [mining] sector was in charge with body searches. [There was also] the chief of the search room, who was nominated daily. They were supervising the search. Regularly, it was made by the controller at the entrance door. [...] Well, they would search the bag, the control was

¹⁴ Gheorghe Armeana, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1859, OHA, Bucium Sat, Alba, 19.10.2018.

superficial, superficial, pockets, for ore, dynamite and so on [...] It happened long time ago [the X Rays controls], but more recently it did not happened anymore, as some people would try to get gold by swallowing it, and then get it out in excrements. Others would put [the gold] in anus, but this was long time ago, the elders used to tell us about this. It did not happen our times. [In the searching room] was a ladder. They would put [a person] up on the ladder, would stripe [him] naked and would check if having gold inserted in colon. But this was a practice taking place before, not recently. [...] ¹⁵

People in charge with body searches were for most of the communist period, civilians, and employees of the mining enterprise: “there were people appointed by the company’s management. They were in charge with searches and then the Roentgen devices came.”¹⁶ The practice of hiding gold ore or nuggets inside one’s body was rather extended as shown by the preoccupation of mine owners to issue regulations against it. It was perceived and represented as extraordinary and many miners mention it *en passant* as something that seldom

¹⁵ Han Ioan interview by Ionela Bogdan, audio file no. 1838, OHA, Brad, Hunedoara, 27.04.2018.

¹⁶ Pârva Ioan, interview by Adrian Boda, audio file no. 1805, OHA, Criscior, Hunedoara, 27.04.2018.

happened, but avoided to speak about the internal body searches, as too intimate and embarrassing to publicly speak about it and share it with a stranger. On the other side, the official memory as exposed in the Gold Museum in Brad exhibits, as main attractions, gold nuggets and cartridges used for hiding inside the body.

If you go to the Museum of Gold [in Brad], you can see some dumplings that were put in the anus and took them out like that. There was also the revolt of the miners on this subject. If one was suspected to have something like this, he was not allowed to go home. Under medical supervision they gave him purgatives until he emptied his stomach and this was a treatment often [applied] [...] It had serious consequences for people's health, and because of that there were many riots.¹⁷

In this fragment, Mr. Tudor Andrei Kiszely describes another method used by the authorities, with help of medical personnel. Apparently, these practices associated with the X-Ray exposure generated miners' riots, as specified by the interviewee.¹⁸ Even if the presence of X-Ray detectors was explicitly mentioned since 1947,

¹⁷ Kiszely Tudor Andrei, interview...

¹⁸ These riots were not presented either in archival documents or mentioned by other interviewees, but they represent an element of resistance worth to be taken into consideration in future research.

we do not have the proof they were actually used until latter, as oral history interview refers to, especially during the military administration of the mines. In fact, Mr. Tudor Andrei Kiszely remembers that “large theft of a few tens of kilograms of gold in the years 1954s and 1955s, led to the introduction of a method with Roentgen devices that were also dangerous.”¹⁹

According to oral history sources, there was a certain degree of negotiation when it came to the actual use of X-Ray detectors. Mr. Nicolae Pantea argues that

The machine was not turned on, sir. [...] Of course, [we did not want] to irradiate people. Of course, [it was done] only in very rare cases. There were informants in the mine who reported: “Be careful, this person...” This person was thoroughly searched. In the beginning, the man came first, his interests and his health [were most important], but there was nothing we could do: we had to take action [when gold thefts occurred]!²⁰

This idea of “pretending” to use the X-Ray detectors in order to protect peoples’ health is reiterated by Mr. Kiszely who mentions that “we had a doctor, poor guy he is dead now, God rest him in peace, who

¹⁹ Kiszely Tudor Andrei interview ...

²⁰ Nicolae Pantea, interview by Adrian Boda, audio file no. 1813, OHA, Brad, Hunedoara, 11.11.2017.

said: “Put just a few people inside, and I will pretend to turn on the device so we don’t irradiate people.”²¹

Both Mr. Pantea and Mr. Kiszely were in leading positions in different moment in time and had access to decision making process. Moreover, from the nowadays perspective, have a more relative approach and interpretation of one of the most invasive controlling measures used by the authorities, while regular miners interpret X-Rays as abusive and radical, something to be avoided by all means as Mr. Mihai Băiceanu remembers.

Each goes to body search. If someone looked suspicious, he would go over to the Renghin. What was the Renghin? It was a machine able to see if you would have some gold, impurities or something else. It did not happen to me, I did not like it. [...] We had good foremen, horizon chiefs, sector chiefs [...] I had no problem with them, never gave them the occasion as I was trustworthy.²²

Another interviewee, Mr. Iosif Boldea reflected on daily living with the fear of being arbitrarily exposed to the X-Rays. His testimony emphasizes the secretive dimension of gold stealing, its tabuisation by both miners and authorities.

²¹ Kiszely Tudor Andrei, interview...

²² Băiceanu Mihai interview by Ionela Bogdan, audio file no. 1836, OHA, Brad, Hunedoara, 27.04.2018.

This was a very difficult situation. It happen, we heard about it, it happened. And woe for those caught! [...] those caught were simply destroyed. It was a big secret at that time! When we got out with the shift 1 or 2,...there were these machines we had to go through, when you went out [the mine]. You had to go through this machine [...] there was a period when MAI [the Ministry of Interior Affairs] was the master here in the Barza enterprise. Then they put military men to control, to control when we got out the mine. But, madam, those who did this [steal gold] and wanted to get [illegally] gold out, well, [...] it was a big secret to get the gold out, do you understand? When each of us got his turn, the military said: “you go there, you go there...!” So, they would pick you randomly... If you got there, if you had something immediately a red bulb would lighten up.... So, it was very strict, but still, it happened.²³

Mr. Avram Miheț remembers that no matter how many miners were working in the mine, the radiologist made a maximum of 20 X-Ray investigations per shift. This can be also interpreted as a loose application of the

²³ Iosif Boldea interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1804, OHA, Valea Bradului, jud. Hunedoara, 25.04.2018.

abusive rule which implied this apparently over-reaching powerful instrument. The explanation for this close to limit approach is the protection of medical personnel no to be over exposed to radiations than the preoccupation for miners' health.

The doctor from Brad would come every shift and put 20 people [to Roentgen]. [...] Sometime, the military was doing the search, but there mostly the foremen. When we were getting out of the mine, the guard would search us and then I would sit in that line and they would come in front of me. The one who was leading the search would tell me: "You send them to Renghel [Roentgen]," to Măriuța as we used to call it. And then I, if he had to come to me, tell him: go to the doctor. [...] The doctor did not make more than 20 [X-Rays] a shift, with lead apron, because he also could be irradiated when working with the device.²⁴

However, the different aggression on the interior of miners' bodies was usually a second step following regular body searches, described by Mr. Avram Miheț from the perspective of both controller and controlled.

²⁴ Miheț Avram interview by Ionela Bogdan, audio file no. 1837, OHA, Țebea, Hunedoara, 27.04.2018.

You would check..., you would touch the coat. [The person] who was leading the search would command: "This series take your left shoe off." Everybody would take their shoe off - some people had broken shoes, with wet socks - you had to touch him so he wouldn't have anything in there. Then we would turn around and they would sit on the bench to put on their shoes. Others would come and then we would command again: "This series is undressing." Or how he was pleased! And then: "This series take the right shoe off," as the one who led the search wanted. When the search was ready, everyone went to the lockers to change, wash, and then on the bus. [...] Where was no native gold, were not searches. As long as I worked here, in Caraci was similar to Barza only the doctor didn't come.²⁵

There are several interesting elements emerging out of this fragment. The first is the appearance of an efficient, military type organization of the searches with miners being organized in successive series. Secondly, there is a lot of ambiguity in what concerns the patterns which, apparently, depended upon the good willing of the leading controller, which mirrors the unpredictability of searching procedures. Third, these body searches reveal the

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

precarious standard living of miners as reflected in broken shoes and wet socks. And last, but not least, this fragment speaks about a nuanced difference in controlling strategies in different mines, according to the type of gold ore presented in the exploitation.

A controlling strategy was to make sure that people working directly with gold nuggets are trustworthy. For this, oral history narratives mention that the teams were small, “only [teams of] three were allowed to work with native gold, so as not to discuss to get something [out], although there were searches and raids at the exit of the mine.”²⁶

We can say that one cannot [steal gold] alone, as in the team are mostly three people. And then, one can say, come on, we have a deal, watch out I have found [gold], I take, you take too, and we tell nothing. But one of them can tell: we found gold and we steal gold [...] So, a team working where [native] gold was found, had the right of working less than three months in that spot. [...] Yes, they would rotate you, every three months in order not to make friends. We were all new, until you established friendships, to collaborate more closely; they would transfer you in another team.²⁷

²⁶ *Ibidem.*

²⁷ Han Ioan, interview...

Reliability was a personal attribute needed for one to be able to work where native gold was spotted. Background checks were made, as Mr. Ioan Han emphasizes that for experienced miners it was possible to take out gold, in spite of all controls.

There was native gold, [you had] to break it to put in respective jug. [...] but there were working only special teams, strongly checked: who are their parents, everything about their parents, to trust him not to be tempted ... because no matter how many controls, if wanted, you could still trick them. [...] You could still trick them and get [gold] out. But you could not risk as you did not know when they would discover you. You know the proverb: the jar goes 10 times to water, but the 11th time it brakes. So it is there [in the mine]: you steal twice, the third time when you steal, you think I was not caught, I can steal more. And that's the moment they catch you!²⁸

When speaking about illegal gold activities, no interviewee assumed personally such actions. They mentioned, often with compassion, people whom they knew, relatives, neighbors, fellows and, rarely, friends who were involved. This discursive distancing can be associated with personal values and principle as Mr. Mircea Miheț

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

who confessed: “I have never thought [to steal gold]. I avoided this as the devil loves no holy water. I used to clean myself, pockets, everything. I controlled myself not to have any gold dust left on me and to get in trouble.”²⁹ The distancing from the gold trespassers could also be caused by the stigma associated by the communist regime to those involved in gold thefts or trafficking, projected in the memories of participants as recorded years after the fall of communism. Nevertheless, no personal assuming is surprising given the extension of illegal activities with gold in local communities, as one interviewee remembers that “in the 1954’-1956’ in the village of Ormindea, there is practically no man left. All were investigated for gold theft. That they were miners, they were all miners ... Some were convicted, some got away.”³⁰

In many miners’ life-stories are people involved in gold stealing, with no precise chronological reference to the events, large periodization being made before and after World War II. Usually, the harsher times were implicitly associated with the military administration of the mines, Securitate men were directly involved in controlling and punishing gold stealing.

Sir, I had an uncle, Danciu Lazăr, who was also accused, but I don’t know if he really stole or not. I only know that he was arrested and I saw him when he was taken

²⁹ Miheț Mircea interview by Adrian Boda, audio file no. 1850, OHA Criscior, Hunedoara, 26.04.2018.

³⁰ Kiszely Tudor Andrei interview...

out of the Police [headquarters], handcuffed with others, put in a truck by the police and gendarmerie. They got also in the truck and they took him to Deva. Then, I don't know where he got to, to Aiud, to Gherla, he spent many years in prison and when he came from there he had no teeth anymore. He didn't tell me anything, as I wanted to make him speak, to find out [what happened]. He just smiled like that and said: "Forget about this, you don't have to know this" and then he died.³¹

When I was working, there was one guy from Moldova, we called him Margină, a wagon driver. He stole something, but I don't know [if] he had something [nugget] or only some ore. He brought it to Brad, he made a full of himself. [He] went to pubs for a beer. And there was one who was sitting at the table and not drinking much beer. He was listening what the others were talking [...] Then, this guy came and he took the [mine] team leader, deputy team leader of that wagon driver. He took all three, then the foreman. And they got each one year and the foreman two years [in prison]. [...] They were heavily beaten. I

³¹ Pârva Ioan, interview by Adrian Boda, audio file no. 1805, OHA, Criscior, Hunedoara, 27.04.2018.

had a fellow from Bucureștii Bradului, his name was Moțu Gheorghe. My leader told me: “Miheț, can you take care of Gheorgheuț's people?” “Yes, but what is the problem?” He said: “He is recovering.” He would not come two, three days. The leader told us: “Look, Miliția took him away.” He came after three, four days. “Where have you been?” “Let me alone!” When we went for a beer, when he would see a Militia man, [would say] “I don't want to see blue coats!” “Why?” “They beat me up so I passed away.” “Well, old Gheorghiuț, why you did not gave them [the gold]?” “Well, I gave them...”³²

Well, there were many things happening that time. [The gold] was traded on the black market. I had here some older people I used to work with and they told me how they were tortured in the black room, in Deva, by the Securitate. They caught him with stolen gold. As the jewelers were bastards. They were the only one whom you could give the gold to be manufactured. I heard, before I started working in the mine, that in Luncoi, it was said people had some tools. [...] And they were caught [...]

³² Miheț Avram, interview...

They were heavily beaten by the Securitate for gold [...] It was during Ceaușescu's time.³³

Mr. Mircea Crișan's story hints to another dimension of gold problem in Romanian communist society: the illegal network that connected the gold producer, allegedly the miner to the gold beneficiary that is a jewelry buyer. The state supervision extended all over these society sectors, with an impressive network of officers under cover and civilian informants. No matter the moment of discovering illegal gold activity, it would go back to initial producers.³⁴ For example, Mr. Nicolae Pantea remembers that many times, some gold traffickers would sell native gold in other parts of the country, often being mentioned towns close to Western Romanian borders. This meant serious troubles for mine controllers as well, as the investigation usually led back to the illegal gold extraction from mines.

The great problem for us, who were in charge, [was] that we often didn't catch them. It was like that! For example, a

³³ Mircea Crișan, interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1826, OHA, Ocișor, Hunedoara, 24.04.2018.

³⁴ There were, of course, different gold suppliers on the black market, with jewellery smuggled mostly from former Yugoslavia, as according to the legislation, there was state monopoly on gold possession and trade. However, the implementation of the legislation related to gold jewellery black market was more negotiable than the one related to native gold extraction.

person could appear in Arad with gold: “Where is he from?” He said, “From there.” “Look, there came that one, let's take him!” And they took them in line! And they would catch them all in the end! But we also found [gold] during our controls, without a doubt. We found most of them! I mean, the production controllers, as they were called [found them].³⁵

While usually the gold thieves were portrayed in the oral history narrative sympathetically as victims for the Securitate abuses, Mr. Iosif Boldea's story contains a reversed perspective, on a mine guard who became a victim.

It happened here, in our place. It was a person, father of 5 or 6. He was a mine guard, here in Barza. And a gold thief was in the mine, there. [The thief] got ready with what he wanted to get out and he got into a wagon. His fellows, accomplices, you can imagine it was an entire network; they came and put a kind of cover and attached to the entire train. And then out! When he got to the mine entrance, they had this method: the controller had a kind of hammer and he would [makes the sign of hitting] each wagon. When he got to his

³⁵ Nicolae Pantea, interview...

wagon, [he said]: “Hey, this is empty!” He made a sign to the locomotive driver to stop the train. [...] When the train stopped, the guy raised and [...] he had a gun. I was a child that time. When he rose, he shot the guard! Then he run away but eventually got caught. [...] But he shot the father of 5 or 6. He shot there, in front of mine, he shot him! [...] Well, there were such cases. Some were found, others not. But those who were caught were destroyed by the Securitate. [The Securitate] ruin them, beat them, beat them, torture them, finished them.³⁶

As mentioned above, in 1955 the gold exploitation in Romania entered under the administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the department of prisons, camps and working colonies.³⁷ Subsequently, working colonies were created Brad, Crișcior, Roșia Montană, Zlatna, in order to use forced labor of common law prisoners. Three years later, in 1958, the General

³⁶ Iosif Boldea interview by Diana Nistor, audio file no. 1804, OHA, Valea Bradului, Hunedoara, 25.04.2018.

³⁷ CNSAS Archives, *Ordinul Ministrului Afacerilor Interne privind înființarea, în cadrul Direcției Penitenciare, Lagăre și Colonii, a Trustului Aurului cu sediul în Gura Barza, com. Crișcior/Brad/Hunedoara – ca organ de conducere operativă a întreprinderilor miniere și a Oficiului Tehnic Minier cu sediul în București*, no. 502, 01.07.1955, Ministry of Internal Affairs fund, file no. DJ 3613, vol. 3, pp. 1-2. This document was based on the HCM no. 979, 1955.

Mining Direction was created as part of Securitate structure,³⁸ to direct gold exploitation until 1963 when it went back to the Ministry of Mining. Most interviews mention the military administration as a distinct period in history of gold exploitation.

After this event with massive gold thefts in the Ormindea-Căinel-Hărțăgani area, the gold mining entered under administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This for two reasons: to extract a large amount of gold, because that at that time the country had needs, had many debts and needed a lot of gold. The leadership of the mine was given to a colonel, who had nothing to do with mining, but only with implementing coercive methods for increasing the production. There were many Securitate officers infiltrated... They had also brought controllers to the Military Unit here, it was a company of production controllers, also from young men drafted in the military service, who had a connection with mining. They went to workplaces and controlled those who worked on native gold, assisted in the production of native gold, did the control at the

³⁸ CNSAS Archives, *Ordinul de creare a Direcției Generale Miniere*, no. 3040, 15.10.1958, Ministry of Internal Affairs fund, file no.7367 DMRU, vol. 21, p. 161.

exit of the mine. [...] So, the problem of native gold security has always been raised!³⁹

What happen to those caught? According to article 21 in the Law no. 686/1946 all people found with illegal gold were instantly fired from the mine.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, several oral history testimonies speak about people who following a condemnation, would still be able to work, but in places where no native gold could be found.

Well, I had an older team leader when I started working in the mine. He told me that his grandfather taught him how to do [get gold out of the mine], as he have had lost the right to work in places with gold. So, if someone in your family had have done such a thing [stealing gold], you, as their successors were not allowed anymore to work with gold directly.⁴¹

[If found guilty] a person was liquidated, he was finished. Whoever would steal gold was gone. [...] He was no longer able to work in the mine, but only outside, or moved to places where there was no gold,

³⁹ Kiszely Tudor Andrei interview...

⁴⁰ Legea pentru controlul producției, prelucrării și circulației metalelor prețioase, no. 638, 08.08.1946, in *MONITORUL OFICIAL*, no. 185, 12.08.1946.

⁴¹ Han Ioan interview by Ionela Bogdan, audio file no. 1838, OHA Brad, jud. Hunedoara, 27.04.2018.

for example, from the mine to the preparation plant or to a wood depot.⁴²

To conclude, it can be said that albeit controlling was part of gold mining tradition, the communist regime in Romania made significant changes in how it was implemented, especially in what regard controls over miners' bodies. The highly invasive controlling measures which endangered people's health and the violence used by the authorities in preventing and punishing gold stealing are visible in oral history interviews. It generated a rather sympathetic portrayal of the trespassers by member of local communities who considered them more victims of the authorities, than criminals punished by the law.

⁴² Nicolae Pantea interview...

VARIA – Oral History Interviews

Professor PETER GROSS: “Romania is a very young country. The maturing of Romania will take a bit longer.”

Oana Ometa in dialogue with Peter Gross, journalist and teacher of journalism, specialized in communication and mass-media systems in the ex-communist countries

Abstract: This article presents an oral history interview with a well-known scholar, Peter Gross whose life experience and professional career are example for a successful path for practicing and teaching journalism. The article has two main parts, the first being a biography of Peter Gross while the second one reproduces the interview about his life as an immigrant to the US, his professional choices and his continuous relation with Eastern Europe in general and Romania in particular.

Key words: journalism, post-communism, exile, Romania, Cold War, Central and Eastern Europe

Peter Gross is not only a journalist, but also a teacher of journalism, specialized in communication and mass-media systems of ex-communist countries. He was

born in Timișoara in 1949, and emigrated in 1963 to the U.S.A. with his family. It was there where he continued his studies and started his professional career. In 1971 he graduated from Northern Illinois University as a Bachelor of Science and got his Master Degree in Communication in 1977 at the University of Iowa with the thesis: *Volksfront and Abendpost: A Study of Two Chicago German-Language Newspapers (1933-45)*. He received his Ph.D. in mass communication/international communication in 1984, at the University of Iowa, with a dissertation on *The Romanian Press and Its Party-State Relationships: A Study of the 1974/77 Press Laws*. His intention was to write his dissertation on Agerpres, as he confesses in this interview:

I was working on my doctoral dissertation; my theme was going to be Agerpres, so I was scheduled to be here [a.n. in Romania] for six weeks. I was not allowed to access the documents or people that would have helped my work. They found excuses not to provide access - they told me at once that yes, we have lots of data, lots of documents, but we are painting our rooms right now and we moved everything to the basement and we have no access; and, of course, I was under surveillance and followed, and if I remember correctly, the person who surveyed me made sure that I knew that I was followed.

However, his dissertation on the press of Romania was a forerunner to his specialization in media research in East and Central Europe. His research specialization is in international communication, with an emphasis on East European media systems. The written works that he has published recommend him not only as a mass-media analyst, but also as a theoretician of a transitional zone between communication sciences and socio-political sciences. He is the author/co-author of seven scholarly books and two textbooks, and co-editor of two book collections. Among his best known works are: *Entangled Evolutions, Media and Democratization in Eastern Europe* (2002) (translated as *Mass Media and Democracy in Eastern Europe*, 2004), *Mass Media in Revolution and national development: The Romanian laboratory* (1996), *Eastern European Journalism, Before, During and after Communism*, together with Jerome Aumante, Ray Hiebert, Dean Mills (1999). In Romania he published *The Giant with Feet of Clay, The post-communist Press of Romania* (1999), *Introduction in public relationships* (1998).

Professor Peter Gross began his teaching career at the University of the Pacific (Stockton, California), moved on to the California State University (Chico), then the University of Oklahoma where he was appointed Professor and Gaylord Family Endowed Chair at Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication and also Head of Journalism Area, and Director of Institute for Research and Training. He was named Director of the School of Journalism and Electronic Media at the University of Tennessee in 2006 and served in that capacity until 2016.

Professor Gross's career continued not only in America, but also in the post-communist countries, where he got involved in organizing schools of journalism. He was instrumental in helping establish a new journalism program in 1992 at the West University, Timișoara, Romania. He taught at the U.S. Department of State's National Foreign Affairs Training Center (School of Professional and Area Studies – Foreign Service Institute) and carried out training and media assessment assignments on behalf of the U.S. Information Agency (U.S. Department of State), the Voice of America's International Training Program/International Broadcast Bureau, the Eurasia Foundation, and the Academy for Educational Development. He also conducted journalism-training seminars in the U.S. and in the country for journalists and journalism students from Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia-Montenegro, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. He served as consultant on East European media issues to the Washington D.C.-based International Media Fund, The Freedom Forum, and the Eurasia Foundation, and as an educational consultant to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Prague, Czech Republic. In 1998, Peter Gross received the Secretary's Forum Distinguished Public Service Award from the U.S. Department of State.

Since 1985, he conducted journalism workshops and lectured at the University of Dortmund, Germany; Oxford University, England; Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania; the universities of Madrid, Bilbao, Santiago de Compostela, Murcia and Barcelona, Spain; University of

Tirana, Albania; the Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland; the University of Bucharest, West University of Timișoara, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, and the Black Sea University, Romania; The Association of Georgian Journalists, Tbilisi, Georgia; the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary; International Summer School for Democracy, Petrovac, Montenegro, FR Yugoslavia; The University of Salzburg, Austria; Shanghai University, China.

In 2009, the State of Romania awarded Peter Gross one of its highest national awards, the “Order of Merit in Education,” Commander Grade. The President of Romania conferred him the award, by decree, for “unusual merit in the development of education of different types, levels and forms of organization, and in research, or (for) contributing to establishing relationships between foreign educational institution and Romanian ones.” The University of Bucharest, Romania, granted Gross the Doctor Honoris Causa in 2005 for his contributions to Eastern European media studies. In 2009, the University of West Timișoara, Romania, also awarded him the Doctor Honoris Causa for his contributions to Eastern European media studies and his role in establishing the university's journalism program. The Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, accorded him the Professor Honoris Causa distinction in 2018.

Gross served as a Ratings Review Advisor for the Freedom House's yearly Freedom of the Press Index (East/Central Europe and Eurasia Region). He is a member of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and served as Chair of Teaching

Standards, Chair of the Markham International Student Paper Competition and Chair of Professional Freedom and Responsibility for the association's International Communication Division. He is a member of the European Communication Research and Education Association, the European Network for Trans-Integration Research, the South East European Studies Association, and the Society for Romanian Studies, the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies, COST A30, a research group sponsored by the European Union, and the International Communication Association. He was on the Board of Directors of the American-Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences and served as its Vice President between 1997 and 2001.

Professor Peter Gross served as a consultant to the now-defunct United States Information Agency (U.S. Department of State). He lectured at the U.S. Department of State's National Foreign Affairs Training Center (School of Professional and Area Studies – Foreign Service Institute) and carried out training and media assessment assignments on behalf of the U.S. Information Agency (U.S. Department of State), the Voice of America's International Training Program/International Broadcast Bureau, the Eurasia Foundation, and the Academy for Educational Development, InterMedia, Washington D.C. - Global Audience and Market Research Institute, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, The East/Central European Network of Journalism Educators (1994-present), The Freedom Forum, (1992-1995), The International Media Fund (IMF) – organization created at the initiative of the American Presidency, aiming to support Eastern Europe,

United States Information Agency/Voice of America (USIA Academic Specialist Program) and many others.

Peter Gross claims that the course of post-communist changes was triggered by the cultural patterns that served as models of development and that these patterns don't have to be exclusively limited to the communist relics: more important are the ideological roots specific to the construction of the national state in the XIX century. *"Culture is at the root of all systems. We can talk about political systems or economic systems or social systems, but they're all driven, they're all contextualized in values, beliefs and attitudes,"* believes Peter Gross. In this interview Peter Gross explains how he got interested in Romania and in the study of communism, answering questions about his private life and those about the evolution of our country following the communist period. He speaks about his American adventure, saying that he has always felt close to our country. *"The very fact that I ended up in journalism and then as an academic in the field of Media Studies was due to my immigrant status,"* confesses Peter Gross, saying that he *"ended up being an accidental journalist."* As for Romania he claims that it is still a young state. *"We're talking about a nation state and that nation state was really not formed until the second half, as you all know, of the 19th century; it was not liberated from Ottoman rule until 1877, it did not completely unite until 1918, and so, when you look at it in those terms, Romania is a very young country,"* explains professor Peter Gross.

On the other hand, Peter Gross says that Romania can have a democracy à la Putin, or a democracy as we

might find in Western countries. *“Romania is sort of a hybrid at this point. It is not authoritarian by choice, it is authoritarian by corruption,”* says Peter Gross. As for the way the press transformed in Romania, Peter Gross is of the opinion that everything has changed. “If you look at the last 28 years, journalism, as well as the media, have gone through several phases, some phases very promising, others not so promising. I think what is promising today, those journalists who are intent on doing an ethical professional job and have the means to resist economically and in other ways,” explains Peter Gross.

Q: When did you leave Romania? Why did you leave it? What memories have you kept?

I left in 1963. I was 13 years old approximately. My parents left because, of course, it was a communist regime here and they did not want to live under such a regime; otherwise we would not have left, I'm assuming. I have nothing but good memories of my time in Timișoara; growing up as a kid it was absolutely wonderful - we spoke German at home, Romanian in school and Hungarian on the street. I had lots of friends and I did what all the other children usually do and had a great time. I have no horror stories about our time under communism, although obviously it was not pleasant because one never know what the next day will bring. Of course, my father, who was a dentist, could not work in his own dental practice - he had to work, officially at least, for the Romanian hospital under the communists. For a child it was a great time; for my parents, perhaps, much more of a trying, tense time than for me.

Q: Everybody knows that it was really difficult to leave the country at that time. Could you tell us how you managed to do it?

I remember we went from Timișoara to Bucharest; so, that was my first time in Bucharest, and we flew out of Bucharest to Vienna. And so, when we took off on the airplane from Bucharest and were actually in the air, on the way to Vienna, my brother, who was four years younger than I was, leaned over to my father and asked: “can we talk now?” As I understood it at the time, my father made a request to emigrate the year I was born, that is 1949, which means when Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was in power, and he waited 13 years. And so, we left legally, I mean, we escaped officially, and not swimming over the Danube. And I remember that we needed to leave everything behind, everything, and we simply had some clothes and nothing more. And I remember at the airport being body searched, I mean, we were searched before we were allowed to leave. If my memory serves me right, my father said something – about having to pay an exit fee of some sort, which was quite bizarre. So, I mean, the interesting thing is that my parents, once we left the country, did not talk about it, they didn't want to talk about the details and I don't know whether that was a choice that was made for psychological reasons or for other reasons. Perhaps they feared to some extent that somebody will still report them, I don't know. Whenever the subject was brought up, they did not want to talk about it.

Q: You said that you came back to Romania in 1979. How did it happen and how were you received?

Well, that was a wonderful experience, because at that point in 1979, I was no longer a child. So, here I was, returning to the country where I was born, very excited, but now with the knowledge of what communism really meant, beyond what my parents said. I had permission to come to work with Agerpres, because I was working on my doctoral dissertation. I was scheduled to be here for six weeks. They found every excuse - they told me at once that yes, we have lots of data, lots of documents, but we are painting our rooms right now and we moved everything to the basement and we have no access. And, of course, I was under surveillance, and if I remember correctly, the person who surveyed me made sure I knew that I was followed. So, the same person that I always saw following me in Bucharest, came on the train with me when I went for a little visit to Timișoara to see my friends, colleagues, school colleagues, and so he was with me until the last moment when I left the airport six weeks later from Bucharest to go back home. A very “nice” guy!

Q: So, it was after this episode that you became *Persona Non Grata*, right?

I became *Persona Non Grata* after that. That is every time I tried to make a request for a visa, I was told that it's not a good time, it was too hot in the summer or too cold in the winter. I'm guessing, it was the result of me writing an article, which was really not even that political. In those days, all communist countries had a clipping service in the United States. A clipping service was a

service that followed all newspapers on a daily basis and then clipped or cutout all stories that were about the country in question - in this case Romania, of course – so, I'm sure that the Securitate knew everything that was written about Romania in the American press, including what I might have written.

Q: After 1989 did you search for your personal file at the Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității? Is there a file on your name?

Well, I didn't find it, a colleague, friend of mine found it and send it to me. It's a few short pages, nothing serious really - where I may have gone, what I might have done. I'm sure there is another page or two about everybody that I had contact with, I don't have that page because I'm also sure that most, if not all of those people that I met with, including my friends and colleagues in Timișoara, were most likely interrogated by the Securitate after I left.

Q: Did you meet Romanian dissidents before 1989? Did you get in touch with them?

I really did not know too many Romanian dissidents. As a member, Vice President and General Secretary of the American-Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, I certainly knew that most if not all of its members were dissidents in one way or another. Outside that organization, I only knew a small handful of so-called dissidents.

Q: How did you get interested in Romania and in studying the communist regime?

First of all, the very fact that I ended up in journalism, and then as an academic in the field of Media Studies, was due to my immigrant status. When I reached the United States, of course, I did not speak a word of English and I began my university studies about two years after I got there. My English was still not good enough and I wanted to be an architect. One of my Political Science professors pulled me aside one day, the first year of university, and said: “your writing is not very good.” And he suggested that I should go to the journalism department for a year, because they would improve my writing, and then to come back and do what I needed to do. Because I had interests in Eastern European affairs, coming from this region, and specifically Romania; the combination of journalism and Eastern European Affairs was very interesting. I never went back to the idea of becoming an architect. So, I always tell people that I ended up being an accidental journalist and, therefore, an academic dealing with media studies. And of course, I was interested in this region [Eastern Europe] and particularly in Romania. Romania has given me a wonderful childhood; it was always in my heart. I mean, I couldn't separate myself from that, and so I kept in touch, when I could, if I could, with certain schoolmates in Timișoara, which was very, very difficult – letters from time to time, a phone call here and there. It was extremely difficult, as you might guess, but I've always kept in touch in other ways - meaning following what was written about Romania, journalistically and scholarly. And so, there was never a complete

separation from Romania. It would have been impossible. You're born in a certain place and you cannot deny the fact that you were born there, or forget the whole atmosphere that you grew up with – the smells, the sounds, the food, the memories of the friends you had and the games you played, and so on.

Q: Can you tell us something about your family? How was it at home?

My parents, at home, both here in Romania, and in the United States, always spoke a mixture of German and Romanian. It all depended on the topic and the mood they were in and so forth and so on. So, it was easy to switch back and forth Romanian-German, German-Romanian and after a while, of course, they actually began speaking English at home, as we kids did as well. And so, then you had sort of three languages when you sat down to dinner: somebody said something in German and somebody answered in English and then somebody else said something in Romanian.

Q: When did you get back to Romania after the '79 episode?

I did return on, to be exact, on January 11th 1990. I would have come earlier, but the way I found out about the revolution in Romania, or whatever you want to call it - we don't have to call it a revolution – on December 15th 1989, I was in the hospital. I had hernia surgery, nothing major, but I was drugged, of course. After the surgery, they wheeled me into the recovery room and I was still drugged and my wife put on the television. And on CNN, they said

there is a major revolt in Timișoara - and I said these drugs are wonderful; they're making me imagine things that, of course, I dreamed about. By that evening, the drugs wore off and CNN was still reporting about this revolt in Timișoara. Then I knew it was not the drugs and I told my wife I have to pack and go. The doctor said "you cannot go anywhere for two weeks," so, that meant around January 1st. Then, of course, it was not easy to arrange to get here because flights were cancelled. I couldn't fly directly to Romania, so I flew to Vienna, then took a train to Budapest, stayed overnight with some friends and then took the train from Budapest to Timișoara. I didn't know what was going to happen at the border, because it was complete chaos in terms of information; nobody knew what was really happening. I arrived at the border and two soldiers came on board with the ticket inspector and I had my American passport ready, they stopped, and said in Romanian, of course, "Where are you going?" I said: "to Timișoara" "Where are you coming from?" I said: "from the United States," and they said: "Welcome!" They didn't look at my passport; they did not stamp it; I had no visa. So, then I was worried that I couldn't get out. But I reached Timișoara about 6 o'clock in the morning, snow up to my knees and very cold. I went directly to one of my friend's house and knocked on the door and the only thing he said was: "We knew that you were going to come." We talked for a week, every hour, all day long, all night long. It was a very exciting time. At that point, I was beginning to think about ways to help; what could I do to help in my own field. The idea of establishing a journalism program at UTV was the most obvious project and it was realized, not

due to me, but thanks my friends in Timișoara. Some of them at the University, individuals whom I could talk to about this idea and who really went out of their way to help begin setting the groundwork for establishing the program of journalism.

Q: What do you think of the Romanian journalism? How is it? Has anything changed following the 1989 revolution?

Well, everything has changed in a way. I mean, obviously there's not a one-party control, there is not a Marxist-Leninist conception of journalism, and it's all been atomized, both in terms of the media and the journalism that is being practiced. If you look at the last 28 years, journalism, as well as media, have gone through several phases, some phases very promising, others not so promising. I think what is promising today, are those journalists who intent to do an ethical professional job and have the means to resist economically and in other ways. What has become the norm, which is a journalism that is being controlled for political purposes or sold for political purposes and that's the interesting change in the last few years. It might have been controlled for political purposes before and, in my estimation, it is now being sold for political purposes. So, that's a small change but not an important one, in the sense that it doesn't contribute to democratization and it doesn't contribute the civil society. It is those independent journalists, the few independent journalists, who are really contributing to pushing Romania forward and helping democratization and helping civil society, which, as is evident in the last two years, has

grown, has matured, has a staying power that bodes well for the future, because this is what has to happen. There has to be a civil society that is persistent, that never gives upon bringing about those changes that will help a true democratization of Romania, not just from a systemic perspective, but from a value perspective, that is you can have a democracy that is à la Putin, or you can have a democracy as you might find in Western countries. And Romania is sort of a hybrid at this point. It is not authoritarian by choice, it is authoritarian by corruption.

**Q: What do you think of the Romanian elite?
Could it get more involved in society?**

Well, when I criticized the elite, I was thinking about the political and economic elite, less so about the intellectual elite. Most intellectual elite is obviously engaged in resisting the corrupt and authoritarian tendencies of the political and economic elite. So, as far as the intellectual elite is concerned, and here again I'm not including everybody necessarily, but a good number of them, the political and economic elites, they have a long way to go before they become socially responsible, before they become transparent, before they become interested in the country, rather than in their own welfare. And this is a long process. And there are parallel eras, which we had in the United States as well where the political and economic elites were simply interested in their own benefits and not in the country's benefit, so Romania is no different from many of the countries that have evolved over time. Romania is a very young country, you know? I don't want to talk about the Dacians and how long ago they existed,

because that doesn't really matter; we're talking about a nation state and that nation state was really not formed until the second half, as you all know, of the 19th century. It was not liberated from Ottoman rule until 1877, it did gain its unity only in 1918, and so, when you look at it in those terms, Romania is a very young country. That being said, Romania is not that much older than Germany, which was not united until the middle of the 19th century, or Italy, that was united by Garibaldi, again second half of the 19th century. So, Romania is as old as Germany and Italy, if you want to look at it in those terms. But Italy and Germany had the opportunity to be sufficiently independent to settle the national identity question while Romania did not have that opportunity until 1989. So, it's only been doing it for 28 years. I'm not pessimistic in that regard. I realized that, in fact, it's been mentioned before by others, that this is a work in progress and so the maturing of Romania will take a bit longer.

Q: What is your opinion about sentencing communist perpetrators? Is it fair to do this? What about the lustration law? Or about ex-president Iliescu? Should he be sentenced or not?

Well, obviously, lustration in this country did not work as it did in Poland or in the old Czechoslovakia or even in Hungary, but again, that had to do with the way that communism was overthrown, by whom, or I should say, who took over right after 1989 and so forth and so on. I don't want to speak directly about Ion Iliescu or anybody else; it is sufficient to say that those who tortured people and those who were more exuberant in applying

Marxist/Leninism/Stalinism/Ceausescu-ISM in this country, should indeed be punished, if nothing else, symbolically, at least. Because there has to be a lesson learned that this system and its ideological underpinning were criminal and that those who actively took part in it contributed to this criminality. And so, I think they should be punished symbolically, at the very least, perhaps not necessarily sent to jail; because at this point that serves no purpose. And so, yes, I think that these trials should proceed for the reasons that I have stated, and the lesson should be learned, it should be widely disseminated. I mean, every school, child, every grade school and high-school student should understand what these trials are about, why they are necessary, what was the history of communism in Romania and what did these individuals do to contribute to what I've continued to call criminality. It could possibly help by making it clear just what the opposite of an authoritarian-totalitarian-communist regime is; by making it clear, in addition to the lesson that history offers, why it is important to have democracy and the nature of that democracy, which really has to embrace liberal values.

Q: You mention that you are working on a research using culture as a tool? You mentioned Adrian Marino, Emil Cioran. What is it all about?

There is a whole body of work that focuses on the cultural underpinnings of societies, certainly in the West, but as you've mentioned, some in Romania and the rest of Eastern Europe, that recognize that culture is an exceedingly important factor to consider. By culture we

mean values, beliefs, attitudes, which ultimately result in certain behaviors and practices, that are key important in constructing any system, certainly, a democratic one that will match its Western counterparts. Until culture changes, particularly among the elites, democratization will continue to be slow, to be quite imperfect, and to affect mass media. Therefore, the mass media's potential effects in helping civil society grow more and, therefore, take over, in a sense, this process of democratization to bring it on par with Western countries, is minimized. We can talk about politics, economics and so on but they're all driven, they're all contextualized in extant values, beliefs and attitudes.

Q: Fake news is a real issue nowadays. What is your opinion about this topic?

Fake news is a fake topic. Any news that is biased and, therefore, does not give a complete and accurate picture of an idea, an event, topic or issue could be considered fake news. But this sort of news has been with us forever. Why the discovery now that this is "fake news"? Nobody talked about fake news before 2016. I am reminded of a scene in the film *Casablanca*, in which, if you remember, one of the main characters, the Chief of Police, is forced to close Rick's bar because of the discovery that there is gambling in the bar and he says something like "I'm shocked, shocked to find gambling going on in this establishment." At that moment, one of the waiters is walking up to him saying "your winnings, sir, from the roulette table." So, the discovery of fake news is on par with that discovery that there was gambling going on in Rick's bar in the movie "Casablanca." Any news that

is in any way bias, that is not accurate, could be considered fake news because it projects a fake tableau to an audience. I think people love trends, just like in clothes, you know. They love trends and then they think that they're very clever and very different. When I was an undergraduate university student in the late 1960s, all of us guys had longhair because that was the trend. I was with a bunch of my classmates in Chicago to a banquet, and one of the older persons at a table asked "why do you have long hair?" We, the students, looked at each other and we almost in unison said, "because we want to be different." Then, this old man asked "well, how many boys do you have at the University?" – About 60% of the 25,000 students that were at the University, we answered. And he asked, "Well, you all have long hair"; we said "yeah" and he asked, "So, how are you different?"

Q: Will print press disappear?

No, they will not disappear, they will change, and they will metamorphose. Some of them have already made that transition to the digital media; that is a platform, it's just the platform and they may make another change, if a new technology is invented. But it will never disappear. The newspaper in some form or another will exist and there are many forms. In fact, there are some who have argued that television news is simply another form of news, a continuation of radio, which is a continuation of the print media.

Q: What do you think about journalistic ethics?

Well, ethics are simply rules; they are rules that address the right and wrong of carrying out the profession. They are very important because, ultimately, they speak to the kind of journalism that you practice. They speak to the need not to be biased, by being incomplete, by being inaccurate, by reporting something that's not within a context that is explanatory of what is happening with that particular news/story. Ethics are the most important element of any profession. But ethics have to be interpreted the right way, applied the right way and there need to be consequences to not being unethical. In Romania at the moment, certainly all three - the interpretation, the application and the response to an ethical journalism - are non-existent. There is no professional institution or individual media outlets that will respond to unethical behavior. In fact, this mirrors what is happening in society, particularly among the elites; if there is no response to the elites being unethical - not just unlawful, but unethical - then of course, the media is marginalized.

Book Reviews

Patrick H. Hutton, *The Memory Phenomenon in Contemporary Historical Writing. How the Interest in Memory Has Influenced Our Understanding of History*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 234 p.

Towards an end of the memory phenomenon?

Why would someone begin a review of a scholarly work that focuses on the memory phenomenon in historical writing with such a question? Is the mnemonic turn over? Assaulted by the post-truth era's take on not just our understanding of the present, but also of the past, has memory finally found a challenger? Patrick H. Hutton argues that recent history, the changes towards the way of doing and understanding new world politics, the resurgence of religious fundamentalism "with a fanatical edge," together with the mass migrations phenomenon will not mark an end of the mnemonic turn, but it will help or will determine the forging of new concepts of memory. However, one might argue that historians will return to their work as interpreters of events, searching certainties rather than "verisimilitudes in the knowledge of the daunting problems we face."¹ Memory has already proven its use for that purpose, since it has challenged the meta-narratives and has offered a rather personal, emotional, and

¹ Patrick H. Hutton, *The Memory Phenomenon in Contemporary Historical Writing. How the Interest in Memory Has Influenced Our Understanding of History*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 211.

inspirational approach to the cold, rational and analytical view of history.

Patrick Hutton sets out to evaluate memory's status in contemporary historical writing, highlighting the adaptability of the mnemonic approach – he addresses especially what we call the “mnemonic turn,” which shed light on our understanding of subjective experiences, the ones that are usually ignored by History's grand narrative. That has been broken. It has been smashed to bits. The mnemonic turn has, in his opinion, dramatically changed our understanding of history and of historical writing, which have become “arts of memory.” Therefore, one of the aims of this book is to analyze and determine the magnitude and the role of memory in today's historical writing, a mapping of the oscillations between history and memory in different scholarly areas and subjects. Hutton manages to accomplish this by going through the historiographical background, by analyzing the crisis of meta-narratives which started towards the end of the 20th century and by following the historical and intellectual trends that have determined the loss of the ideological component of historical writing. For example, he follows Pierre Nora in his quest to map and draw meaning from the *lieux de mémoire*, he reflects on Nora's approach and critics' reactions 30 years later,² moving on to the politics of commemoration, history and historical remembrance as

² Cf. Laurent Gervereau, “Pourquoi Canoniser Pierre Nora,” in *Le Monde*, 01.11.2011, available at https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/11/01/pourquoi-canoniser-pierre-nora_1596553_3232.html (accessed on 26.06. 2018).

part of the Holocaust studies or nostalgia and the mnemonics of time. Hutton is constantly challenging the thin borderlines between representation and experience in order to see how these are “negotiated,” and he does that by going back to the essential or crucial works in the history of memory studies. His analysis follows a thematic pattern, extremely useful in today’s memory studies, where the amount of scholarly work has multiplied greatly during the last decades. The book follows a clear and logical path from the Annales School to deconstructivism, nationalism (and the Jewish response to it), commemorations, cultural memory, digital memory, nostalgia, helping the reader understand how the memory phenomenon has permeated the historical writing and the epistemic mutations that it generated.

Another important aspect that the book discusses is cultural memory, which can be traced back to the human need for immortality and for constant remembering of the great events and personalities in order to create a symbolical framework that contributes toward reinforcing group identities. For this, Hutton goes back to the early scholarship, analyzing books such as Marshall McLuhan’s *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) or Robert Funk and Roy Hoover’s researches on Jesus’ “real words.” He then discusses the recent theories of Jan and Aleida Assmann on the cultural canon and the archive. Working as a “counter-present,” the canon has its origins in ancient Egypt’s monuments, which were designed as places of memory, where the Earth intertwined with the Heavens and the human meet the divine, in a symbiosis that left no place for interpretation. This is where the archive plays a vital role,

says Aleida Assmann, since it offers the context for the canon, it makes sure that a glorious past remains as such.

Following a natural and logical chain of thought, the book also addresses a very actual topic, that of digital memory, an era where memory is “unbound,” where the historian finds himself in a sort of an impasse due to the new communication technologies, the globalization of the communication networks and the acceleration of the pace of time, where memory does not just preserve anymore, but it stimulates creativity and imagination, it becomes a theatre that “performs” the past for the present.³ This is one of what Jacques le Goff identified as “the contemporary mnemonic revolutions,” which follows the ethnical memory of illiterate societies, memory’s ascension from orality to writing, the medieval memory (with a balance between writing and orality) and the progress of written memory, which we can set, chronologically, between the Renaissance and the present times. This new “media memory” has several interconnected roles: the first one would be the storage function, which preserves the components of memory, the second one is the circulatory or spatial function (e.g. the printing press), which ensures real-time dissemination of information and content. These should be thoroughly investigated and theorized, due to their mediated nature and instrumentality, but also because of their ability or role as a collective remembrance

³ Cf. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook*, Berlin, 2008, pp. 392-395.

catalyst.⁴ Some authors, such as Robert Darnton, have begun to address the impact of these new communication media on history and, even though he believes that we cannot yet assess the cultural consequences of the digital age, he makes some remarks on the fact that in digital format, many things can be excised, cut, rearranged and data can be lost or deleted.⁵

This is where the author shifts the analysis towards the historian's role in theorizing memory and developing frameworks to understand the different guises of memory, such as the difficult task of approaching trauma from a historical perspective.⁶ The historian is faced with a "past that will not pass," a memory that would not allow itself to be approached historically, overloaded with psychoanalytical terms and exaggerations stemming from the fact that it has been repressed for years and years. Some authors went down this very path, trying to follow childhood memories that only the person who recalls can understand (through the filter of one's own subjectivity) and insert them into the greater scheme of the Holocaust's collective memory. The manner of interrogation here is to

⁴ *Eadem, Memory in Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 126-139. See also Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, Anna Reading (eds.), *Save as...digital memories*, Springer, 2009.

⁵ Cf. Robert Darnton, *The Case for Books Past, Present and Future*, Public Affairs, New York, 2009, *apud* Patrick H. Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 191-201.

⁶ That is, for example, what happened in Germany during the *historikerstreit*. For more information, see James Knowlton, Truett Cates (eds.), *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit*, Humanities Press, 1993.

identify the impact of the Holocaust on one's existence, sometimes even indirectly, since, for example, the family stories of suffering are passed on to their children, who later become the narrators of their parents' suffering. In this case, what the new approach proposes is to re-arrange or re-contextualize the family stories with help from the historical knowledge, which can, as Eva Hoffman suggests, correct memory, helping the bearer of memory make sense of his own knowledge of the past.⁷ This is exactly what French philosopher Paul Ricoeur has concluded about the reconciliation between the memory of a traumatic event and the need to move on. Such an infamous event will only find consolation in memory by acknowledging or accepting history's truth.⁸ But history has, in turn, to respect the mourning, the suffering that Holocaust memory engenders and ask for forgiveness before proceeding to grasp its meanings.

However, if history makes this claim on memory, then one must ask the question of objectivity, to address the "noble dream" of historical objectivity, as Peter Novick so brilliantly put it in his 1986 work on the bias and omissions in American historical writing, since it is almost impossible for a historian to obtain absolute detachment. Novick considers that it is significantly more productive for the historian to accept and understand the

⁷ Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge. Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, New York, 2004, *apud* Patrick H. Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 112-117.

⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris, Seuil, 2000, p. 593-595.

differences in interpretation, the nuances in approaching a particular topic, rather than deny them in the name of a superficial claim of objectivity. This is precisely the kind of mutation that I was referring to earlier on: memory studies have changed the historical profession, shifting the historian's main quest from just looking for evidence to rhetorically analyzing what we write and what was written about a particular event. Historians have moved away from the 19th century mentality where history was a science that claimed it can know the past firsthand, through the analysis of historical traces, to a more nuanced (some say even reductionist) view on their craft: historians are not in quest to find The Truth (similar to what natural sciences do), but rather they look for meanings and wisdom on how to live⁹. That is why, from a postmodern point of view, the historical analysis should start with a perspective that is focused on the present time and then approach the past metaphorically, build a narrative that makes sense, re-construct the past so that it becomes plausible – the success of a historical work depends on how plausible the narrative is. The postmodern approach on the historical craft had brought it closer to memory again, making them almost interchangeable, but what Jenkins doesn't address is precisely the weight of historical evidence and the unresolved traumas of the past. This kind of approach expects very little of the past as a frame of reference and

⁹ See Keith Jenkins, *Refiguring History. New Thoughts on an Old Discipline*, Routledge, London, 2003, pp. 2-59, *apud* Patrick H. Hutton, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-155.

focuses too much on the present time. Here, Hutton makes a very compelling argument against this kind of reductionist view on history and on the present-centered approach on history – this naivete that we are fully prepared to understand the experience of the worlds we enter. The works of Frank Ankersmit (following Johan Huizinga) come to correct such approaches, stating that language and metaphor do not contain everything that we can know about the past. Hutton analyzes this phenomenon, where we stray away from historical evidence, we tend to escape into fiction and imagination, tempted by media and reenactment¹⁰.

Patrick Hutton's work follows the crisis that occurred in French historiography at the end of the 20th century, during which historians noticed that the old historical narratives would not fit into the shifting contemporary realities and how it evolved, globally, into what we now call "the memory phenomenon" or the "memory boom." French historians addressed the very sources of those narratives, they aimed to find how memory is transmitted and when it was not, as it was the case with repressed memories that denied historicizing, why this was. Memory studies have developed as a manner of understanding subjective experiences and have developed, over decades, into what we now call mnemohistory (the "reconciliation" between history and memory), which is now used to assess or analyze what was deemed "worthy" of remembering. Our understanding on history and historiography was deeply

¹⁰ Patrick H. Hutton, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-177.

changed by the “mnemonic turn,” thus making this scholarly work extremely beneficial to our understanding of the contemporary status of historical writing.

List of contributors

Luminița Ignat-Coman is senior researcher specialized in Modern History, with a Ph.D. degree awarded in 2009 from Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Her main research area are identities in Transylvania, nationalism and ethnicity. More recently, she became interested in gold mining in the Apuseni Mountains in the 19th century.

Călin Andrei Olariu is enrolled as Ph.D. student at Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, with the thesis “The State and the Roma in Socialist Romania. An Oral History Research,” an analysis of the interactions between the communist State and Roma marginal communities during the period between 1948 and 1989. His areas of interest are Contemporary History, Roma History and Oral History. Between 2015 and 2017 he was part of the research project: “The Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma People in Romania”. Between 2017 and 2019 he was a research assistant in the research project “The History of Gold Mining in the Apuseni Mountains”. The host institution for the two projects was Babeș-Bolyai University, Oral History Institute.

Ioana-Zoia Ursu is currently works as researcher and curator at the Museum of National Union in Alba Iulia, Romania. Her specialization is in contemporary history of Romania, mainly on victims of communist repression. As doctoral student, she is writing a thesis about “Rugul Aprins” de la Mănăstirea Antim: istorie, memorie, discurs” [The Burning Bush at Antim Monastery: history, memory and discourse].

Lavinia S. Costea is senior researcher at the Oral History Institute, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. She graduate History Department at Central European University in 2001 and she received her Ph.D. in International Relations and European Studies in 2009 with a thesis on the Romanian exile in Western Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. She teaches graduate courses and seminars on oral history, memory and migrations. Her research interests are the oral histories of the Roma, gold mining in Transylvania, history of the borderlands in the Cold War and she coordinated several research projects on these topics as well as educational projects within the ROSE financial framework, for high school pupils and history students.

Oana Ometa graduated Journalism in 2007. Since 2018 she is part of the permanent faculty at the Journalism Department, Babeş-Bolyai University. She holds a Ph.D. in History with a thesis on the condition of the journalists in the communist era, an oral history research. During her doctoral studies, she published the book *The Story of a Veteran Journalist* (Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2011). Her research interests include history, oral history and cultural journalism.

Dorin Pop is a doctoral student at Babeş-Bolyai University, with a thesis on the memory of Vienna Award in Transylvania during and after World War II. He participated in several oral history research campaigns, being interested in how oral sources can be used in writing history.