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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

**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

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.

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,

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.

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.

Oana Ometa

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

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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.