

HOLOCAUST MEMORYSCAPES
CONTEMPORARY MEMORIALISATION
OF THE HOLOCAUST IN CENTRAL AND
EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Edited by SONIA CATRINA

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EDITURA UNIVERSITARĂ
București, 2020

Colecția

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Editură recunoscută de Consiliul Național al Cercetării Științifice (C.N.C.S.) și inclusă de Consiliul Național de Atestare a Titlurilor, Diplomelor și Certificatelor Universitare (C.N.A.T.D.C.U.) în categoria editurilor de prestigiu recunoscut.

Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României

DOI: (Digital Object Identifier): 10.5682/

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Editura Universitară
Editor: Vasile Muscalu
B-dul. N. Bălcescu nr. 27-33, Sector 1, București
Tel.: 021.315.32.47
www.editurauniversitara.ro
e-mail: redactia@editurauniversitara.ro

Distribuție: tel.: 021.315.32.47 / 07217 CARTE / 0745.200.357
comenzi@editurauniversitara.ro
O.P. 15, C.P. 35, București
www.editurauniversitara.ro

CONTENTS

Preface & Acknowledgements	9	
Sonia CATRINA		
Holocaust Memoryscapes: <i>In Lieu of an Introduction</i>	11	
Sonia CATRINA		
 First part		
 THE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST: ACCOUNTABILITY, LEGISLATIVE MECHANISMS & PUBLIC SPEECHES.....		25
 <i>Chapter 1. The Legacies of the Holocaust in Post-communist Romania: Spatialities of Traumatic Memory, (Dis)connected Politics of Memory and Anti-Semitic Social Attitudes.....</i>		26
Sonia CATRINA		
 <i>Chapter 2. The Issue of Antisemitism in the Jurisprudence of the National Council for Combating Discrimination</i>		103
Cristian JURA		
 <i>Chapter 3. The Efforts of Romanian Politicians in Developing the Holocaust Public Discourse</i>		133
Valeriu ANTONOVICI		
 <i>Chapter 4. The Memory of the Holocaust and the Myth of the ‘Outside Enemy’: From Anti-Semitic Attitudes to Redundant Politicisation</i>		158
Alina POPESCU		

Second part

LEARNING FROM THE PAST: TRENDS, PATTERNS AND PRACTICES IN HOLOCAUST EDUCATION AND REMEMBRANCE 189

Chapter 5. The Production, Usages and Circulation of Holocaust Testimonies within Mainstream Societies: Identity Stakes 190
Sonia CATRINA

Chapter 6. Remembrance through Education. The Case of Holocaust Education in Romanian Higher Education Institutions 238
David DIACONU

Chapter 7. Artistic Approaches at Memorial Sites – A Workshop Example..... 261
Kamila PAŁUBICKA

Chapter 8. Geographies of Remembrance: Observing the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust in Romania’s Educational System 278
Mihai Stelian RUSU

Third part

THE BURDEN OF THE PAST: ETHICAL ISSUES, SYMBOLIC REPARATION AND SHARED MEMORIES..... 307

Chapter 9. Holocaust Remembrance as Reparation for the Past: A Relational Egalitarian Approach..... 308
Adelin-Costin DUMITRU

Chapter 10. Demons, Saints or Something Else? Holocaust Actors and Victims of Communism in Theological Memorialisation in Romania (2017-2018)..... 337
Nicolae DRĂGUȘIN

Chapter 11. Holocaust Remembrance, Memorial Space and Otherness. Dialogue between Memory and the Spectator 367
Astrid ROTTMAN

Fourth part

THE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS 391

Chapter 12. Truncated Images of the Holocaust: The Deportation of the Roma in the Censored Romanian Literature. The Case of the Novel Șatra by Zaharia Stancu 392

Sorin MITULESCU

Chapter 13. The Holocaust in the Memory of Peasants from Bogata de Sus, a Village in North-Western Transylvania..... 408

Gheorghe CIASCAI

Chapter 14. Remembering the Roma Deportations in Post-Communist Romania: The Difficult Path to a Shared Past 424

Petre-Georgian MATEI

Notes on contributors..... 458

Preface & Acknowledgements

Sonia CATRINA

The present volume originates from the International Colloquium on the “Contemporary Memorialisation of the Holocaust in Central and Eastern European Countries” which took place at the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust (Bucharest, Romania) on the 11th-12th of October 2019. A selection of the colloquium papers is now presented in this thematic volume on “Holocaust Memoryscapes” in Central and Eastern Europe, an overarching trope that captures authors’ perspectives on the memory-work in these countries, with a special focus on the Romanian post-communist context. This scientific event was focused on the major themes of ongoing research on the Holocaust memorialisation in post-communist contexts. It was organised in connection with the research project entitled “Coming to Terms with National History and Participation in Contemporary Memorialisation of the Holocaust in Central and Eastern European Post-communist Countries”. This research project was hosted by the INSHR EW – The “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, and it was financed by the UEFISCDI – The Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, Contract 31/2018, 02/05/2018 – 30/04/2020). Therefore, I would like to acknowledge the support of UEFISCDI which made possible the publication of this volume. I would also like to express my gratitude and appreciation for our hosts, notably, to Professor Alexandru Florian, General Director of the INSHR EW, for his strong institutional support, and firm belief in the value of our undertaking. Due to his valuable advice at various stages of this project and ongoing mentoring, the research has properly developed in relevant directions. I particularly thank the contributors¹ to this volume for their inspiring research papers which made our editorial work a most rewarding enterprise. Their case studies and theoretical frameworks added valuable

¹ The content of each chapter is the sole responsibility of the author.

insights to the topic of the “Holocaust Memoryscapes” in post-communist European contexts. I am most grateful to Raul-Michael Cârstocea for his diligent proofreading of our papers and constructive feed-back on the preparation of this volume. Last but not least, I want to express my appreciation for all the colleagues at INSHR EW for their contributions to our overall project.

HOLOCAUST MEMORYSCAPES: *In Lieu of an Introduction*¹

Sonia CATRINA

European Jews were among the most affected categories by the genocide systematically planned by the Nazi perpetrators and their collaborators during the Second World War (1939-1945). They were targets of hostility, stigmatisation, persecution, and state discrimination long before the Holocaust. Yet, the escalation of these attitudes from 1933 toward the final stage of mass destruction in the period 1941-1945 was the result of the Nazi policy built on the idea of racial superiority. According to this conception, of biologically pure, Aryan blood, the Nazis deliberately targeted people who did not correspond to their racist ideological framing, without distinction of gender or age. In addition to the six million Jewish people (of which over 1,5 million were children) who perished across Europe during the Second World War in ghettos and extermination camps, other targets of Nazi racism were the Roma (Gypsies)², people with disabilities, Slavic people (Poles, Russians, and others), Soviet prisoners of war, and blacks (USHMM no date). Because of their alleged ‘inferiority’, these categories were considered as a threat to German racial purity – for example, Roma were considered as “asocials” and for this reason outside “normal” society (Open Society Foundations 2019). For this reason they were deliberately targeted for destruction across German-occupied Europe. Communists, socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals were also

¹ The main arguments developed in this Introduction to “Holocaust Memoryscapes in Central and Eastern European Countries” outline our research project “Coming to Terms with National History and Participation in Contemporary Memorialisation of the Holocaust in Central and Eastern European Post-communist Countries”, hosted by the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania and financed by UEFISCDI – the Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation – following the competition for “Young Research Teams” within the PNCDI III – The National Plan for Research and Development and Innovation for the period 2015-2020 (PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, Contract 31/2018, 02/05/2018 – 30/04/2020).

² Despite the “unreliability of pre-genocide population figures for Roma”, which makes it difficult to estimate the number of Roma and Sinti killed during the Second World War, “[s]cholarly estimates range from 300,000 to 500,000” (Open Society Foundations 2019).

persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioural grounds (USHMM no date).

Thinking that previously “racial stereotyping and demonization” has been the “prelude to mass violence around the globe” (Wall 2019) that led to the Holocaust, considered “a turning point in history” and “the archetype of evil” (Stone 2004), this volume is dedicated to the analysis of the remembrance policies, projects, practices, activities, and structures in contemporary Central and Eastern European countries. The aim of the chapters gathered in this volume is to showcase the extent to which societies from these countries connect with the past, dialogically engage with history, actively participate in tackling present issues of anti-Semitism, and contribute to building a culture of respect for human rights and peace. In other words, the chapters in this volume all deal, in different ways, with the problem of ideological debate in coming to terms with difficult pasts and the stakes of integrating the dark pasts into mainstream society in the Central and Eastern European post-communist region. In trying to answer the question: *How is the memorialisation of the Holocaust dealt with in different national and disciplinary contexts?*, the studies collected in this thematic volume examine the social, cultural, intellectual, political, technological, ethical, and practical changes impacting on the ways individuals, groups, and societies relate to the events of the Second World War and the Holocaust in various post-communist European contexts, with a special focus on Romania. By critically engaging with the field of Holocaust and memory studies, and using various theoretical, empirical, and methodological tools, the contributions to the volume inquire into various agencies dealing with the issue of the Holocaust in the contemporary Europe, examine the layering of remembrance, and analyse memorial events, performances, and cultural ventures of reconciliation, social repair and reconstruction. The chapters examine the history of memorialisation, the culture of memory, and Holocaust memorial art, both in terms of design and of content, in our contemporary era, deployed in local and transnational settings by political actors, non-governmental institutions, and individual agents.

The primary objectives of these research studies are threefold. (1) First, the chapters in this volume seek to trace, from a comparative perspective, the historical genealogy of the Holocaust remembrance in Central and Eastern European post-communist countries by discussing various engagements with the (re)enactment of the Jewish and Roma dreadful past into public memory. To answer this objective, we consider both top-down and bottom-up actions of memorialisation dedicated to the Holocaust, aimed at raising awareness about the destruction of European

Jews and Roma. (2) Second, through a critical analysis of a wide selection of Holocaust ‘memoryscapes’, our research interrogates how memories of the Second World War have been spatially and discursively appropriated by state and non-state agencies over various scales, as means of achieving multiple objectives, including nation-building, mourning, and education. (3) Third, our studies scrutinise ethical, emotional, and memorial attitudes within post-communist societies, in other words the moral and societal implications of the cultural valuing of memorial landscapes relating to the Second World War, including monuments, museums, and commemorative ceremonies, and the social impact of transmitting the memory of such tragic events.

The proposed overarching topic of our volume, which provides a research vista less explored in post-communist European academic contexts, has grown from my personal research interests and previous fieldwork, focused on identity, heritage, and the cultural phenomenon in connection with political authority and social engagement. This blend of research interests, supported by interdisciplinary academic foundations, with a social science and cultural studies emphasis, has opened up new vistas for questioning competing glances and representations of the Jewish and Romani past on a larger scale and in various national contexts. Moreover, considering that the analysis of the extent to which states across post-communist Central and Eastern Europe have valued their past and dealt with ‘the Jewish issue’ and ‘the Roma issue’ is of paramount importance for research, I decided to embark on this topic in an attempt to examine on comparative grounds the ways in which public authorities (state and municipal representatives, heritage professionals), but also other social agents (from private organisations and local communities to individual actors) have re-enacted the terrible Jewish and Romani past on home ground through memorial development and enhancement, heritage work, cultural practices, and educational resources. The need for an in-depth comparative analysis was supported by my motivation to scrutinise how, what, and why the memory of the war is currently commemorated in the nation-states’ public lives and appropriated in everyday practices. The analysis of official attitudes toward Europe’s painful past developed in post-communist contexts offers a window through which it is possible to understand what is at stake when national identity, political culture and ideology, public memory, and professional history intertwine. In turn, private stakeholders’ engagements with these aims show how ‘historical consciousness’ and ‘moral responsibility’ relate in contemporary societies.

The importance of addressing this topic arises from the idea that there is a burden which hangs on the recent history of the European region

because of the planned killing of Jews and Roma during the first half of the 20th century. Unlike previous research, which focused on the why and how the genocide was possible, the aim of this volume is to examine the processes of remembering trauma in contemporary post-communist European societies, with a special focus on the Holocaust memory-making in the Romanian context. More precisely, it examines the manner in which post-communist states across Europe have dealt with their Jewish and Romani (hi)stories in the aftermath of the Second World War, and how the official memories have intertwined with “vernacular memories and histories” (Sather-Wagstaff 2016), by exploring engagements aimed at the (re)enactment of the traumatic past into national culture. Even more specifically, the object of study of this research volume concerns the analysis of cultural forms of memorialising and commemorating the Jewish and Romani histories during the Second World War in contemporary post-communist European countries. The analysis of the memorial and educational projects that make reference to the Holocaust carried out by various agents raises the question of the importance of the Holocaust for the collective memory in contemporary European historiography, as well as of its role in education and in fostering respect for human rights. This refreshing approach to the social functions performed by Jewish and Romani memory in the framework of national identity intends to historicise and rework our understanding of the role of memorial practices in present-day Europe. Thus, by investigating the actors’ discourses, interpretations, and representations about Jewish and Romani history, we elaborate a critical and contextual analysis of the role of this legacy in contemporary post-communist European societies.

Whereas the literature that has developed around the phenomenon of war memorial landscapes has mainly drawn on Western case-studies, exposing the ways in which large-scale conflicts are commemorated and contested, we contend that there is still much more that can be learned from considering ‘memoriscapes’ of war in non-Western societies. This volume presents such an endeavour in its analysis of how the Second World War is remembered within post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, unique for its potential to shed light on the manifold politics associated with the commemoration of wars within multiracial and multi-religious post-communist contexts. From this point of view and considering that research on this issue remains rather underdeveloped in non-Western societies, through this research we want to bring the Eastern research in line with Western standards and open it to new research questions. For example, we ask ourselves if changing representations of trauma and memory of the Holocaust, and by extension of mass atrocities in general, could emerge as a

constitutive feature of the post-communist European identity project. On the other hand, Western research in this field mainly focused on official engagements aimed at the (re)enactment of the Jewish history in the present and its internalisation into individuals' consciousness. Holocaust memories were shaped by national imperatives, an aspect which was reflected in the proliferation of national sites of commemoration. While this focus remains confined to a territorial conception of memory inscribed into national discourse, it does not take into account how it is acknowledged locally. Compared to such an approach, the originality of our research involves touching upon bottom-up actions of memorialisation and heritagisation dedicated to the Holocaust, in addition to top-down actions of dealing with the past. In other words, the richness of this research lies with the analysis of official efforts in conjunction with those of private stakeholders to raise awareness about the Jewish and Romani past in these territories and to bring a dark chapter of the history of these countries into the present. The examination of the current memorial practices in post-communist Europe will reveal completely new modes of expression and meanings related to the social functions of such practices. In addition, it will unravel appropriations or even identity claims, socio-economic changes, and the negotiation of new socio-cultural relations, even political ones, at a territorial level. Broadly speaking, our comparative in-depth analysis will help us understand how the local history of Jews and Roma during the Holocaust is transmitted nowadays through commemorative practices, heritage, and education. More generally, the research studies collected in this volume indicate the extent to which the recognition of the historical and educational importance of Jewish and Romani memory is determined by the attitude of the authorities toward a previously unacknowledged history. In addition, the analysis of the mechanisms that have brought about the political commitment of the European states to the rediscovery of an overshadowed past and of the forms that this commitment has taken shows what factors allow the rise of private actions of memory-making, projected to stir emotions and empathy and to encourage people to engage with history, and the extent to which the 'internalisation' of the life-shattering experiences of Jews and Roma frames mentalities and contributes to reducing 'social distance' in multi-ethnic societies. In sum, we postulate that our research exposes the power games resulting from the social valorisation of the memory of the Second World War in post-communist Central and Eastern European countries, ideology issues, as well as the ethical and societal implications of the cultural valuing of the Holocaust, or the social impact of transmitting the memory of tragic events, such as the ghettoization followed by the extermination of the

European Jewry and Roma people, leading to the identification of elements that shape the social relationships in these societies.

Using cross-territorial comparisons, our research scrutinises symbolic forms of ‘memoryscapes’ of the Second World War, such as performative and commemorative practices aimed at directly engaging the audience with Jewish and Romani history through an immersive experience, as well as material ones, such as heritage projects and art installations. The difficulty in addressing this issue consists in approaching the multiple layers of the problem as unfolded below. To understand Holocaust memory-making entails investigating the strategies of various agents embarking on such processes, their proactive cultural and symbolic activities of memorialising the Second World War in more and more changing and entangled post-communist European societies, as well as their ethical and societal implications. Yet, by weaving together complex understandings and experiences from a wide range of disciplines, including political science, history, sociology, social anthropology, cultural studies, and Holocaust studies, this interdisciplinary blend of approaches will allow overcoming this problem. In turn, this will help us shed light on various agencies and their role in acknowledging the atrocities of the Second World War, on the symbolic value (to be) attached to Jewish and Romani history, and on the socio-cultural implications of these processes.

To refer to the ways in which memory develops in the public sphere and difficult pasts are remembered, and thus to reveal modes of “relationship to the past” (Tornatore 2010, p. 5) at work in memory processes, we have to acknowledge the existence in the literature of several competitive keywords associated with ‘memory’, such as ‘collective’, ‘cultural’, ‘communicational’, ‘official’, ‘public’, ‘social’, or ‘popular’. Yet, these differences in terminology point less to diverging definitions of ‘shared memory’ than to different approaches to studying it. Thus, it was Maurice Halbwachs (1925) who first developed the term ‘collective memory’. According to the French sociologist, individual memory develops in interaction with ‘social frames’ (*cadres sociaux*), with the nation-state being one of the less influential frames as compared to religion, class, and family. In contrast to Halbwachs, Pierre Nora’s (1989) ‘sites of memory’ (*lieux de mémoire*) placed the emphasis on the nation as a primary framework for the building of collective memory and stressed the importance of collective memory for the identity of the nation. Halbwachs’ insight has been further refined by historians and social scientists who studied twentieth-century memory practices. They have focused more on the social environment of memory and asked how individual stories about the past interact with existing narratives and other forms of commemoration. In

addition to the term ‘collective memory’, many scholars of literature and some philosophers prefer the term ‘cultural memory’ (Assmann 2010), while historians and social scientists mostly use the term ‘social memory’. Being a familiar key term in the humanities and social sciences, the concept of ‘public memory’ seems to better help us analyse the framing of ‘the pasts into present’ (*passés présents*) (Tornatore 2010, p. 91). However, as a way of recalling the past, memory-work has to be considered as being subject to negotiation, even to contestation, among various agents concerned with expressing identity, and “in terms of multiple, diverse, mutable, and competing accounts of past events” (Phillips 2004, p. 2), as presented in more detail below.

It is already acknowledged that ‘public memory’ is officially shaped with the aim of defining the identity of a group or community. Following Laurajane Smith’s (2006) conceptualisation of ‘authorised heritage discourse’, we posit that an ‘authorised’ memory discourse “generates institutional positions and legitimizes certain experiences and identities” (Smith 2006, p. 299). Because it is devised by political, cultural, and professional institutions, it follows that it entails “choices of inclusion” and exclusion (Kuutma 2013, p. 26). Therefore, “official memory” is defined by intersecting cultural policies, actions, and representations of various state-sponsored agents contributing to identity building. Being “officially sanctioned” (Kansteiner 2002, p. 182), it functions as “a political asset in negotiating governance”. Since power interests are at stake when it comes to constructing identity, it follows that the processes of building public memory are not consensual, nor passive or neutral. On the other hand, “the processes of codifying collective memory (...) may engender varying levels of engagement”, this because agents “engage differently with a particular aspect of history” (Smith and Campbell 2015, p. 445). Moreover, in addition to officially designated forms of public memory, one cannot deny the possibility of “‘from below’ engagements” (Ashley 2016, p. 556) with public memory, entailing memory-making “ideas or practices of those ‘outside’ the typical realm” (Ashley and Frank 2014) of these processes. Consequently, to explore the multi-layered frames of memory processes, we have to admit the multiplicity of perspectives of those who engage with or use memory as “a spatial-temporal reference in which collective narratives are structured” (Brescó 2010, p. 61). We therefore consider memory-work as “a process of engagement” (Smith 2006, p. 1) undertaken by various agents who “memoryscape” (Muzaini and Yeoh 2016, p. 10) the past with the purpose of “making meaning in and for the present” (Smith 2006, p. 1) and create a shared ‘culture of memory’.

Considering that memories are actively constructed in specific contexts and places, while meanings are inscribed and maintained through communication and performative acts such as embodied “acts of remembrance and commemoration” (Smith 2006, p. 3), our approach refers to material and representational memorial forms of the Holocaust such as heritage war sites, sites of pilgrimage, museums, memorials, monuments, and plaques, but also to non-representational ones, such as discursive productions during jubilees, commemorations, and festivities. Moreover, given that these processes entail both production and reception, we analyse them not only as a result of “human agency” (Kansteiner 2002, p. 186), but also from the perspective of their social appropriation. By scrutinising social consumption and appropriations in “popular practice” (Cupers 2014, pp. 6-8), our research examines the ‘performativity’ (Smith 2006) of ‘memoryscapes’ in social processes. Therefore, our studies explore both the role played by various agencies in generating and shaping collective ‘emotions and affects’ (Hutchison and Bleiker 2008) encompassing “formal and informal depictions of the past” (Muzaini and Yeoh 2016, p. 10) and the social response to the cultural acts of codification of public memory.

By examining various social agents’ engagement with the development of proactive activities, as well as local communities’ attitudes toward the acknowledgment of the difficult history of the Jews and Roma, our studies try to fill the existing research gap on this issue. Therefore, the volume provides an original view on the agencies underlying the endorsement of Jewish and Romani history in the cultural, economic, and political spheres, as well as the cross-cutting implications and stakes of appropriating a traumatic past in the public sphere. It showcases a range of empowerment strategies of NGOs or individuals who decide to contribute to these processes of memory-making, of local authorities and representatives of local communities, social groups, and elites or Jewish communities still living in Europe. This in turn reveals the challenges of such approaches in contemporary post-communist Central and Eastern European societies, the structural and cultural barriers to building proactive activities around these processes in changing societies. In addition, it indicates the remaking and the new reinterpretations of Jewish history in the abovementioned post-communist European societies, an issue located at the interface between power, negotiation, exchanges, challenges, tensions, and conflicts. In sum, our focus on the social impact of a wide variety of interrelationships within and among government entities, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and individuals may provide new approaches to contemporary identity settings, seen from a comparative perspective, by

acknowledging the dynamic dimension of memory functions in a more and more interconnected world.

By setting the framework of this research on the position of the recent Jewish and Romani past in historical knowledge and its role in popular culture, our research calls for particularly sensitive critical reflection on the engagement with the accuracy of these events, whether we talk about political actors, non-governmental institutions, or individual agents. It is already known that standpoints³ on the topic of the Second World War are not necessarily ‘consensual’ (Geissbühler 2012). Few far-right politicians and scholars have denied or downplayed the role of perpetrators in destroying European Jewry⁴. Beyond considering contemporary multifaceted dimensions to Holocaust denial, our research aims to disclose the extent to which the mental structures which had made the Holocaust possible have changed or disappeared.

In line with these arguments, widely described in my research project financed by the UEFISCDI (PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811) and briefly summarised in this introduction, I sought contributions which examine how various post-communist contexts determine different strategies of negotiating memory-production and how memorial practices produce or reinforce specific values related to the Jewish and Romani legacy or the establishment of intercultural relations. In addition to analysing the social impact of transmitting the memory of such tragic events, I was interested in grounded papers that scrutinised frames, the media and political economy of remembrance, or explored affects engaged and catalysed by processes of shaping public memory. In this attempt, I welcomed ethnographically grounded, theoretically driven analyses, case studies, and comparisons from various disciplines, including social and cultural anthropology, history, sociology, political science, Holocaust studies, cultural studies, heritage, and museum studies.

³ Michael Shafir (2004) identified three Holocaust-denying postures: ‘outright’ (rejects the existence of the Holocaust), ‘deflective’ (admits the existence of the Holocaust, but transfers the responsibility to historical enemies or national minorities), and ‘selective’ (does not deny the Holocaust as having taken place elsewhere, but excludes any participation of members of one’s own nation).

⁴ In the case of Romania, although not being fully accepted, the Antonescu government’s involvement in killing the Jewish populations within the Romanian territories is already widely acknowledged nowadays. Without having been as systematic as the German practices of killing Jews, the disorganised local practices and the frenzy of killing the Jews on a wide scale encompassed all social layers of the Romanian society of the time, which indicates the extent to which anti-Semitism and xenophobia were traits of a sick society, regardless of whether we are talking about underprivileged social classes, intellectuals, or authorities.

The volume dedicated to the politics of memory and the memorialisation of the Holocaust in post-communist Central and Eastern European countries has been divided into four parts.

The first part of this volume, “The memory of the Holocaust: accountability, legislative mechanisms and public speeches”, investigates the role of authorities in speaking the ‘historical truth’ and taking on the responsibility for genocide, and critically presents official discourses and practices of engagement with the Holocaust or sanctioned means of establishing shared representations of the past through memory laws, such as laws prohibiting Holocaust denial. This is compared to popular culture, which sometimes clashes with the ‘official narrative’, being a productive space for alternative accounts and perspectives on history. By considering the Romanian case, **Sonia CATRINA** inquired into the process of institutionalising the Holocaust during the post-communist period, specifically by focusing on perceptions regarding the foundation in Bucharest of a National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust. In light of the resurgence of anti-Semitism at the dawn of the 21st century, **Cristian JURA** paid particular attention to the issue of anti-Semitism as reflected in the jurisprudence of the National Council for Combating Discrimination. The relationship between Holocaust memory, national identity, and political legitimation is the main topic of the chapter written by **Valeriu ANTONOVICI**, who focused his research on the analysis of the official approaches to the Holocaust, as reflected in speeches delivered by Romanian officials in the last 30 years, before and after the formal acceptance of the “Final Report” in Parliament. **Alina POPESCU** analysed some of the most famous slip-ups the Romanian politicians have had in their public discourses from 2012 until the present, referring both to the myth of the ‘outside enemy’ embodied in the person of George Soros and the growing politicisation of the memory of the Holocaust.

The second part of our volume, “Learning from the past: trends, patterns, and practices in Holocaust education and remembrance”, addresses the role of power structures in establishing a curriculum with regard to historical events such as the Holocaust, or other ‘on the ground’ educational practices of teaching about the Holocaust, with the aim of instilling certain values and ethics, such as respect for human rights, and creating, through this powerful vehicle, an anti-genocidal culture. The performative dimensions of memory transmission, through specific gestures, behaviours, or language adopted by survivors during Holocaust commemorative events was the main topic of **Sonia CATRINA**’s second chapter in this book.

Kamilla PALUBICKA reflected on interactive forms of audience engagement with the Holocaust and presented the use of performative strategies to teach about empathy, or social and civic responsibility. **David DIACONU** employed a mixed-methods research design in order to provide a descriptive mapping of the Holocaust-related courses offered by Romanian Universities, along with a discussion of the importance of the research centres in this field. **Mihai Stelian RUSU**'s study scrutinised the patterns of commemorating the Holocaust in the Romanian school network, in an attempt to map out a national topography of remembrance.

The third part of our collective volume, "The Burden of the past: ethical issues, symbolic reparation, and shared memories", explores the political responsibility for participating in war crimes and genocide in relationship to moral reparations. **Adelin DUMITRU** focused on the reconciliation processes through memory-work and practices of remembrance as forms of symbolic reparation for a traumatic past. Presenting and representing Jewish history and traditions through memorial spaces in various European national contexts was the main topic for **Astrid ROTTMAN**'s study, as well as visitors' experiences of and responses to Holocaust museums and artistic projects. **Nicolae DRĂGUȘIN** mainly explored the ways in which Mircea Vulcănescu's memory was portrayed in the central media of the Romanian Orthodox Church on the occasion offered by "the homage and commemorative year" (2017). His choice of this case study is prompted by the double perspective on Vulcănescu, considered on one hand a war criminal according to a definitive sentence pronounced by the Romanian judiciary system in the year 1948, and, on the other hand, as a victim of communism since he died in prison in 1952. Three other similarly problematic personalities, Radu Gyr, Nichifor Crainic, and Visarion Puiu, are also briefly discussed by the author.

The fourth part of our volume, "The memory of the Holocaust and social representations", explores the social and symbolic transmission of Holocaust memory outside the realm of the state. **Sorin MITULESCU** analysed the novel *Șatra*, written by Zaharia Stancu in 1969, considered a notable attempt under communism to uncover facts that had occurred in Transnistria during the war, but counterbalanced by the lack of transparency manifested by the communist authorities throughout their governance regarding the Holocaust in general, and the deportation of the Roma to Transnistria in particular. **Gheorghe CIASCAI** inquired into the ways in which the old people of the village Bogata de Sus (Cluj County, in north-western Romania) have kept a memory of the tragedy of the Jews from their

village, and how they transmitted their memories of this collective tragedy to their descendants. **Petre-Georgian MATEI** critically examined the memory-making mechanisms in Romania with regard to the Roma genocide and the extent to which we can talk about shared perceptions of their past.

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First part
THE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST:
ACCOUNTABILITY, LEGISLATIVE MECHANISMS &
PUBLIC SPEECHES

Chapter 1

The Legacies of the Holocaust in Post-communist Romania: Spatialities of Traumatic Memory, (Dis)connected Politics of Memory and Anti-Semitic Social Attitudes

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This research paper² has two main aims. First, it seeks to contribute to existing research on the politics of memory in Eastern Europe by considering the Romanian case and proposing an analysis of the process of institutionalising the memory of the Holocaust during the post-communist period. Second, it pays particular attention to perceptions regarding the foundation in Bucharest of a National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust. Thereby, it makes a contribution to recent literature that examines the problem of ‘coming to terms with the past’ in the wake of the Holocaust by considering official initiatives of ‘mastering the past’, with a special focus on the spatialities of traumatic memory. The analysis draws on discourses released in the public sphere by (1) authorised agents entitled to transmit official statements regarding the Holocaust in Romania, to orchestrate the processes of institutionalising public memory and to facilitate its internalisation into contemporary public consciousness, and (2) a range of social agents who take certain positions on these issues and act in response to them according to their own identity references and beliefs, built in contrast to what was officially acknowledged following the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania. Starting from these general considerations, the study focuses on the power of language, and on how language and rhetoric create dissimilar ideological interpretations of the Holocaust, and associated issues. Our argument is that divergent rhetorical processes deployed on grounds related to collective memory undermine the building of shared representations about the Holocaust in Romania.

Keywords: Romania; politics of memory; National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust; nationalistic feelings; stereotypes; anti-Semitism.

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² The author of this chapter started to work on this topic as a guest researcher at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (July-August, 2019), under the supervision of Dr. Béla Rásky, Managing Director of VWI, and Prof. Éva Kovács, Research Programme Director at VWI, whom she would like to thank for the invaluable academic support. Assistance from Raul Cârstocea on the later version of this paper is fully acknowledged.

Background and definition of the research problem

The official interpretation of the legacy of the past and its public acknowledgment is a prerequisite to a functional democracy. The process of critically engaging with the legacies of the past is connected to the production and transmission of collective modes of remembrance through official channels of memorialisation. The (re)production of shared images of the past in the public arena through mnemonic practices and commemorative discourses contributes to building collective memory and to consolidating a common sense of national identity. Denoting shared representations of the past, collective memory has the potential to “influence collective thought and behaviour by assigning normative meaning to signal dimensions of the communal past” (Vivian 2010, p. 63), functioning as an in-group identity bond. Being influential in shaping the development of identity in relationship to the group, past experiences communicated and shared in society have the power to convey positive forms of attachment and generate normative civic experiences. Collective forms of identification play into how individuals define themselves and enable them to acquire a sense of their personal and social identity, without impeding on self-reflection and self-awareness. In turn, the connectivity of the self within society allows developing a critical examination of (traumatic) past events and a more complex understanding of their magnitudes. Not only do they play a central role in the development of the self and identity formation by means of personal cognitive processes, they also instil a sense of belonging into individual lives. Given that the transmission of memory is encapsulated in democratic principles, the question is how these mechanisms surface, evolve, and interact in a post-authoritarian society.

Considering that the processes and mechanisms of democratisation follow a path which is not universally applicable in all post-communist Eastern European countries, our inquiry refers to the Romanian case, where the Ceaușescu dictatorship was overthrown in December 1989 by a violent popular uprising. In the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution, the country, haunted by continuity with the old regime, was struggling with internal political, economic, and social conflicts, tensions, and weaknesses. The silencing of the Holocaust, the politicisation of historical events, and the instrumental use of national symbols in order to cultivate ideological foundations during the communist period created a problematic approach to transitional justice in post-communist Romania. During the on-going period of transition, the political, institutional, and symbolic continuities with the communist order hindered the establishment of democratic frameworks of responsibility and institutional accountability. This official prevailing

attitude toward the past biased the politics of memory. Because of the imbrication of the communist ethos in the newly installed political orders, self-titled as democratic while in fact deeply rooted in the communist political culture, in the newly born democratic Romania, there was neither an official recognition of the repression and crimes engendered by the dictatorial regime during the second half of the twentieth century, nor a consensus on the fascist regime in the country. The reconciliation with the past was troubled by a lack of consensus on 'political truth' and "the unmastered past of the twentieth century's atrocities" (Tismăneanu 2010). These matters prevented the country "from institutionalizing the connection between democracy, memory, and civic awareness" (Tismăneanu 2010). The structural tension during the post-communist democratisation period between authoritarian legacies and hope in the possibility of change hindered democracy. The feeling of continuity with the past further deepened the dissatisfaction and resentment of the Romanians, who were waiting for the historical truth to be publicly revealed and for justice to be made. Not only did "the absence of a decisive break with the bureaucratic-centralist and strongly statist traditions inherited from Leninism" (Tismăneanu 1997, p. 407) slow down the establishment of democratic principles, but they prevented the historical and political experiences of the twentieth century from being assessed, the crimes committed during the Holocaust and the communist regime from being condemned, and traumatised memory from being recovered.

In such circumstances of inconsistent reforms and delay in authentically engaging in accountability, the emergent Romanian democratic society felt the need to break with the past and to recognise itself in officially sanctioned frames of identification, different from those inherited from the former regime. Its search for identity was supposed to be found in shared contents, categories, and forms of consciousness moulded in accordance with democratic values, ideals, and principles. However, the lack of collective identity reference points, beliefs, ethical thinking and attitudes challenged the Romanians' sense of self. In the absence of shared identity components, which normally unify society, creating social bonds and inspiring confidence, and because of the impossibility of projecting themselves unto common identification benchmarks, Romanians felt frustration and discontent. Concomitantly, the public sphere was challenged by the necessity to disclose and assess the crimes committed by the Nazis and their collaborators. It follows that both traumas, of the Second World War and of the communist repression and crimes, required an official acknowledgment regarding the responsibility and culpability of the Romanian authorities for the collective suffering. As a missing component

of the collective past, it was expected that the double legacy of dictatorship would be integrated into collective memory, to be shared by the mainstream Romanian society. In these circumstances, which allowed for the development of civil society, the arena of memory politics had to deal with the social demand to officially acknowledge the repression and crimes committed during the twentieth century and to express them through collective memory.

As a consequence of the specificity of the post-communist Romanian context of profound systemic crisis doubled by the absence of public morals in societal life, the emerging process of coming to terms with the past was mainly characterised by personal attempts of recollecting the past, generally supported by civic organisations “advocating human rights, transparency of legal and government procedures, and ethnic tolerance” (Tismăneanu 1998, p. 20). Being aware of the importance of transmitting the knowledge and memories of traumatic pasts, some intellectuals started a campaign to this effect throughout the country, their actions supported by the idea of the importance of acknowledging the past for the present and future. A new civic culture was to be born along with civil society initiatives to reveal past historical and political atrocities. Concomitantly, the growing willingness of political elites “to initiate and assume judicial and political steps towards historical and legal accountability regarding a traumatic, violent, and brutal past” (Tismăneanu and Stan 2018, p. 49) marked the beginning of a change in approaching the past. Later on, more than one decade from the overthrow of the communist regime, the state has taken over the efforts of non-state actors engaged in making the past transparent and supportive of transitional justice. It was under the pressure of European institutions that the Romanian government committed itself to bring the past into the present, to produce and communicate unifying narrative versions of the past, to institutionalise and internalise the memory of Romania’s traumatic pasts. Accordingly, the process of critically examining its dictatorial past was mirrored by the establishment of two Commissions: the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, created by the President Ion Iliescu on 22 October 2003 and led by Elie Wiesel, the American Nobel Peace Prize laureate of Romanian Jewish origin, and the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania set up on 5 April 2006 by the President Traian Băsescu and led by Vladimir Tismăneanu, the American political scientist of Romanian origin. The main purpose of both commissions was to scrutinise Romania’s recent traumatic pasts inflicted by the previous totalitarian regimes, of the extreme right between 1940 and 1944, and of the extreme left between 1944 and 1989, and to produce final reports about their crimes and human rights violations. In addition to the

need for documenting the previous historical and political crimes, disclosing them publicly became an important concern for the post-communist process of state-building in Romania. Although this bifurcation of memory has conquered the official, as well as the public area, but also the unofficial and private spheres, the establishment of specific investigative institutions constituted an important political step in the process of Romania's coming to terms with its recent traumas.

Starting from these general considerations and without diminishing the importance of memory concerning the communist terror and crimes, in this research paper we chose to focus on the mechanisms of institutionalising the memory of the Holocaust in post-communist Romania. By deciding to work on this topic, we do not adhere to the idea that the legacy of the Holocaust deserves a better place in collective memory as compared to that of communism, nor do we accept the theory of competitive victimhood. Our methodological choice is inspired by our personal interest as a socio-cultural anthropologist in apprehending the state-led mechanisms of mastering the truth about the Holocaust and the previous period of anti-Semitic legislation in the contemporary Romanian national context. The topic of the Holocaust was silenced and repressed from the individual and collective memory and the word 'Jew' had been banned from public dialogue in communist Romania. After the fall of communism, there was a lack of public recognition of the Jewish past. In addition, the Romanian authorities' involvement in the persecution and deportation of Jews and Roma population was an unfamiliar topic in Romanian society. Despite official efforts to critically examine the Holocaust era and communicate the results of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania in the public sphere, this topic is still disputed nowadays, thirty years after the overthrow of the communist regime. In line with these accounts, several questions triggered our research interests: How can one explain the fact that the Jewish past was largely unknown in Romania despite the ubiquitous presence of Jewish memory markers? What are the mechanisms that led the Romanian state to its political commitment to institutionalise the memory of the Holocaust? What forms does this process take? How can the Jewish past be integrated into public consciousness? How does the memorial transmission of the Holocaust intertwine with civil society's actions? Is the memory of the Holocaust in Romania a shared, collective legacy? Does the institutionalisation of the memory of the Holocaust manage to increase one's responsibility for the past and to reaffirm the commitment to fight against racism and intolerance? These questions indicate the level of our analysis on the topic of engagements with historical memory in post-communist Romania. To grasp the complex dynamics of dealing with the

Holocaust, we investigate legislative processes, but also perceptions, feelings, and attitudes toward producing an interpretative framework of Holocaust memory in the post-communist Romanian society.

The topic of our study is situated within the scholarship on the Holocaust and memory studies, practice theory, and rhetorical studies. At the heart of our research paper is the concept of ‘collective memory’, developed by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s. In *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (The social frameworks of memory), Halbwachs (1925) emphasised the society’s influence on memory. In his view, “individuals recall, recognize and localize their memories in society” (Halbwachs 1992[1925], p. 38). Other scholars agreed that individual understanding of the present is mediated by ‘cultural memory’, which determines the general framework within which the past acquires a meaning and it conveys “a society’s self-image” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, p. 132). As “a process of engagement, an act of communication and an act of making meaning in and for the present” (Smith 2006, p. 1), ‘collective memory’, defined here following Laurajane Smith’s (2006) re-theorisation of heritage, refers to “a range of activities that include remembering, commemoration, communicating and passing on knowledge and memories, asserting and expressing identity and social and cultural values and meanings” (Smith 2012, p. 2). According to Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith (2002, p. 5), ‘collective memory’ involves a dynamic negotiation of various aspects of recalling the past in the present. As a cultural tool for transmitting “social and cultural values, meanings and understandings about both the past and present” (Smith 2012, p. 2), ‘collective memory’ is built at the crossroads of memory policies, actions, and representations of various agents contributing to identity building. While being “a multi-layered performance” (Smith 2006, pp. 3-4) shaped by competing agencies, influences and interests, the cultural process is framed by a dominant discourse³ that “generates institutional positions” (Smith 2006, p. 299). It also regulates “particular historical and cultural narratives” (Smith 2012, p. 3). Being officially sanctioned, it “legitimizes certain experiences and identities” (Smith 2006, p. 299). It produces meaning and knowledge in society, thus shaping “social relations and identities” (Smith 2012, p. 3). ‘Collective memory’ also functions as “a political asset in negotiating governance” (Kuutma 2013, p. 28). As power interests are at stake, it follows that the processes of memory-making are not consensual, nor passive or neutral. On the contrary, being relevant for identity construction, these processes are “actively and continually recreated and negotiated”

³ Referring to heritage, Laurajane Smith’s (2006) termed it as “the authorised heritage discourse” (AHD).

(Smith 2012, p. 2-3) in order to correspond to “the social, cultural and political needs and aspirations of the present” (Smith 2012, p. 2-3). Being subject to negotiation among various agents concerned with expressing identity, they entail “choices of inclusion” and exclusion (Kuutma 2013, p. 26).

Subsequent to these theoretical conceptualisations, the above-mentioned research questions will be examined by looking at memory production in contemporary Romania from the perspective of actor-network theory (Latour 2005). The study delves into the stakes of taking position on the issue of the Holocaust. In referring to memory-work as a mechanism involving various values, understandings, and sources of agency, the analysis is mainly concerned with relationships developing between various stakeholders involved in memory-work (Catrina 2016). These agents include official representatives of the state, elites and state-sponsored institutions, but also individuals, groups, and professional organisations representing civil society. In addition to authorised agents entitled to transmit official statements regarding Romania’s recent difficult pasts, to orchestrate the processes of institutionalising public memory, and to assure its internalisation into contemporary public consciousness, a range of social agents take certain positions on these issues. Therefore, the politics of memory adopted by the Romanian state are analysed in conjunction with individuals’ social attitudes and perceptions of the country’s traumatic pasts. In doing so, our endeavour is to describe negotiations, partnerships, or tensions among official agents concerned with memory-work and individuals representing civil society as a space for collective action around shared interests, purposes, and values.

The analysis of the modalities by which Holocaust memory is being produced and circulated in the Romanian public space (including official statements, parliamentary debates, governmental proposals and regulations, and concrete actions of memorialisation) will inform our inquiry into the setting-up of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust. Because of its feature of ‘locus memoriae’, this museum would have the potential to locate within the Romanian mnemonic landscape the official perspective on the genocide that occurred during the Second World War, in addition to showcasing, both locally and internationally, Jews’ contribution to the evolution and modernisation of the Romanian society throughout history. More precisely, the museum, as a repository of socially constructed and “collected memory” (Young 1993, p. 6) would allow establishing an indexical relationship with the knowledge and memory of the Second World War and of the Shoah. Beyond the particular ideological interpretations this museum could prompt in the contemporary Romanian socio-political

context, it would be conceived to provide not only state-endorsed representations of the Romanians' traumatic past, but also "a sense of shared values and ideals" (Young 1993, p. 6) and further common grounds for identification. As a point of reference in the memorial landscape and an instrument for consolidating national identity, such a memorial museum would provide channels "to share socially constructed assumptions and values that organize memory into roughly similar patterns" (Young 1993, pp. XI-XII). Its purposefully directed production aimed at a large audience would be tantamount to a medium that would assert responsibility for the past, bring about civic transformation, and contribute to the fight against racism in the contemporary Romanian society.

By discussing attitudes related to the foundation of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust, our chapter raises important questions about how memory operates at the level of mainstream society. In other words, this museum might be instrumental in articulating not only the state's *modus operandi* to inculcate its version of the past, but also individuals' practices of appropriating and circulating perceptions about how they remember the past, thus building their own identity strategies, which do not necessarily correspond to official frameworks of interpretation. The study also focuses on the extent to which the museum, as an officially designated channel of historical knowledge, activates cognitive and affective dimensions of the human capacity to engage with memory-work.

In this context, we argue that the processes of publicly acknowledging the genocide in Romania as a moral responsibility toward producing common identity references and reinforcing the setting up of official memory through representation allow for a conflicting relationship among agents across time. The underlying argument is that state-sanctioned historical narratives are challenged by social actions aimed at instilling a strong sense of nationalist feelings in contemporary Romanian society, which destabilise the process of building shared representations of the national suffering and losses inflicted by Nazism.

From a methodological standpoint, we first identify the key agents in the public production of historical narratives. Then, we analyse official statements, parliamentary debates, governmental proposals and regulations in an attempt to diachronically depict the layouts of the process of institutionalising and managing memory by state regulatory authorities. This section of the chapter is a comprehensive study of state-sponsored developments in national memory corresponding to various socio-economic and political circumstances in post-1989 Romania. Secondly, we focus on agency of the Romanian government in the erection of this memorial

marker, whose setting-up would allow for a connectedness of mainstream society with its difficult past. In order to identify arguments that animate public debates on historical memory, the core of this section resides with the analysis of state representatives' statements and their press communiqués on this issue. These will be compared to (re)actions of the ethno-national elites and civil society representatives, including their online messages and public discourses driven by their acts of participation in memory production. The comparative framework of the power of language and agency within the Romanian memory arena is necessary to indicate ideological interpretations of the Holocaust, and associated issues.

Our research is structured as follows: it first showcases the manner in which the Romanian society has dealt with its traumatic past and the genocide that took place in Romanian territories during the Second World War in the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution. We explore both the state-sanctioned politics of memory and some of the alternative memory narratives in an endeavour to disclose how 'historical consciousness' and 'moral accountability' intertwine in our contemporary society. At this stage, our analysis will be informed by official speeches and actions relevant to the issue of founding the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania. At the same time, considering national identity as a co-construction of shared memories, we take into account grassroots participation in this process in an attempt to divulge the stakes of discursively appropriating traumatic memories of the Second World War. Therefore, the second part of the study examines the ways in which the official and popular standpoints on the issue of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania interrelate.

I. Romania's reckoning with its traumatic past in convergence with democratic values

Interplay of the national historical controversies over the twentieth century with xenophobic accounts

In Romania, the ways in which the nation-building process functioned across centuries impacted on the re-establishment of common standards for making moral and ethical judgments during the post-communist period, and on establishing commonly shared narratives of major historical events. The communist state reproduced an ethno-national discourse and practiced a monopoly to shape collective past. The perpetuation of the nation's origin myths and the emphasis on traditional and exemplary historical narratives imprinted the collective imaginary with

ethnocentric identity outlooks. To anchor the image of the state in an eternal essence, a perspective invented in the 1850s and perpetuated across time, was a manner to provide a political message resonant with communist ideology. The essentialist-nationalist perspective was exploited by communist political elites with the purpose to forge a unitary national identity and a sense of nationhood. Yet, reducing nationhood to an ethnocentric axis of interpretation allowed emerging distorted versions of the past and sharing inaccurate mnemonic narratives. Moreover, longstanding and deeply ingrained national mythologies, endorsed by the communist state apparatus, induced a national amnesia in what regards other minorities living in Romania. In addition to the distortion of the historical facts and “the ethnicization of memory” (Stan and Tismăneanu 2015, p. 31), state-centric nationhood left room for “mnemonic myopia” (Bărbulescu 2018) regarding past injustices. Yet, in order to align with democratic values, both the memory of Holocaust and Gulag had to be approached, and the Romanian authorities’ accountability for traumas of the twentieth century assessed. It follows that, in addition to “evaluating controversial elements of history” (Cohen 1999, p. 21), the post-communist ideological elites had to cope with assessing “the wrongs of the communist and fascist pasts” (Cohen 1999, p. 21). In the post-communist period, the challenge was thus to tackle the hegemonic manner of presenting Romania’s own national history in order to phase out the truth about its past. The political parties that ruled the country after December 1989 had to grapple with Romania’s national history constructed on distorted history and selective memory, in addition to “the development of state policy and governance aimed at managing the transition” (Florian 2018, p. XVI), which was their main objective at that moment.

Examining the “legacy of two totalitarianisms” ten years after the fall of the Berlin wall, Cohen (1999, p. 1) notes that “[r]eferences to the past resurface like debris, with little apparent meaning, as these societies remain confused about the most important moments of their history”. In other words, following the overthrow of the communism in Eastern Europe, the traumatic events of the Holocaust had little relevance for these countries dealing with challenges of political, economic and social change. Thus, during the first years of transition, they seemed to be unworthy of collective remembrance. The lack of interest in such unprecedented chapter in the world history is attributable to the extent to which representatives are willing to approach the Holocaust with all its painful and uncomfortable aspects. As official stances and policies influence the general perception, it follows that engaging with the Holocaust in public space serves to setting

the remembrance of the past, to bringing about social and cultural changes as well.

In his study regarding the post-1989 political, cultural, and social developments in the immediate period marked by the transition to democracy in Eastern European countries, Cohen (1999, p. 45) identifies two intertwined types of nation-building processes which affect one another and impact on the type of post-communist elites: “One represented continuity with pre-communist nation-building and the ideological cleavages of the past. The other, a Leninist nation-building process, produced a mass-elite, without historical consciousness”. In this vein, Cohen (1999, p. 46) proposes “a closer look at aspects having returned from the past once Communist party control was lifted, and at how communism combined with national trajectories (...) to produce the types of political grouping we can observe in communism’s aftermath”. Ulf Brunnbauer (2012, p. 495) highlights “the complexities of the collective memory of communism, which floats between attempts to come to terms with communist crimes on the one hand and idealisations of state socialism on the other”. Referring to the same issue, Ulf Brunnbauer (2012, p. 495) quotes Svetlana Boym when he talks about the significance of “nostalgic memories of communism”, a topic with “great heuristic value”.

In the aftermath of communism, in Romania, the transition from a totalitarian to a democratic regime followed a path similar to those of other Eastern European countries: nostalgic feelings re-surfaced and were accompanied by the re-emergence in the ideological discourse of nationalism, supported by themes such as origins and historical continuity. In this regard, István Horváth (2002, p. 24) states that “the FSN leadership relied on two main strategic elements to establish its power base: the absorption of a part of the former communist elite and the use of ethno-nationalism as the main binding ideology within the new elite and the broader population.” Not only was nationalism a continuation of Ceaușescu’s tradition, but, as Gallagher (1992, p. 570) notes, to follow the nationalist path was a manner to “fill the political vacuum left by the collapse of Communism”.

Referring specifically to the post-communist Romanian context, Raul Cârstocea (2014, p. 24) argues that the resurgence of nationalism was “partly due to the valorisation of the interwar period as a ‘golden age’ of Romanian history (brutally interrupted by the instauration of communism) and partly by the continuation into the post-communist period of the nationalist line of Ceaușescu”. Evoking the distinction made by Michael Shafir “between organisations of ‘radical return’ and ‘radical continuity’”, the researcher considers that “although the two positions share a strong

nationalist outlook, the distinctions between them account for the different manifestations of exclusionary nationalism – and implicitly also anti-Semitism – in contemporary Romania” (Cârstocea 2014, p. 24). In Horváth’s view (2002), nationalism was activated in the psychological context created by the Hungarian minority’s claims and activities to re-establish the Hungarian-language educational system, which entailed on “old-new amalgamation of (post)-totalitarian forces with ethno-nationalist ideology” (Horváth 2002, p. 24). Unquestionably, the issue of inter-ethnic relations came to the forefront in the 1990s, especially because there were right claims associated with minority rights. However, it was under international pressure and because of the fact that Romania had to meet the Copenhagen criteria in order to be eligible to join the European Union that an official recognition of the multi-ethnic structure and identity of the Romanian society occurred. This was an important concern for the new regime installed following the 1989 Revolution. At the beginning of the 1990s, Romania joined the General Assembly of the United Nations concerning minorities, which adopted the “Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities” on 18 December 1992. This was followed by the decision to celebrate the “Day of National Minorities” on December 18, established by the Government Decision no. 881 / 9 December 1998 published in M.O. 478 / 14 December 1998 and first celebrated in 1998. Subsequent to the official recognition of Romania’s national minorities, the Hungarian minority obtained some rights, while the Roma people, whose status as a national minority was also re-established in the 1990s, following the denial of their ethnic identity by the communist state, which had imposed “assimilationist” policies (Grigore 2007, p. 28) and egalitarian directives passed under the communist regime that left no room for ethnic diversity.

Identified as ‘a social problem’, the Roma are subjected to special treatment by the Romanian welfare state. Their “social inclusion” is at the core of the Romanian political agenda since February 1997, when the Romanian Government founded the Department for the Protection of National Minorities (DPNM), within which the National Office for Roma (NOR), a governmental department, was charged with “Roma issues” in Romania. Starting with February 2005, NOR’s responsibilities have been taken over by the National Agency for Roma (NAR). The setting up of NAR by the Romanian government was caused by the problem of social exclusion, which came to the fore of the political concerns. The NAR was charged with “developing integrated and sustainable approaches towards Roma”, and “promoting together with institutions and non-governmental organisations, actions, projects and sectoral programs in order to improve

the situation of Roma” (NAR no date). Mariea Ionescu and Sorin Cace (2006, pp. 21-24) identified three stages in the evolution of the interests of social actors involved with Roma issues during the period 1990-2005, as follows: (1) 1990-1995, *period of “unstructured research”* corresponds to the identification of needs and means of intervention given that Romanian researchers drew attention to “the polarization of social and economic status among large segments of Roma population and the majority population”, as well as “the negative perspectives on the maintenance of the *status quo*”; (2) 1995-2001, *period of “comprehension of responsibilities”* both on the part of public institutions and civil society, although applied actions of social intervention have been mostly carried out by foreign organisations or institutions, such as the Foundation for an Open Society, the Matra program of the Ministry of External Affairs of the Netherlands, and the European Union, rather than by the Romanian government; (3) 2001-2005, *period of “taking on responsibilities”*, which began with the “institutionalisation of the National Strategy to improve the situation of Roma in Romania” in April 2001. Later on, Government Decision No. 829/2002 on the approval of the Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion National Plan aimed at creating an active economic, social, and political society, both with high levels of collective and individual responsibility, and a socially cohesive community. Additionally, the establishment of the National Agency for Roma in 2004 corresponds to this period of “taking on responsibilities”.

Coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of social measures⁴ in various sectors with the aim of improving the situation of Roma people was one of the main responsibilities the Romanian government had to address as a precondition for Romania to be accepted as part of the EU and NATO structures which the country intended to join. For this reason, Raul Cârstocea (2014, p. 27) considers that “international conditionality has acted as the driving force stimulating the improvement of the legislation” regarding the ethnic minorities living in the country. Concomitantly with the few positive governmental undertakings on minority issues, in a context in which positive discrimination - directed toward the Hungarian minority in Romania, and also toward Roma people - was considered unjustified, and for this reason rejected by the Romanian majority, the Romanian public sphere had to deal with a rise of xenophobic

⁴ This topic has been developed in “Managing Roma People’s Social Inclusion through Social Housing Policies and Regulations. Cross-national Perspectives from Romania and Bulgaria”, a Research Report written by the author of this research paper for the project “Building and Implementing an Innovative Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program on Roma Issues” (2011-2013) at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration.

nationalism, supported by extremist political parties. We should note that after the 1989 Revolution, the immediate creation of the Romanian Hearth Union (Vatra Românească), a “self-proclaimed cultural organization” (Gallagher 2005, p. 78), gave birth eventually to two extreme right wing parties: PUNR (the Romanian National Unity Party) and PRM (the Greater Romania Party), led at that time by Corneliu Vadim Tudor. The frictions between the Hungarians and the ultranationalist political parties led also to an intensification of anti-Semitic statements, which became increasingly frequent and ever more extreme in the early post-communist period.

The embryonic stage of Holocaust memory in Romania

The emergence of Holocaust memory in Romania would develop at the beginning of the 2000s against the background of growing anti-Semitic, racist, and xenophobic discourses and actions throughout the 1990s, as a consequence of either the international reaction to the hesitant policy toward minorities and anti-Semitic and extremist manifestations in Romania, or the conditionality for accession into the EU and NATO structures. In an analysis of the anti-Semitic phenomenon in Romania in the first decade after 1989, Radu Ioanid (2001, pp. 813-831) scrupulously noted in chronological order all such manifestations, divulging a picture of the prevalent feelings in the Romanian public sphere. He also pointed out the main elements that contributed to the rise of anti-Semitism, a mechanism he linked to the rehabilitation of the Marshal Antonescu at the beginning of the 1990s. The interplay of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and Holocaust denial, with the rehabilitation of Romania’s wartime leader, Ion Antonescu, was an opinion also formulated by Mihai Chioveanu (2013), among others. The researcher emphasised that Marshal Antonescu, a “symbol of Romania’s dictatorial and xenophobic pre-communist past, and a war criminal for the democrats” and “the central historical figure of a complex and multi-facet nationalist and anti-communist mythology”, became a popular historical figure in the 1990s due to “his apologists who, after a leap into ‘a heroic past’ with its violent solutions, wanted to present and propose him as a model for the future” (Chioveanu 2013, 74).

Indeed, in June 1991, on the eve of the 45th anniversary of the execution of Marshal Antonescu, Petre Țurlea, a member of the parliamentary majority held at the time by the National Salvation Front (Frontul Salvării Naționale – FSN), proposed holding a moment of silence in the Romanian Parliament in the memory of Antonescu, due to the ‘services’ he had allegedly brought to the Romanian state (Țurlea 1998). Referring to Antonescu as “one of the great heroes of the Romanians”,

Țurlea (1998) recalled in the Parliamentary Debates of June 2, 1998 that he had begun to evoke the figure of Marshal Ion Antonescu in the Chamber of Deputies since 1991, on each beginning of June. Moreover, starting with 1993, once a year, he sent to the General Prosecutor's Office a request to initiate the appeal for annulment with regards to the decision of the 1946 communist law-court that condemned Antonescu for war crimes, a court sentence that "was against the whole Romanian people" (Țurlea 1998). According to him, the grounds for his demand would be based on archival documents attesting that the accusations against him would not have had a real basis. Țurlea (1998) concluded that "[this] samavolnic sentence must be annulled", because "the marshal not only cannot be accused of treason of Romania, but he was its saviour while the historical parties preferred not to get involved."

Eight years later, under the parliamentary majority of the coalition established by the Romanian Democratic Convention (Convenția Democrată Română – CDR), the Social Democratic Union (Uniunea Social-Democrată – USD) and the The Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România – UDMR), Ion Moisin, a senator from the National Peasant Christian Democratic Party (Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin-Democrat – PNȚCD) would propose in the Upper Chamber of Parliament to approve a resolution presenting Antonescu as "the great Romanian patriot, who fought for his country to his death" (Final Report 2004, p. 22). Basically, throughout the 1990s, Antonescu was valorised in the public space, statues and busts of him were erected, his name was assigned to several streets or squares, several institutional leaders set up radical right organisations and parties that adopted a radical discourse termed by Cârstocea (2014, p. 27) as "reminiscent of interwar fascism", and government officials frequently expressed negative and revisionist positions.

The popularity of the Ion Antonescu cult is explained by the fact that in the early 1990s there was no (widespread) knowledge of Romania's role in the Holocaust among Romanians, be they politicians, intellectuals, or ordinary people. It was against the background of a lack of knowledge and of overt ignorance from the part of the political leaders to deal with this issue that some extremist nationalist politicians and intellectuals campaigned for the rehabilitation of the Marshal Antonescu. This political manoeuvre, also embraced by public opinion, was useful for at least three reasons, explained by Raul Cârstocea (2014, pp. 25-26) as follows:

"as an ideological tool directed against ethnic minorities in Romania (particularly Jews, Hungarians and Roma), a feature which was a direct continuation of Ceaușescu's approach to the matter; as a means to divert public attention from the outstanding

issues of government corruption, as well as from the communist past of many of its members; and, finally but perhaps most importantly, as a means to undermine the credibility of King Michael of Romania, who, while not having any political aspirations of his own, made clear his opposition to the ruling coalition of 1992-1996⁵ (...) and his support for the opposition, consisting mainly of the two historical democratic parties in Romania, the National Liberal Party and the National Peasant Party.”

In Chioveanu’s view, “any attempt to rehabilitate Antonescu and his regime” indicated the survival in the Romanian society of “the xenophobic, anti-Semitic, nationalist, dictatorial and quasi-fascist, eliminationist Past” (Chioveanu 2013, p. 74). Such attitudes were supported by “Romania’s ‘unwilling politicians’ and ‘undecided intellectuals’ who were perceived from outside, and described from within, indiscriminately, as a monolithic group caught up in a common anti-liberal project including, among other things, the recovery and commemoration of Romania’s ‘fascist past’” (Chioveanu 2013, p. 75). Chioveanu added that “Antonescu’s apologists and the ‘champions’ of Iron Guard, and outstanding intellectuals who insisted on the urgency of a prioritized in their view critical exam of the communist traumatic past as more representative for the deep moral crisis faced by post-communist Romania were often placed under the same stigmatizing ‘banner’.” (Chioveanu 2013, p. 75) In his appraisal, such prevalent attitudes within the Romanian society “contributed to an increased confusion and uphold suspicion towards different approaches of the recent past.” (Chioveanu 2013, p. 75)

This perspective on Antonescu’s portrayal as a national hero would change toward the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s. The re-evaluation of his anti-Semitic politics was due to official reactions to this issue from outside the country. The 2000s was the period when Romania initiated its accession process to NATO and the European Union, which was to be approved at the NATO’s Prague Summit in November 2002. Quoting Rabbi Andrew Baker, the American Jewish Committee’s director for international Jewish affairs, the author of the press article “Better late than never, Romania moves to confront Holocaust past” (JTA 2003) noted that “[c]onfronting the Holocaust-era past figured prominently in the NATO accession discussions, certainly in the bilateral exchanges with the U.S.”.

⁵ According to Cârstocea (2014, pp. 25-26), the 1992-1996 coalition included the two most significant formations of ‘radical continuity’, the Greater Romania Party (PRM) and the Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR), alongside one of the ‘successor parties’ of the Romanian Communist Party, the Party of Social Democracy of Romania (Partidul Democrației Sociale din România – PDSR).

Thoroughly analysing this mechanism, Geissbühler (2012, p. 130) concludes that this shift was brought about by “an increase in international pressure on the government to curb anti-Semitism and to take a closer look at Romania’s Fascist past and its involvement in the Holocaust”.

Although knowledge regarding the realities of the Holocaust remained very low among the general population, the legislative and institutional level indicated at this time certain signs of progress. Thus, important steps were taken at the legislative level in 2002, when the “Emergency Ordinance no. 31 of 13 March 2002 regarding the prohibition of fascist, legionary, racist or xenophobic organisations, symbols and actions and of promoting the cult of persons guilty of committing genocide offenses against humanity and war crimes” was promulgated in order to combat anti-Semitism. At the same time, during the early 2000s, various institutional archives in Romania were made available to researchers. Several collaboration agreements were established between the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and: (1) the National Archives of Romania (18 July 1998), (2) the Ministry of Interior Affairs (12 October 2000), and (3) the Ministry of National Defence (18 September 2002), in order to determine the historical truth. The archives of these institutions were opened to the public with the purpose of studying the documents related to the Holocaust, from the period following the establishment of the Nazi regime in Germany until the institutionalisation of the communist regime in Romania (1933-1948).

National history and Holocaust education

To understand the prime importance of democratic values, it is imperative to learn about the history of anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and the genocide of European Jews. Educational strategies nationally adopted could be a powerful tool for social transformation in transitional period. Holocaust education, in particular, could serve as a catalyst to sensitise the wider society to current issues and as a prism in addressing manifestations of anti-Semitism and xenophobia. As Monique Eckmann (2010, p. 13) put it, “HE [Holocaust Education] constitutes a motivation and a starting point for an interest in HR [Human Rights], as a tool for awareness-building”. Countering the common misinterpretation that “Holocaust education is above all a duty of memory”, Eckmann asserted that it is “first and foremost a duty of history: the duty to transmit and to teach and learn the history” (Eckmann 2010, p.10). Consequently, the knowledge of the history is an imperative. In her view, the educational system must integrate four lines of action:

“First, it is important to learn the historical facts, and know about the process leading to the Holocaust. Second, attention must be paid not only to what happened during the era of National Socialism, but also to what happened afterwards, to the history of memory, and to the diversity of historical narratives. Third, it is important to address current violations of HR, especially those occurring in our own society and in our own national contexts. Finally, we must challenge and deconstruct national myths about this history that are present in our own countries, and reflect on how to come to terms with each country’s own past.” (Eckmann 2010, pp. 15-16)

In Romania, major deficiencies in public knowledge and understanding regarding the Jewish history were related to both the way political elites and intellectuals dealt with the Holocaust and the ideological work embodied within the National Curriculum. Being previously a circumvented topic, the Holocaust was not incorporated in textbooks from the communist period. As Romania’s involvement in the Holocaust was misrepresented, it follows that textbooks were flawed. As long as the textbooks did not present reliable information about what happened in the first half of the twentieth century, the understanding of the Holocaust was partial and biased. Thus, the content of the educational curricula during the communist period explains the lack of a collectively shared organising conceptual framework on the Holocaust. To be able to make judgments about the past, Romania’s citizens had to know the truth about the genocide in their country. As Romanian politics moved toward democracy, there was a need for assessing historical facts in convergence with democratic values and for their incorporation in textbooks. Therefore, the emergence of Holocaust knowledge, memory and consciousness in post-communist Romania has corresponded to the correction of the misperception and myths regarding the Second World War. Yet, the Romanian educational system reforms after 1989, as well as their translation into educational practices, would be slow and laborious, and still underway.

Relevant research on the post-1989 trends in post-communist Romanian historiography captures the evolution of historical writing corresponding to the on-going period of transition to democracy. Cristina Petrescu and Dragoş Petrescu (2007, pp. 312-313) identified three major turns in the evolution of history as a discipline: (1) the “*de-ideologizing turn* emerged immediately after the 1989 revolution (...) supported by those historians who did not consent the idea of ‘national’ history promoted by the Communist regime”, (2) the “*de-mythologizing turn* emerged in the mid-

1990s” period during which some historians advocated for a reassessment of communist history writing, and (3) the “*re-professionalizing turn* emerged in the late 1990s”. Referring to the Decision no. 3001/1999 of the Romanian Ministry of Education which brought about a change in the national curriculum, Ana Bărbulescu (2018, p. 31) noted in a research paper that after December 1989 “another ten years had to pass before Holocaust related issues were included in the school curricula for contemporary and Romanian history”. Yet, the use of alternative textbooks in the Romanian educational system has consequences on the content of lessons. Ana Bărbulescu (2018) has disclosed “six different ways of recounting the events”, “ranging from a complete lack of information on the Holocaust (...) to a thorough reconstruction of the historical events”. Between the two extremes, the researcher has identified “several models that fail to reconstruct the historical events, either by omitting important information (...) or by choosing to emphasise particular decisions of the Romanian authorities while ignoring others” (Bărbulescu 2018, p. 8). Reflecting on “the (professional) historians’ role in the rewriting of the past” (Brunnbauer 2012, p. 495), Cristina Petrescu and Dragoş Petrescu (2007, p. 313) state that the attempts “to structurally change the discipline from within after decades of cultural isolation under Ceauşescu and adapt, both theoretically and methodologically, to the academic developments that occurred in various Western historiographies after WWII” were “timid and slow”, as no spectacular changes occurred during the period 1990-2004. However, the researchers note some thematic changes driven by the reorientation of the students’ interest toward the history of Romania after the First World War. In their view, the “new” history is “a complex mixture of ‘new’ and not so new, sometimes quite ‘old’, trends in Western historical writing” (Petrescu and Petrescu 2007, p. 372).

The lack of standardised educational policies and pedagogies which provide collectively shared organising conceptual frameworks negatively influenced the internalisation of the events of the Holocaust at the level of society at large. Furthermore, the lack of accurate interpretive frameworks at the level of elites slowed down the history-writing process and the development of public ideology. It follows that the elucidation of controversies over national history and the institutionalisation of the memory concerning Romania’s traumatic pasts was necessary for the readjustment of a post-communist society to democracy, being a momentous step toward coming to terms with its historical atrocities.

Domesticating the Holocaust: the role of festivism in constructing an understanding of the past

Attempting to establish a direct connection with the Jewish past, in 2002 President Ion Iliescu declared Elie Wiesel's pre-war childhood home⁶ in Sighetu Marmatei – a town situated in Maramureş County in north-western Romania, once with a vibrant Jewish community during the interwar period – a historical monument and transformed it into a museum⁷. In an attempt to attract public attention and construct a certain understanding of the past, the local slaughter of Jews was depicted in culturally gripping accounts. This explains why the “Elie Wiesel” Memorial House located on Dragoş Vodă Street, in the centre of the city, in the former Jewish quarter of Sighet, was aestheticized. Elie Wiesel's childhood home is Jewish due to, or because of the story it incorporates. In this house, Elie Wiesel had spent his childhood up until May 1944, when he was deported together with his family from the ghetto situated in down-town Sighetu Marmatei to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The house therefore relates to the life stories of the 2,000 Jewish survivors out of the 15,000 Jews deported from Sighet to Auschwitz in the spring of 1944, by the Hungarian authorities who had occupied the northern half of Transylvania on 30 August 1940. The local Jewish (hi)story is thus communicated through this place-based memorial museum. In addition to recalling the past, as a proof of originally being “a true Jewish home”, “a mezuzah was installed on the doorpost” (Ghiţă 2016). The aim of creating this memory site is “to see more tolerance towards minorities and towards each other”, therefore to change perceptions about Romania's minorities, as Elie Wiesel declared in an exclusive interview given to Andreea Ghiţă from TVR Cluj, dealing with his 1995 and 2002 visits to Sighet.

⁶ Adjacent to the garden in Wiesel's childhood home, a Holocaust Cellar Education Centre was inaugurated later on, in 2014 (The “Elie Wiesel” Foundation no date). The opening ceremony organised to mark 70 years since the deportation of the last Jews of Northern Transylvania to Auschwitz was sponsored jointly by the Government of Romania, the City of Sighet, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Romanian Jewish Federation, the “Caritatea” Foundation and “Limmud” Former Soviet Union (FSU) (Dvorin 2014).

⁷ Wiesel's house was restored by the Romanian Government, following the requests of the Maramureş Museum in Sighetu Marmatei and of the Romanian Cultural Foundation. Towards the end of 2000, the first amount of money necessary to consolidate the house was allocated to the local authorities through a Government Decision, and during the following year substantial funds were obtained with the support of the Romanian Presidency and the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs.

The inauguration of the “Elie Wiesel” Memorial House – The Museum of the Jewish Culture in Maramureş, on 29 July 2002, was made in the presence of Elie Wiesel, who “paid a brief visit” (Sighet City Hall no date) to Romania. A local festival with traditional music was organised on this occasion, where survivors of the Holocaust were welcomed by the inhabitants of Sighetu Marmăţiei. Andreea Ghiţă (2016) recounted in her reportage for the “Salom” show that “the entire city of Sighet was in the frenzy of waiting for the one who helped place Sighet in the contemporary history of mankind”. She also described “the extraordinary emotional load” for the people of Sighet, and the people of Maramureş overall, due to “the presence of the professor, writer, profound philosopher Elie Wiesel in Sighet [who brought] a painful past close to us”. Andreea Ghiţă (2016) described the event as “[a] day full of emotions spilled over into the rush of song and dance, bringing a smile on everyone’s face”. The festivism⁸ of this event that obviously referred to a tragic moment both in local and in national history clearly showed the need to ‘domesticate’ the issue of the Holocaust. Through this event, marked by a high degree of participation, where festivism played an important role, the remembrance of past events was encouraged, as well as the creation of an empathetic relationship with the (local) Jewish victims of the Holocaust. “It is important to recognize the past and to incorporate it, because it is part of our lives, of our history to understand and to avoid what caused malice, hardships and sufferings to mankind”, added Andreea Ghiţă (2016) in her above-mentioned news coverage.

On the occasion of the inauguration of the museum, Wiesel was decorated with the Order of the Star of Romania in the rank of High Officer (*Ordinul Steaua României în grad de Mare Ofiţer*), the highest Romanian civilian distinction. Previously, he had also received⁹ honorary membership of the Romanian Academy, during the general meeting of June 6, 2001, “as a tribute to the eminent spiritual and moral work dedicated to contemporary humanity and in recognition of cherishing the Romanian people, its traditions and culture” (Romanian Academy 2002). On this occasion, Elie Wiesel received the academic honours (*însemnele academice*) due to having made his name known “on the Romanian territory, as in the whole world”, and to managing “to transform his life into a destiny, or, more precisely, to make of his life a destiny” (Romanian Academy 2002). Elie Wiesel had previously returned to Sighet in 1964. Re-experiencing his 1944 trauma, he did not want to return to his hometown anymore after that. However, he did

⁸ However, when relating to the significance of the museum, one should note that the festive character of the event was (consciously or not) exaggerated.

⁹ During the general meeting of the Romanian Academy of 6 June 2001.

eventually return on 25 July 1995, accompanied by an international filmmaking team, with the intention of producing a documentary about the place where he was born and had grown up. Thinking of his father's visit to Sighet, Elisha Wiesel (2019) remembers the extent to which Elie Wiesel's psychological well-being was affected: "When I was in Sighet with my father, 25 years ago, he experienced powerfully harmful feelings. He was very vulnerable at that time. He underwent tragic moments" (Şiman 2019). In spite of the challenging psychological complexities of recalling his own family's tragic past when visiting this place filled with unforgettable personal memories, Elie Wiesel "never forgot Sighet. Before he died, he had dreamed about walking through the park in Sighet. He was smiling in his sleep. When he woke up, he was surprised at how real his dream seemed to be. He really wanted to pay again a visit to Sighet. Unfortunately, he couldn't do it anymore" (Şiman 2019). Elisha Wiesel added in his address on 21 May 2019, on the occasion of the 75th commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust organised by the "Tarbut" Foundation, Sighet City Hall, the Maramureş Museum, and the Sighet Cultural Center, that in this place "the ghosts of the past want to be heard, they want to be taken into account" (Şiman 2019). The fact that this place related to historical trauma is 'voiced' means that contemporary legacies must be addressed and acknowledged. Convinced about the power and potential of this memory place to become a "site of conscience"¹⁰ which provides a framework for addressing disputed historical questions related to the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel advocated for memorialisation as a key component of engaging with the past. For this reason, Wiesel returned, fifty years after the brutal interruption of his adolescence, to his hometown "to walk the painful road of remembrance" (Frodon 2010 [2007], p. 272). At that time, he was welcomed by local representatives, Ivan Truţer, Executive Secretary of the Council of National Minorities (1993-1997), and Decebal-Traian Remeş, Vice-president, then President (1992-1995) of the Maramureş County Council, as well as other personalities of the political, public, and cultural life in Romania. In Sighetu Marmatei, Elie Wiesel visited the synagogue, the Jewish community and, obviously, his family home, which unfortunately was in a precarious state. Dawn M. Barclift (1996) asserted that the result of Wiesel's visit was a "documentary chronicling Elie Wiesel's adolescence and the story of his sufferings". Ivan Truţer, a local representative, noted that Elie Wiesel was "impressed by the local inhabitants' interest for his visit and the warm welcome. He also promised that he would return to Romania with his family, to show them the places where he grew up as a child and from where

¹⁰ These are "places of memory that take deliberate steps both to remember the past and open public dialogue about confronting contemporary legacies" (Brett et al. 2007, p. 7).

he was deported. He returned in 2002, when the Elie Wiesel Memorial House was already settled and accepted the invitation of the President of Romania to chair the Holocaust International Commission in Romania, known as the “Elie Wiesel Presidential Commission” (Truțer 2016).

The “Elie Wiesel” Presidential Commission – a momentous stage in the process of acknowledging responsibility for the genocide within the Romanian territories

On 25 July 2003, President Ion Iliescu made a controversial statement in an interview he gave to Grig Davidovitz for the Israeli daily newspaper *Ha'aretz*, “in which he appeared to call into question the uniqueness of the Holocaust” (JTA 2003). His attempts to deflect the Holocaust and to minimise the genocide within the Romanian territories were followed by letters of repentance sent by Ion Iliescu and his prime minister to their Israeli counterparts. In order to minimise the effects of his reprehensible statement, President Ion Iliescu decided to establish a committee of international historians to fully investigate Romania’s role in the Holocaust, an issue “far from being fully elucidated”, as he declared during an official address on October 22, 2003. The President publicly explained that “disputes not so much between historians, but especially between politicians and opinion-makers on this topic” (Iliescu 2003) called for the setting up of an investigative Holocaust Commission. Its declared objective was to analyse “in depth and with professionalism the consequences of the Holocaust in Romania”, in order to “[establish] historical truth and assuming it” (Iliescu 2003). To support his undertaking, the President made references to the “The final statement adopted by the Stockholm International Holocaust Forum in January 2000”, in which all the participant states “expressed their commitment to fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, to take measures so that the future generations understand and are aware of the Holocaust’s causes and of its consequences” (Iliescu 2003). In his view, these arguments are “preconditions essential for reconciliation between nations, contributing to the development of the sense of responsibility of each citizen, the assurance of human rights, as they are formulated in the international documents to which our country has adhered” (Iliescu 2003). Despite these arguments to justify “the establishment of a historical commission to investigate the Holocaust in Romania”, President Iliescu’s undertaking was interpreted by the mass-media as “part of a belated effort by the government to clean up its act before entering NATO” (JTA 2003). Knowledge of history was a compulsory condition to comply with before entering the EU and NATO

structures. This was the lever that induced the shift from the formal condemnation of the Holocaust to its incipient institutionalisation.

Composed of renowned Romanian, Jewish, and American specialists, including Jean Ancel, Radu Ioanid, Andrei Pippidi, Michael Shafir, Raphael Vago, Leon Volovici, Alexandru Florian, and Lya Benjamin, the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania¹¹ was “conceived as an independent research organism, outside of any sphere of influence and political decisions” (Final Report 2004, p. 1). Piloted by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, honorary member of the Romanian Academy, and Vice-Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Professor Elie Wiesel, and the “fruit of close cooperation between the Romanian government, Jewish organisations and Holocaust research and memorial centers in Israel and the United States” (JTA 2003), the “Elie Wiesel” Commission revealed the Jewish and Roma people’s dreadful history on the Romanian territories and the Antonescu regime’s crimes against them. Relying on primary sources for research, the Commission wrote a detailed report on the destruction of Romanian Jewry and Roma during the Second World War, which was handed to the President of Romania on 11 November 2004. Despite the continued silence on the terrible past of these ethnic groups during the Second World War, the international panel led by Elie Wiesel estimated that between 280,000 and 380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews perished from territories under Romanian administration (Final Report 2004, pp. 179, 382). While the exact number of victims cannot be fully grasped, the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania described the “human carnage” in its *Final Report* (2004, p. 382) as follows: “Between 45,000 and 60,000 Jews were killed in Bessarabia and Bukovina by Romanian and German troops in 1941. Between 105,000 and 120,000 deported Romanian Jews died as a result of the expulsions to Transnistria. In Transnistria between 115,000 and 180,000 indigenous Jews were killed, especially in Odessa and the counties of Golta and Berezovka. At least 15,000 Jews from the *Regat* were murdered in the Iași pogrom and as a result of other anti-Jewish measures. Approximately 132,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz in May-June 1944 from Hungarian-ruled Northern Transylvania”.

The “Elie Wiesel” Presidential Commission also disclosed that “[t]he deportation of Roma to Transnistria, from its conception to its implementation, was altogether the work of the Antonescu government” (Final Report 2004, p. 223) and it resulted in the death of 11,000 Roma.

¹¹ After the budget of the Commission was established by the Government Decision no. 227/20 February 2004, its membership was also decided by Government Decision no. 672/5 May 2004.

Research showed that politicians started to see the Roma as ‘a problem’ during the Antonescu regime. Treated more as a social category (and registered in censuses as a separate ethnic group with their own language), “Romanian authorities never actively treated the Roma as a national minority per se; therefore, legislation concerning minorities was never applicable to them. Moreover, interwar Romanian nationalism was not accompanied by anti-Roma manifestations, and the Romanization policies of the 1938 Goga government and the Royal Dictatorship did not pertain to the Roma” (Final Report 2004, pp. 223-225). According to the *Final Report* (2004, p. 225), “the Legionary movement was the first to consider adopting a racial policy toward the Roma”. Quoting *Țiganiii din România. Monografie etnografică* (The Gypsies in Romania. Ethnographic Monograph), published by Ion Chelcea in 1944, and *Procesul mării trădări naționale. Stenograma desbaterilor de la Tribunalul Poporului asupra Guvernului Antonescu* (The Trial of the Great National Treason. Minutes of the People’s Tribunal Proceedings Against the Antonescu Government), released in 1946, the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania concluded that “unlike in the case of Jews, anti-Roma policies were not rooted in the Romanian past, but rather in new political realities resulting from Marshal Antonescu’s entry into the political arena”, when he initiated “either their concentration in an isolated area of Romania, their deportation to Transnistria, or their sterilization” (Final Report 2004, p. 225). Additionally, the deportations of the Roma to Transnistria having occurred between May and September 1942 were part of the preoccupation of the Romanian government at that time of “[a]chieving ethnic homogeneity in Romania by transferring the minority out of the country and bringing in Romanians from neighboring countries” (Final Report 2004, p. 227). Although the exact number of Roma who died in Transnistria is not known, on the basis of the reports of the General Gendarmerie Sub-Inspectorate Odessa, the “Elie Wiesel” Commission concluded that out of the more than 25,000 Roma deported to Transnistria, approximately 11,000 died of hunger, cold, or disease and 14,000 survived (Final Report 2004, pp. 235-236).

After having for long downplayed Romania’s role in the Holocaust, in 2004 the Romanian government took on the responsibility for Antonescu’s involvement in the slaughter of Jews and Roma within the Romanian territories.¹² In Brunnbauer’s (2012, p. 494) view, “[t]he salience

¹² In the old kingdom of Romania, the responsibility for what happened with Jewish people belongs to the Antonescu regime, and was publicly accepted as such by the Romanian state, while in Northern Transylvania it was the Hungarian Horthy regime that destroyed the Romanian Jewry. Both were supported by the Nazi regime.

of memory politics was determined by the important role which control over the past plays for the legitimisation of political orders”. While it is broadly accepted that the process of coming to terms with the past relating to the Second World War is due to President Ion Iliescu, Cârstocea (2004, p. 27), quoting Shafir, stresses that “[d]uring his term in office (1996-2000), President Emil Constantinescu was the first one to acknowledge Romanian responsibility for the genocide perpetrated against the Jews, albeit qualifying his statement by insisting on the fact that Romania had also refused to take part in the Final Solution”.



Fig. 1

Therefore, after a half-century of amnesia, when the memory of the Holocaust was either silenced or “intentionally forgotten as part of the politics of identity” (Kidron 2012, p. 723) endorsed by the communist regime, Romania finally acknowledged in 2004 its role in anti-Jewish and anti-Roma violence during and after the Second World War. Moreover, since 2004, the date of 9 October, which marks the beginning of the deportations of Jews to Transnistria in 1941, was approved as the official Holocaust Memorial Day by Government Decision no. 672 / 5 May 2004, to be commemorated at a national level.¹³ At the institutional level, the work

¹³ On the basis of this decision, each year, on 9 October, Romanian authorities organise manifestations dedicated to the Holocaust, including conferences, seminars, book launches, shows, school contests, etc. The institutions involved in coordinating the activities on Holocaust Memorial Day are: the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of External Affairs, the National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania “Elie Wiesel”, and the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania (Ministry of External Affairs).

of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania was followed by concrete actions taken by the Romanian authorities, such as the setting up of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, a public institution with juridical personality, coordinated by the Prime Minister through the Prime Minister’s Cabinet (Governmental Decision no. 902/2005).

The genocide in Romania: from denial to resipiscence

The release of the *Final Report*, which revealed the genocide within the Romanian territories, an issue neglected or denied during the communist period and overshadowed for a decade and a half in the post-communist period, marked an important step in the process of the democratisation of public memory.

Following its release, it was expected that the Jewish past would be publicly embraced by the Romanian political class. However, the anti-Semitic slip-ups of several political elites and intellectuals revealed that the issue of the Holocaust was not fully internalised, not even at the level of political elites. Alongside the efforts of Jewish elites and few Romanian officials to make public the horrors of the Holocaust, more and more mainstream undertakings aimed at filling in the ‘blank spots’ in the Romanian historiography regarding the ghettoization and deportations of Jews and Roma during the Second World War indicated an effort on the part of Romanian society to deal with significant historical subjects. This major enterprise has taken various forms: from conferences and TV debates to private genealogy projects, the foundation of Holocaust memorials, the restoration of synagogues and other Jewish built heritage, and projects of heritage tourism. In trying to fill the gaps concerning the Jewish and Romani past, researchers started to collect an elided narrative revealing the painful wound. Not only did researchers show that Romania had downplayed its role in the Final Solution, but they also revealed instances of collaborationism inside Romanian society aimed at obliterating the Jewish and Roma populations. In the same vein, oral history testimonies collected by historians revealed first-hand facts relating to the killing of Jews in the so-called ‘death trains’, and identified the location of new mass graves. Forensic archaeology (and forensic anthropology) thus became an important instrument to explore crime scenes *in situ* and to disclose former camp locations or locate previously unknown mass graves.

At the local level, people were familiarised with the memory of Jewish history in their towns, generally due to second and third post-war generations who, interested in discovering their own roots through family

genealogy and Jewish heritage, became involved in preserving the past of their relatives, once residents in Romania (Catrina 2016). Private initiatives led to the restoration and preservation of Jewish heritage sites, until then excluded, ignored, stigmatised, or forgotten by local authorities and civic stakeholders. Jewish synagogues and cemeteries, heavily damaged even when situated in the middle of a town's urban fabric and "perceived as dark places with difficult memories" (Catrina 2016, p. 231) of a long gone civilisation, are often only in the care of the Jewish communities still residing in Romania. In most cases, their restoration is due to the efforts of descendants of Holocaust survivors living abroad. Grassroots initiatives driven mostly by private individuals, whose heritage-work was supported by various foundations or associations, mostly from abroad, contributed to the foundation of Holocaust memorials and monuments, to displaying exhibits or initiating other cultural projects, or making available educational resources regarding the Holocaust (Catrina 2016). Such a positive example is the foundation for the first time in Romania of the "Northern Transylvania Holocaust Memorial" in the town of Șimleu Silvaniei, inside an old synagogue built in 1883. The opening of the museum took place on 11 September 2005. The restoration of the dilapidated synagogue from Șimleu Silvaniei was initiated by Dr. Alex Hecht. This Jew born in Nușfălău, a village located 8 km from Șimleu Silvaniei, together with Adam Wapniak, founded the Jewish Architectural Heritage Foundation (*Fundația Moștenirii Arhitecturale Evreiești*) in New York. This foundation, supported by the Hebraica Association, has saved the synagogue from demolition and its replacement by a club. At the same time, the Jewish community has taken possession of a former Jewish boys' and girls' school which needed repairing. Both the synagogue, currently representing the region's first fully functioning Holocaust memorial commemorating the great loss of the Jewish life and culture that had been an integral part of this region, and the Jewish school became Holocaust educational centres with a special focus on the history of Jews in Northern Transylvania. Inside these heritage sites, video interviews with survivors and relics that were recovered from the site before the renovation of the synagogue are displayed.

From dealing with the past to remembrance

It should be noted that it was only in 2009 that the capital of the country witnessed the inauguration of a "National Memorial to the Victims of the Holocaust from Romania". Although initiated in 2005 by the Ministry of Culture and Cults, following the recommendations of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, as an expression of the state's

responsibility to recognise and accept the crimes committed during the Second World War against the Jewish and Roma communities, the Memorial erected in Bucharest was not completed until 8 October 2009 the day of the commemoration of the Holocaust in Romania (INSHR EW – The “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania “Inauguration” no date). Therefore, this Memorial was unveiled long after the aforementioned private initiatives of publicly memorialising the Jewish history in Romania. The memorial space includes a memorial monument, two installations with desecrated tombstones from the graveyards in Odessa and Bucharest, and five sculptures placed around the central memorial enclosure: the Memorial Column (*Coloana Memorială*), Via Dolorosa, the Wheel of Roma, the Star of David, and an Epitaph. Although not enough attention is given to the genocide of Roma people, for numerous reasons, including that the number of Roma murdered during the Holocaust in Romania is not comparable to that of the Jews, as contended by some Holocaust revisionists and deniers, or because Romani activists are not as vocal as the Jewish ones, to which we can add the prominence of some Jewish bearers of memory, renowned worldwide, or because of the prevailing anti-Roma feelings in the Romanian mainstream society, etc., one should note that the memorial is dedicated to all the victims of the Holocaust in Romania, including the Roma. On the other hand, one should remark that it was only on 6 March 2019 that the Bill PL-x no. 10/2019 for the establishment of the Memorial Day of the Roma Holocaust – Samudaripen on 2 August has been enacted as Law no. 73/2019 (Chamber of Deputies 2019). All these characteristics of the politics of memory in post-communist Romania prove the difficulty of institutionalising the memory of the Holocaust, in a country where frictions with and resentments toward national minorities on the part of the majority still occur, sometimes leading to social tension and conflict at the local level.

Holocaust memory at the crossroads of ideological standpoints and ‘memory laws’

Despite the public recognition of the responsibility of the Romanian authorities for the extermination of Jews during the Second World War and the involvement of a part of the population in perpetrating the Holocaust, the persistence of revisionist, negationist, or relativist statements still represent a challenge in the Romanian public sphere. For instance, analysing the negationist statements of Dan Şova, a Romanian lawyer, senator, and Social Democratic Party (*Partidul Social Democrat – PSD*) spokesman, in a television interview in early March 2012, Simon Geissbühler (2012, p. 127)

talks about their being unusual, because “they were made not by a die-hard Holocaust denier but by a young and well-educated Social Democratic politician”. The proliferation of such ideological positions, even if not to the same extent as in the early 1990s, from the part of politicians, university professors, artists, and writers, has recently led to the enactment of Law no. 217/2015, as an addition and clarification to the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 3¹⁴/13 of March 2002 regarding the prohibition of fascist, racist or xenophobic organisations and symbols and the promotion of the cult of persons guilty of committing crimes against peace and humanity. This “anti-legionnaire law” or “memory-law” (Koposov 2017, pp. 60-125) prohibits the promotion of the cult of persons who participated in the genocide, and it punishes the denial, protest, approval, justification, or minimisation in the public sphere of the Holocaust or its effects, as well as of genocide and crimes against humanity.

The enforcement of these laws shows that Romania has undertaken significant steps in terms of the legislative framework toward combating anti-Semitism and other manifestations of racism, xenophobia, racial discrimination, and intolerance. Despite institutional efforts to disseminate the historical truth about the Holocaust, the topic of the Second World War is still subject to divergent views in Romania, while the debate about the past of the Jews and Roma in Romania is far from being accepted by all political elites, historians, and other intellectuals, or by the Romanian society at large.

Holocaust education and remembrance in Romania: still underway

In October 2014, “on the initiative and with the support of the Presidential Administration and the Romanian Government, a Consultative Committee was established with the purpose of producing a concept for a museum dedicated to the history, culture and traditions of the Jewish communities in Romania and of the Holocaust” (Foundation Note 2016). The management of the projected memorial museum has to be placed within the institutional framework of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania¹⁵. The “Foundation Note” also stipulates that this project, launched in agreement with the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania, is supported by the United States Holocaust

¹⁴ It was first amended by Law no. 107/2006.

¹⁵ Since its foundation in 2005, the main tasks of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute were the organisation of cultural, scientific, educational, and legal activities meant to protect the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, as well as the coordination of activities in order to set up a museum of the history of Jews in Romania (Art. (l), (m) from the Governmental Decision no. 902/2005).

Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The activities of the Consultative Committee have been organised by the Prime Minister's Cabinet. The membership of the Consultative Committee included personalities close to cultural and social projects promoted by the Jewish communities in Romania, as well as prestigious academic and cultural personalities from Romania and abroad. In 2015, this Committee had two plenary reunions and several meetings on various work sections. In addition, the Consultative Committee organised several documentation visits to similar museums abroad, with financial support from the Prime Minister's Cabinet, channelled through the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (Foundation Note 2016).

Following the launch of the Consultative Committee, taking into account "the importance of promoting the memory of the Holocaust at the level of international relations" (Foundation Note 2016), the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania would be once more tasked with coordinating the setting up of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania. Moreover, three new positions with specific curatorial tasks – of museographer, archivist, and documentarian – have been proposed as part of the staff of the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute. The objectives of the new measures stipulated by the "Foundation Note" are: the organisation of a network with similar institutions in the country and abroad in order to elaborate the documentation necessary for the establishment of a concept for the museum; the elaboration of the thematic exhibition necessary to the curatorial project; the preparation of the documentation necessary for organising the international competition for the concept of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania; the organisation of the international competition to select the architectural project for the museum; the identification of artefacts, objects, and original documents specific to the Jewish history and civilisation in Romania; the establishment of a list of cultural items that would be part of the heritage museum.

Another momentous step along the lines of Holocaust education and remembrance occurred when Romania took on the chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), for the period of March 2016 – March 2017.¹⁶ This is an intergovernmental body founded in

¹⁶ The International Holocaust and Remembrance Alliance (IHRA, formerly ITF – Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research) is an inter-governmental organisation created in 1998, at the initiative of the Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson, with the objective to encourage activities related to the promotion of education, commemoration, and research of the Holocaust in the EU member states, but also in other interested states, and also to ensure the necessary political support for the materialisation of these aims.

1998 with the aim of supporting, both nationally and internationally, Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. By holding the Chairmanship of the Alliance, Romania joined “the international efforts in fighting against the phenomena such as extremism, racism, intolerance, xenophobia and discrimination” (OSCE 2015). The Romanian presidency of IHRA revealed, in addition to recognising “the concrete proceedings of the Romanian authorities in this direction for more than a decade (...) at the international level” (Iohannis 2016a), “Romania’s firm commitment to acknowledge its own past, to honour the memory of the Holocaust victims and to combat xenophobic and anti-Semitic attitudes”, as stated on the website of the Ministry of External Affairs. In addition to combating Holocaust denial, anti-Semitism, racism, extremism, discrimination, and xenophobia, and promoting Holocaust remembrance, education, and academic research in this field, these foremost priorities of Romania’s mandate at the head of IHRA were aimed at supporting the fundamental goals of the International Alliance. This state-sanctioned commitment mirrored its “orientation towards the future, its pro-active approach in tackling its own past and developing projects that target the new generations by showing them how to avoid tragedies such as the Holocaust” (OSCE 2015). Consequently, taking on the chairmanship of IHRA was a great opportunity for Romania to internationally position itself by communicating a strong message about its politics of memory, and to decide on the foundation of a National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania, respectively. This moral responsibility of the nation-state, passed on to the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute, was also supported by President Klaus Iohannis, who stated, on several occasions, that this museum would produce changes at the level of social mentality. In other words, by transmitting historical knowledge about the Holocaust, this museum would strengthen the reflection about the history of human rights and raise awareness about contemporary human rights issues in the 21st century.

Another important moment for Romania’s chairmanship of IHRA was the adoption of a “non-legally binding working definition of anti-Semitism” (MAE - Ministry of External Affairs 2016) by the committee on Anti-Semitism and Holocaust Denial during the Plenary Meeting of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance that took place at Bucharest between 23 and 26 May 2016. One year later, on 25 May 2017, the Romanian Government adopted a Memorandum through which it took on the “application of the working definition of anti-Semitism, consensually adopted by the member states of IHRA during the plenary reunion of IHRA held in Bucharest one year ago, during the Romanian presidency of the organisation” (Romanian Government 2017). The adoption of the working definition of anti-Semitism – included on the official website of the

European Commission from that date onward – consolidated the Romanian government’s policies of eliminating forms of discrimination, racism, extremism, anti-Semitism. Besides, the Law 157 / 2 July 2018 regarding some measures for preventing and combating anti-Semitism¹⁷ established sanctions from three months to ten years in prison for the crimes of publicly promoting anti-Semitic ideas, conceptions, or doctrines, and for establishing or adhering to anti-Semitic organisations.

II. Official and popular standpoints regarding the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania

Education for and about democratic values

In March 2016, President Klaus Iohannis made two visits at the “Yad Vashem” Memorial of Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust (on the 8th of March) and at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. (on the 31st of March). At the end of these visits, during his press conferences, President Iohannis affirmed the necessity to establish, with the Romanian Government’s support, a National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania, whose foundation he was fully determined to support. The moment of President Iohannis’ visit at the “Yad Vashem” Memorial of Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust in Jerusalem has moral and political implications. Given that his visits coincided with Romania’s turn at the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the choice of the date was not haphazard. In addition to reflecting the official opinion on Holocaust education and remembrance, it reaffirmed within an international context the necessity of a national Holocaust memorial museum, a proposal which had been taken on by President Iliescu twelve years before, yet failed to materialise. President Iohannis has stated that he would include the Holocaust in his personal “Country Project” entitled “Educated Romania”. In keeping with his support

¹⁷ According to this Law (published in the Official Gazette no. 561/4 July 2018), the following are the working definitions: “*Anti-Semitism*: Perception of Jews expressed as hatred against them and the verbal and physical manifestations motivated by hatred against the Jews, directed toward at Jewish or non-Jewish individuals or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and their places of worship. *Anti-Semitic organisation*: Any group made of three or more persons that conduct their activity permanently or temporarily with the purpose of promoting anti-Semitic ideas, conceptions and doctrines. In this category can be included organisations with or without juridical personality, parties, political movements, associations, foundations, societies as well as any other juridical persons that fall under the incidence of this law. *Anti-Semitic symbols*: Flags, emblems, insignia, uniforms, slogans, salutes, as well as any other similar signs that transmit ideas, conceptions or doctrines that promote anti-Semitism”.

for a national memorial museum project, the president emphasised the importance of education as “the first step for a better understanding of the Holocaust and for reckoning with the past (...) – education for democracy, so that citizens learn in school the democratic values and principles” (Iohannis 2016a). The President added that “rejecting anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racial hatred, discrimination and intolerance begins with a solid knowledge of the historical realities that have led to such atrocities. Tolerance and respect for the others are inculcated from young ages, and the school has a fundamental role in this case” (Iohannis 2016a). During his visit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. on 31 March 2016, President Iohannis reiterated the importance of Holocaust education, arguing that “the latest developments in the European space that uncover (...) xenophobic and racist actions (...) [should] mobilise the decisional factors and the citizens to create a new impulse, especially in the field of education for and about democratic values” (Iohannis 2016b). Accordingly, due to its ability to shape Holocaust education and human rights education¹⁸, the interconnected EU key principles, President Iohannis (2016a) stated that the museum “would have a very present mission in society: to talk about freedom, human rights and European values”. In spite of being connected to the past, such a museum would not be an institution of the past. On the contrary, in President Klaus Iohannis’ assessment, it would link the present and the future. As an educational institution, the museum should gain power over the future by transmitting values related to democracy, such as “diversity, tolerance, civic responsibility” (Iohannis 2016a). These values invoked by the President are opposed to intolerance, racism, hatred, and discrimination, which are “threats to democracy” (Iohannis 2016a). Offering insights into the historical consequences of racism, xenophobia, and intolerance, this national museum could accomplish major potential achievements regarding Holocaust education and human rights education, while at the same time opposing popular

¹⁸ According to FRA (2011, p. 10), there are three dimensions of human rights, as follows: (1) Learning ‘about’ human rights, which was termed “the cognitive dimension” (this dimension “refers to knowledge of the history and mechanisms of human rights, the institutions created to examine compliance with them and the legal system. It also means understanding the significance and content of human rights.”); (2) Learning ‘for’ human rights, which was termed “the emancipatory dimension” (“it refers to the knowledge needed to enable one to act to protect those rights. This includes knowledge of one’s own and other people’s rights, the ability to identify breaches of those rights and the knowledge of how to protect and re-establish them.”); (3) Learning ‘with’ or ‘through’ human rights (indicates that “learning will take place using didactic methods that reflect the ideas behind human rights, i.e. learning will take place in a democratic fashion and with the active participation of all those involved”).

myths, misconceptions, and misapprehensions about Jews when putting on display the Jewish legacy. It was precisely these frameworks that President Iohannis considered of most value within a future development of an educational approach to the Holocaust, with the establishment of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania being a key component of this project in the short term.

Biases and misapprehensions on the role of Holocaust education

The two press releases of President Iohannis following his visits to the “Yad Vashem” Memorial of Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. generated reactions on the so-called nationalist websites denying the Holocaust and doubting the usefulness of establishing such a museum. The magazine *Justițiarul* (The Vigilante), published online since 2000, wrote in one of the articles published on 5 April 2016: “Is there any decision of any International Tribunal that definitively condemns Romania for the Holocaust? No! Then why do some people want the Holocaust to be imposed in Romania no matter the cost? It was not the Legionary Movement that was declared ‘fascist’ at Nürnberg, but the German Ethnic Group¹⁹, officially succeeded by the FDGR led by Klaus Iohannis in 2007” (*Justițiarul* 2016).

In keeping with the same xenophobic line of argumentation, in addition to not accepting the conclusions of the *Final Report*, Marius Albin Marinescu (2016), the author of the article above interpreted, the two official visits to Israel and the USA as an incumbent personal manner for the President to obtain support – both internal and external – for a new mandate:

“President Klaus Iohannis (...) wants to bless us too with one [museum of the Holocaust], as a supplement to a mosque and a giant masonic temple. Not only this, but he also wants a holocaustic school!!! He knows that the Zionists have made him president and he wants one more mandate, so he executes whatever the masters of the world order him. Mister President K.W. Iohannis, why not build a planetary synagogue and afterwards give the order for a giant Buddha to be erected between the Intercontinental and the National Theatre, then at least we would know the truth and we would all see ‘the Romania of the well-done-job!’” (*Justițiarul* 2016). The content of this excerpt unequivocally shows the rejection and

¹⁹ In the same article, the author stated that the German Democratic Forum in Romania (FDGR) represents the “reactivation of the hitlerist organisation of the German Ethnic Group.”

intolerance of Romania's cultural diversity or of the rights of minorities to protect and express their cultural identity.

The author's perspective explicitly minimised the genocide, even highlighting the respective section in the text in red: "The gravest problem is that of the Holocaust that Iohannis wants to force upon Romanians, although his Germans bear the guilt for the mass murders, if they were committed. On Romania's territory there were no concentration camps and Romania has not sent Jews to the German camps either. The only Jews that ended up in concentration camps came from northern Transylvania, being deported by the horthysts, that area being under Hungarian administration following the Vienna Dictate in 1940. In Romania there was no holocaust, Romania has not sent Jews to the camps!" (*Justițiarul* 2016).

The author of the article continued to promote the idea that genocide had not occurred in Romania, arguing that: "no serious document proves the allegation of genocide and holocaust brought against Romanians. There is not even one single Jew that can be stated to have been killed, in conformity with the Romanian laws, for the motive that he/she was a Jew! On the contrary, when we have credible documents, these clearly prove that in Romania there was never genocide against the Jews or other ethnicities. Not 'even' a pogrom or two... Serious, authentic documents always prove what we all knew before 1990, that in Romania, Marshal Antonescu's regime actually saved the Jews for whom the Romania of those years represented 'a peaceful oasis' (apud the Jewish historian Braham Randolph), a 'life saver' (Rabbi Moshe Carmilly Weinberger)" (*Justițiarul* 2016).

By depicting Marshal Antonescu in a positive light²⁰, as a man who "saved the Jews", the author attempted a fraudulent revalorisation of his image. Presenting Antonescu in this light diminishes the results of his deliberate actions, which were aimed at exterminating certain ethnic groups, as well as his responsibility for orchestrating the genocide in Romania. Historical truth is falsified through this kind of statements, denying the fact that deportation and killing of the Jews was a state policy supported by Antonescu, enacted for the purpose of ethnic purification, and implemented by state authorities.

²⁰ The same positive perspective is projected on the issue of "selling Jews" during the communist period. While research based on historical documents (Ioanid 2015) certifies the fact that selling Jews and other minority members by the communist regime or even human-animals exchange (Jews for pigs, cattle, or sheep) took place between 1959 and 1989 and was organised by the PMR/PCR, the author of the article in *Justițiarul* (2016) refers to "the [voluntary] emigration of 400,000 Jews, with an extremely important role in the edification of the state of Israel."

The rest of the article in *Justițiarul* continued this rhetoric of minimising the Holocaust and extended it to all of Europe, on the grounds that “the fatidic number of 6,000,000 Jews killed” is minimised by “one of the astute denigrators of Romania, philosopher Hannah Arendt” (*Justițiarul* 2016). The author referenced one of her books, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, but also works of some Holocaust deniers. Hannah Arendt, a prominent figure of contemporary socio-political thinking, was “the first well-known researcher to have compared communism and Nazism” (Cesereanu 2007, pp. 5-7). Her analysis is necessary for understanding “the sociological, philosophical and cultural dimensions of the totalitarian phenomenon and their consequences”. Ruxandra Cesereanu (2007, pp. 5-7) points out in her introduction to the volume *Gulag and Holocaust in the Romanian consciousness* that the terms utilised to express the idea of left-wing and right-wing totalitarian extremism were Gulag and Holocaust. The Gulag (borrowed from Russian) is used to name the typical detention space of the Soviet communist regime and the use of various methods of extermination (labour camp, prison, work colonies, deportation). The Holocaust (from the ancient Greek, meaning “sacrifice by complete burning”) refers to the extermination, mainly of Jews, following the instauration of Nazi-type regimes during the Second World War. The common points of the two types of extremism as identified by researchers are: “Obsession with racial, social and ideological purity and the solution to eliminate the adversaries [instruments that] aimed in both cases at the creation of a new man that both communism and Nazism hoped to deliver from the social-political test tube of the respective systems” (Cesereanu 2007, pp. 5-7). Arguing for the existence of these similarities has led some researchers to formulate the theory of “symmetry” or of “the double genocide” (Shafir 2002, pp. 113, 118). From Michael Shafir’s (2005) perspective, the analysis of the totalitarian phenomenon in its entire complexity could not be done without mentioning Arendt’s work on the *Origins of Totalitarianism* (first published in 1951), which influenced other notable analysts such as Alain Besançon, François Furet and Ernst Nolte who made new comparisons by the end of the 20th century. Michael Shafir (2005, pp. 119-140) noted the fact that when referring to the usage of the terms extermination or concentration camps, Arendt insisted on the distinction that existed between the two totalitarian regimes. Thus, if the concentration camps served the “utilitarian and self-interested motives of the rulers”, under the totalitarian regimes, they “transcend those motives and go further to the realm where ‘everything is possible’” (Arendt 1968, p. 440, cited in Shafir 2005). Particularised through the use of the atrocious gas chambers, the Holocaust was proclaimed the horror of the century (which

accounts for the term Shoah, meaning “catastrophe”). In view of these definitions, the parallelism between the Gulag and the Holocaust was considered inadequate. This moment marked the emergence of “competitive martyrology”, as formulated by Michael Shafir (2007). In practice, by referencing Hannah Arendt and extrapolating her concepts of the two forms of totalitarianism, the author of the article in *Justițiarul* aimed at performing a “mobilising function, in support of right-wing extremism” (Shafir 2007).

When rhetorically asking about President Iohannis’ reasons to visit both Holocaust memorial museums in Israel and the USA, the author of the article in *Justițiarul* (2016) talked about “the colonisation of Romania by Jews”. The author also mentioned Ion Coja, “Romania’s most active Holocaust denier, who is a retired senior lecturer in philology at the University of Bucharest, chairman of the extreme nationalist League for Combating Anti-Romanianism and a former member (1992–1996) of the upper house of the Romanian parliament” (Shafir 2014, p. 943); he is also the author of numerous xenophobic and anti-Semitic articles denying the Holocaust, and of the book *Protocols of the Kogaion, theses and hypotheses about the so-called Holocaust in Romania* (Coja 2013).

More to the point, the author of the article in *Justițiarul* interpreted Iohannis’ declaration of support for the construction of a museum of the Holocaust as an answer to “the foreign and hostile interests [aimed] against the Romanian people” (*Justițiarul* 2016). Adding to this, he claimed that persons of Jewish origin had obtained leadership positions in Romania after being educated abroad. The author referred to the investor and philanthropist of Jewish origin George Soros, popular among the extremist nationalists as an image of the ‘outside enemy’ of the Romanian people, serving foreign interests and aiming to destabilise Romania:

“Klaus Iohannis has named two Jews at the head of the most important secret services. Eduard Raul Helvig (SRI) and Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu (SIE) are both of Jewish ethnicity and have been employees/grant beneficiaries of the Hungarian Jew from the USA, George Soros, alias György Schwartz. (...) His relation to Klaus Iohannis is visible – his NGOs are invited to talks (...) with the pretence of [them being] representatives of the ‘street’” (*Justițiarul* 2016).

Moreover, the author referenced, without naming it explicitly, the ubiquitous presence of the “Securitate” under Ceaușescu, the secret police responsible for the surveillance and manipulation of the country’s population with vicious rumours, but also for the arrests, torture and deaths of thousands of Romanians, to talk about the present feelings of Romanians who “have become afraid of even calling them Jews, as if it were a state secret or something shameful! Romanians are terrorised by the thought

police called the National Council for Combating Discrimination (Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării - CNCD) so much so that people are afraid of saying about someone that they are a Jew, lest they are accused of being anti-Semitic. I think that people who think like this are themselves anti-Semitic and they commit an act of discrimination, because being called a Jew is not something shameful and the name in itself is not pejorative! If one tells people in Israel they are Jews does that mean one offends them? I do not understand why they themselves hide their identity here in Romania, under Romanian names or pseudo-German names, when they should be proud to be part of the ‘chosen people’ as they are called in the Bible” (*Justițiarul* 2016).

Through the statement above, the author confuses the terms “anti-Semitism” and “discrimination”, which can only be correlated partially, because the first refers strictly to the Jews, while the second term has a wider spectrum, including criteria of race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social category, convictions, gender, sexual orientation, belonging to a vulnerable category, age, disability, refugee or asylum status, etc. Moreover, contesting the legality and legitimacy of an institution like CNCD pinpoints the author as part of the category of extreme right-winger and radical anti-Semite writers.

Along with their insulting consequences, there is an obvious lack of historical and scientific accuracy in the statements related to the genocide in Romania and a tendentious interpretation regarding Marshal Ion Antonescu’s non-involvement in the Holocaust in Romania. Practically, the author falsely rewrites the tragic history of the Jews during the Second World War: by minimising the gravity of the genocidal acts carried out on the Romanian territories, arguing that there were no pogroms or Holocaust in Romania; by cleansing the past of the real criminals while exclusively blaming the Nazi regime and ultimately the victims; by treating the members of an ethnic community as indistinguishable parts of a global whole (corresponding to a fascist mental framework), etc. To interpret the historical truth otherwise than as indicated by historical evidence or to silence the past realities regarding the genocide of the Romanian Jewry and, more broadly, of European Jewry, represent forms of anti-Semitism. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, such attitudes are “generally motivated by hatred of Jews and build on the claim that the Holocaust was invented or exaggerated by Jews as part of a plot to advance Jewish interests” (USHMM, “Holocaust Denial and Distortion”, no date). The purpose of making such statements public is thus to challenge the officially acknowledged discourse concerning the Holocaust and to instil a strong sense of xenophobia in contemporary Romanian society. For

ordinary people, it is much easier to internalise stereotypes, myths, distortions, and misrepresentations that society communicates to them, and to act as if they were true, than to face painful truths.

In contemporary Romania, the official discourse is facing serious problems when it comes to shaping mentalities and social processes, precisely because of the reactions involving denial or deflection of the Holocaust, released in the public sphere by some intellectuals or political elites. The possibility to publicly express biased attitudes and animosity toward the Jews shows the existence of breaches in the politics of memory and in the top-down memory-work related to the Holocaust. Inaccurate references to the past delivered by few individuals from the so-called “civil society”, self-proclaimed “nationalists”, and also adopted by several elites and political actors, have the potential to destabilise the process of building shared representations of the national suffering and of the losses inflicted by the authoritarian regime. However, the members of the majority have the responsibility to confront those who challenge the official acknowledged standpoints regarding the Holocaust within the Romanian territories, and advocate for those wronged.

State-sponsored agency within the memory arena, mnemonic regulations and countermoves

Although at the level of institutional memory, of legislation, and of state institutions one can notice significant changes regarding the Holocaust, the establishment of the respective museum has not yet materialised. From the moment the *Final Report* of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania was presented to President Ion Iliescu, except for some political statements, for more than 10 years there was no record of any concrete institutional steps taken for the construction of a national museum dedicated to the history of Jews and of the Holocaust. The few official standpoints on this matter did not contribute to advancing the museum project, until recently, when President Klaus Iohannis decided to take another step forward and finally signed, on 8 October 2019, the law on the establishment of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania. However, the path leading to this point was full of obstacles. Although the establishment of the museum represents an important commitment for the Romanian state, the only occasions on which this topic was mentioned were the national or international days for the commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust. On 24 January 2017, recalling the “unprecedented tragedy (...) experienced individually [by victims], but which has impacted the whole humankind”, President Iohannis

evoked the double meaning and responsibility of such commemorations: “One goes backwards, and claims our moral duty to remember and acknowledge the suffering of those massacred. The other one is forward-looking and prompts us to educate the future generations about the abominable crimes of the Holocaust. It is therefore our duty to keep alive the memory of the so many victims of this unspeakable evil” (Iohannis 2017).

Pleading for setting up a National Museum of Jewish history and the Holocaust in Romania and including this project in his “Country Project” of an “Educated Romania”, as he stated after having visited the Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Memorial in Jerusalem, President Klaus Iohannis decided to move forward and debate the issue with the Government. Following his firm support for a national museum of this kind, which he considered as “an unexpected source of education for democracy” (Iohannis 2016a), in September 2016, by Government Decision no. 625/2016, the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was tasked with the organisation, coordination, and creation of the National Museum of Jewish history and the Holocaust in Romania.

In order to carry out this mandate, on 29 September 2016, the General Council of the Bucharest Municipality approved by Decision no. 285 the transformation of the building known as the “Dacia” Palace into a National Museum of Jewish history and the Holocaust in Romania. Being the palace of the former “Dacia” Insurance Company, standing in Bucharest’s Third District, on 18-20 Lipscani Street, and classified as a historic monument of national significance, registered in the List of Historic Monuments at no. 1305, B-II-m-A-19021, the building, which was property of the Municipality, was transferred to the administration of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (INSHR EW, “Tender Book”, no date, p. 6). Soon after that decision, the capital’s City Hall was sued on the grounds that the respective project was introduced on the supplementary daily agenda, in an extraordinary meeting, but also because there was an anterior decision according to which this building was to be turned into an art gallery. The Decision project no. 285 would therefore be annulled in court following a trial that lasted two years, mainly initiated by Mihai Tociu, one of the people who have instigated several protests and pickets directed especially against the City Hall, which administers the “Dacia” Palace.

The chart below schematically shows the main official actions (from September 2016 to September 2019) concerning the foundation of a national museum, a place which aims to present and promote the history, culture and traditions of the Jewish communities in Romania:

<p>The 29th of September 2016 – Approval by Decision no. 285 of the General Council of Bucharest Municipality to hand over the administrative rights over the building situated on 18-20 Lipscani Street, 3rd District, to the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania for establishing a museum of Jewish history and the Holocaust.</p>
<p>The 28th of October 2016 – Anterior complaint regarding the revocation of Decision no. 285 of the General Council of Bucharest Municipality to hand over the administrative rights over the building situated on 18-20 Lipscani Street, District 3, to the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania for establishing a museum of the history of the Jews in Romania (Filed by Mihai Tociu and Mihai Rapcea at the Prefecture of the Bucharest Municipality, General Council and The City Hall).</p>
<p>The 27th of January 2017 – Call to court of the Prefecture of the Bucharest Municipality, General Council, The City Hall, and the special commission and directions of the City Hall, filed by Mihai Tociu at the Bucharest Municipality Tribunal.</p>
<p>The 16th of March 2017 – Prime-Minister Sorin Grindeanu promises to a delegation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the US Ambassador in Bucharest, Hans Klemm, that he would support the building of the Holocaust Museum. The statement is made before the first international reunion of the Consultative Committee for the establishment of the museum, which took place on the 17th of March at the Victoria Palace.</p>
<p>The 16th of May 2018 – Governmental Decision no. 334/2018 regarding the allocation of 3 million RON for starting the Contest for solutions regarding the design of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania.</p>
<p>The 21st of September 2018 – The “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania launches a call for applications for designing the permanent exhibition and the additional spaces of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania.</p>
<p>The 9th of October 2018 – President Klaus Iohannis reaffirms his unconditional support for the foundation of the Museum of the Holocaust, in a short speech held during the ceremony for decorating survivors of the Holocaust.</p>
<p>The 6th of December 2018 – The Bucharest Tribunal annuls Decision no. 285 of the General Council of Bucharest Municipality by civil sentence 8140/6 December 2018.</p>
<p>The 6th of December 2018 – President Klaus Iohannis receives a visit from a delegation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.</p>

<p>The 29th of January 2019 – President Klaus Iohannis makes a statement during the ceremony held for decorating survivors of the Holocaust. Iohannis states that the existence of a National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania is vital.</p>
<p>The 26th of February 2019 – The General Council of the Bucharest City Hall rejects the Decision for conceding a building for the Holocaust Museum (15 votes for, 28 abstaining, 2 votes against).</p>
<p>The 11th of March 2019 – The General Council of the Bucharest City Hall rejects the Decision for conceding a building for the Holocaust Museum (34 votes for, 12 abstaining, 1 vote against).</p>
<p>The 14th of March 2019 – The General Mayor, Gabriela Firea states: “Promises ought to be kept! I will support again in the next General Council meeting the project for creating a museum of the Holocaust and I will take every action for the foundation of the Bucharest Art Gallery”.</p>
<p>The 21st of March 2019 – Law no. 53/2019 regarding some measures for the study of the history of the Jewish communities in Romania, published in the Official Gazette no. 222/21/3/2019, which creates the legal framework for declassifying certain information for the purpose of scientific research on Jewish history.</p>
<p>The 23rd of April 2019 – The General Council of the Bucharest City Hall rejects the Decision for conceding a building for the Holocaust Museum (34 votes for, 12 abstaining, 2 votes against).</p>
<p>The 22nd of May 2019 – Losing the right to manage the building “Dacia” Palace, the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania decide on the cancellation of “the best design competition for the permanent exhibition and the auxiliary spaces of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania” (INSHR EW 2019)</p>
<p>The 25th June 2019 – The proposal for the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania to be built in the courtyard of the Antipa Museum by the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, which raised many controversies.</p>
<p>The 5th of July 2019 – Decision no. 138 of Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă to establish the Interministerial Committee for combating anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalisation, and hate speech.</p>
<p>The 20th of July 2019 – The Association of the Romanian-Israeli Cultural Centre sends an open letter to Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă and Klaus Iohannis (Apostu 2019)</p>
<p>The 29th of July 2019 – President of USR Bucharest, Roxana Wring, announces that during the next General Council of the Bucharest City Hall meeting she would propose that the Museum of Holocaust be built on the field from Victory Depot (R.M. 2019)</p>
<p>The 11th of September 2019 – PL-x no. 356/2019 – Bill regarding the establishment of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania adopted by the Chamber of Deputies and sent for promulgation on the 19th of September 2019.</p>

Civic responses to the new destination of the “Dacia” Palace: an appraisal of official démarches in nationalistic terms

The proposal to repurpose this centrally-located building to something different than previously promised by Mayor Gabriela Firea (it was to be an art gallery)²¹ did not manage to get a majority of votes in the General Council, even though it was introduced on the daily agenda several times during 2019. The re-emergence of the proposal to use the “Dacia” Palace as a museum of the Holocaust and the history of the Jews triggered press articles and official statements. Several individuals acting as representatives of civil society also reacted to this proposal, by protesting, picketing, and spreading flyers in especially crowded places in Bucharest, so as to disseminate the information as much as possible. This type of actions was envisaged because “Jews count on the fact that people (especially people in Bucharest) don’t know what is happening. With very rare exceptions, 2-3 internet publications have approached the subject, but other than that nothing, because, isn’t it so, we are anti-Semitic if we talk about the rascaldom of the Jews” (Comments on 3 June 2019 to Brândușă’s press article).

Such a picket against the proposal to transfer the “Dacia” Palace to the patrimony of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was organised on 30 May 2019. The activity was supported on the Facebook platform by Mihai Tociu and Cătălin Ioan Berenghi, among others. In their flyers, they were asking people to sign an online petition, written by Mihai Tociu and entitled “We don’t want a Museum of the Holocaust paid by the people of Bucharest!”. For the initiators, this was “citizens’ opposition towards politicians’ intention to offer a building from the patrimony of the Bucharest Municipality FREE OF CHARGE and WITH NO REASON for the organisation of a museum for the Jews / Holocaust” (Online petition no date). In the summary of the petition, it was argued that the establishment of the museum was requested by “the Jewish organisations of the USA, [which] intend to build a mega-museum of the Holocaust in Bucharest with money from the Bucharest City Hall. (...) The American Jewish organisations control Romanian politicians and they act in their interest, often by breaking the law. In 2009 it was Băsescu and Oprescu who illegally destroyed a park for a monument of the Holocaust, now it is Iohannis, Dragnea and Firea who do the political arrangements so that they are given for free a 63 million RON building. One

²¹ The idea of an art gallery was initially formulated by Mayor Sorin Oprescu. On the 30th of August 2012 the General Council approved the Decision no.134/2012 by which the City Hall initiated the program “The Bucharest Art Gallery”, where the main objective was to find a space for exhibitions.

by one, they have agreed – President Iohannis, Prime Ministers Cioloș, Grindeanu, and Dăncilă, as well as the leaders of the political parties that rule Romania: PSD, PNL, UDMR”. Moreover, from the organisers’ perspective, “The museum will not be a museum, but something else (...) an institution for obligatory education of the employees of the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MAI), army, secret services, diplomacy, civil servants, administrative personnel, as well as members of political parties. Obviously, teachers and students alike from all over the country will be brought in buses. All of them will be taught about the Holocaust! Why? Because this is what the Jewish organisations in the USA want and they have the support of Iohannis, Dragnea, Viorica Dăncilă, Gabriela Firea, and other heads of political parties – they are the ones who have ended up deciding what Romanians ought to learn!” (Online petition no date).

Dragnea, Firea și Dăncilă fac strategia să o ia de la capăt.

Firea pune a doua oară propunerea pe ordinea de zi la ședința Consiliului din februarie. Dragnea negociază cu șefii partidelor: el are 24 de consilieri PSD și mai are nevoie de 12 voturi de la celelalte partide. Primește puține și eșuează.

Firea face pentru a treia oară propunerea la ședința din martie. Partidele îi dau 12 voturi lui Dragnea, dar doi consilieri PSD trădează și iar eșuează. Îi exclude din partid!

Dăncilă merge în SUA și promite organizațiilor evreiești că le face muzeul. Firea face a patra oară propunerea la ședința din aprilie. ALDE trădează și Dragnea e în găleată!

Dar Firea nu abandonează! Pune pentru a cincea oară propunerea pe ordinea de zi la ședința din 30 mai.

PÂNĂ CÂND? Tu, bucureștean, nu ai nimic de zis?

Dacă nu ești de acord ca bunurile Bucureștilui să fie înstrăinate ilegal pentru interesele meschine ale politicianilor

Semnează Petiția Online: "NU VREM MUZEUL AL HOLOCAUSTULUI DIN BANII BUCUREȘTENILOR"

Întri pe www.ProcesMuzeuHolocaust.info. Pe bara de sus se află butonul "Semnează Petiția" și acolo găsești link-ul.

FELICITĂRI PENTRU GESTUL CETĂTENESC!

Ceva despre care Presa NU vorbește:

Primăria Bucureștilui deține cea mai mare colecție de artă din țară – "Pinacoteca" – 5500 opere de artă. De 30 de ani, acestea stau în depozite.

În 2013, Primăria a cumpărat un imobil pentru a le expune. Se numește "Palatul Dacia", vis-a-vis de Banca Națională, și a plătit pentru el 14 mil euro. Apoi l-a ținut închis 3 ani.

Șeful Comitetului Evreiesc American vine în România și le cere lui Iohannis și Dragnea să înființeze în București un muzeu al Holocaustului. Altfel, vor discuta despre Jilava.

Viorica Dăncilă are în directă ei subordine un departament cu numele Institutul pt Studierea Holocaustului – Elie Wiesel

Institutul Elie Wiesel cere Primăriei "Palatul Dacia" ca să îl transforme în muzeu al evreilor și al Holocaustului. Primarul Firea propune Consiliului General și acesta aprobă în unanimitate să îl dea, **pe gratis și pentru totdeauna.**

Hotărârea Consiliului General este contestată la Tribunalul de 6 cetățeni. În decembrie 2018, Tribunalul o declară ilegală și o anulează, deoarece Firea și Consiliul general nu au putut arăta un motiv pentru care au dat "Palatul Dacia".

În ianuarie 2019, Șeful Comitetului Evreiesc American revine în România și îi amintește lui Dragnea cum e treaba.

Flyer distributed during the Picket / 30 May 2019. Source: personal archive.

On the left of the flyer one can read:

"Dragnea, Firea and Dăncilă are planning to start all over again. Firea is including the proposal on the daily agenda for the second time in the Council meeting in February. Dragnea is negotiating with the heads of the parties: he has 24 PSD councilmen and needs 12 more votes from the other parties. He gets less and he fails. Firea puts the proposal for the third time on the Council meeting agenda. The parties give Dragnea 12 votes, but two

PSD councilmen betray him and he fails. He excludes them from the party! Dăncilă goes to the USA and promises to the Jewish organisations that she will make the museum. Firea makes the proposal for a fourth time, in the April meeting. ALDE betrays Dragnea and he's in the bucket! But Firea does not let go! She puts the proposal for the fifth time on the Council's agenda at the meeting of the 30th of May. How long will we put up with this? You, citizen of Bucharest, don't you have anything to say? If you don't agree to Bucharest goods being given away for the politicians' petty interests sign the OnLinePetition: 'We don't want a Museum of the Holocaust paid by the people of Bucharest!' You access the site www.ProcesMuzeuHolocaust.info and on the upper bar there is the button 'Sign the petition' and you will find the link there. Congratulations for your civic gesture!"

On the right of the flyer one can read:

"Something the press DOESN'T talk about:

The Bucharest City Hall holds the biggest art collection in the country – 'The Art Gallery' – 5500 works of art. For 30 years they have been sitting in warehouses. In 2013, the City Hall bought a building to exhibit them. It is called the 'Dacia Palace', across the street from the National Bank, and it spent 14 million euro for it. Then kept it closed for 3 years. The head of the American Jewish Committee comes to Romania and asks Iohannis and Dragnea to establish in Bucharest a museum of the Holocaust. Otherwise, they will talk about Jilava. Viorica Dăncilă has in her direct subordination a department called the Institute for the Study of Holocaust – Elie Wiesel. The Elie Wiesel Institute asks the City Hall for the Dacia Palace so they can transform it into a museum of the Jews and the Holocaust. The Mayor Firea puts the proposal forward to the General Council and they approve unanimously to give it for free, for ever. The General Council Decision is contested in court by 6 citizens. In December 2018, the Court declares it illegal and annuls it, because Firea and the Council could not give a reason for giving away the Dacia Palace. In January 2019, the head of the American Jewish Committee comes back to Romania and reminds Dragnea how things work."

Despite the archival documents, the testimonials, the reports, and physical evidence related to the genocidal actions carried out on the Romanian territory, raising awareness and spreading knowledge about these unprecedented moments in the history of humankind is seen by the initiators of the petition as an "instrument of re-education", of mass indoctrination with false information, with the Holocaust in Romania being, in their opinion, "a big lie" (Bloțiu 2017).

Some of the comments on the press articles on this subject were directed against the political parties exerting pressure "on the city hall

councillors to vote one way or another (...) going that far as to even exclude them from the party” (Comments on 3 June 2019 to Brândușă’s press article), and others accused Firea that “she is playing the games of the “Elie Wiesel” Institute” (Comments on 31 May 2019 to Brândușă’s press article). For those thinking along these lines, this last statement is equivalent to saying that “Firea is guilty of national treason, of national identity treason, of treason of the Romanian culture and of our Christian faith” (Comments on 31 May 2019 to Brândușă’s press article). In other words, the moral restoration implied by this process of reckoning with the past, i.e. with the traumatic events of the Second World War in Romania, is tagged as anti-Romanian propaganda. The conviction that the nation is being betrayed is suggested by the references to religious aspects: “One of the things that the Romanian people have in common with God is that both our people and God are used to being betrayed. It is important that the people do not betray God, because God would never betray the people” (Comments on 31 May 2019 to Brândușă’s press article). This portrays the Romanian people in the eternal posture of the oppressed. A reader of the article on “Active News”, using the pseudonym “Miorița” – referencing national(ist) tropes –, argued that the association between Firea, Mayor of the capital city of Romania, and Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is inadequate because “everyone knows him for the impostor he is, he was proven to be an impostor by that Hungarian Jew who actually was in a camp, I forget his name. Something is missing! How is it possible to continue insisting on the project of a Museum of the Holocaust when it was rejected 5 times in a row and there is also a court decision in this sense???” (Comments on 31 May 2019 to Brândușă’s press article). The author of this comment found the answer to their own question in the external pressures applied at the highest levels. This was the interpretation given to the statements of Ambassador Klemm during his address on 13 March 2019, at the conference “Future of memory”: “Ladies and gentlemen, please know – and I am speaking as a member of the Advisory Council to the creation of the National Museum of the Jewish People and of the Holocaust in Romania – please know that the United States, the United States Government, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and my embassy here in Bucharest remain fully committed to the realization of this very thoughtful and important objective” (Klemm 2019).

The comments show that extremist nationalist feelings, pre-existent in the collective intellect, have become ‘reflexes’ in the case of some Romanians. The ‘stimulus’ for this is provided by the fear of the Jews, “specialists in global finances and social engineering” (Comments on 3 June 2019 to Brândușă’s press article), conceptualised as “internal and external enemies” of the Romanian people, which is seen as an entity with ancestral

roots. On the other hand, people from the category above, who comment on the press articles, refuse to self-identify as being anti-Semitic, as well as the idea that “flyers with anti-Semitic content have been spread at the subway to inform people about the Dacia Palace” (Comments on 3 June 2019 to Brândușă’s press article). Their argument is that “everything you don’t like is anti-Semitism” (Comments on 3 June 2019 to Brândușă’s press article). The general conclusion of such comments is that anti-Semitism is just a fiction of institutions like the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (INSHR EW) or CNCDD (the National Council for Combating Discrimination), which are tasked with identifying and sanctioning this kind of social misdemeanour. According to these people, there is no more anti-Semitism in Romania, and the genocide-related acts that were coordinated, planned, and committed “with the intention to destroy in part or in whole a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (UN 1948) are not verified in the case of European Jews. Consequently, one cannot talk about Holocaust in Romania. Thus, in some of the online media comments, people refuse to acknowledge the existence of the Holocaust, considered by specialists as “the ultimate crime against humanity” (IHRA no date), the genocide against the Jewish people – the attempt of the Nazis to kill every Jewish man, woman or child – “unprecedented in its totality” (IHRA no date). According to this (obviously mistaken) perspective on the Holocaust, there is no need for moral amends toward the ethnic groups and social categories targeted by the genocide, as the people responsible for the events are the Jews themselves, as some online comments points out (Bloțiu 2017).

Reactions to the proposal for the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania to be built in the courtyard of the “Antipa” Museum

Having lost the right to manage the building “Dacia” Palace, on 22 May 2019, the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania decided to cancel “the best design competition for the permanent exhibition and the auxiliary spaces of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania” (INSHR EW 2019). Alexandru Florian, Director of the “Elie Wiesel” Institute, declared on 25 June 2019 for *HotNews.ro* that the Bucharest General Council vetoed the project of the Museum four times in February, March, April, and May [2019], after the Institute had received administration rights over the “Dacia” Palace, in September 2016, to set up the National Museum of

Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania (Ivanov 2019). He added that, after the media backlash and the public anti-Semitic messages that suggested “building a museum, but in the Jewish neighbourhood (...), we were forced to rethink our strategy and find another space or building where to continue this project that has been stagnating for two and a half years and in which 50,000 euro have been invested, which are lost (...)”. Florian specified that the “Elie Wiesel” Institute was forced to relinquish this location and rethink their options after not obtaining the necessary votes to become owners of the “Dacia” Palace. This was in spite of Mayor Gabriela Firea’s repeated attempts to introduce the museum question on the public agenda of the General Council, “partners of the project who did not realise their position” (as stated by Florian for *HotNews.ro*). “If we cancel, we cannot start over again. Basically, we did not get the building, so we had to look for something else. Even if they wanted to give it back to us, it would be difficult for us to receive it after cancelling a contest”, explained the General Director of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania for *HotNews.ro* (Ivanov 2019).

To advance this project of national importance, one month later, on 25 June 2019, the “Elie Wiesel” Institute made a proposal for the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania to be built in the courtyard of the “Antipa” Museum. Alexandru Florian declared for *HotNews.ro* (Ivanov 2019) that the proposal was made after consulting with representatives of the General Secretariat of the Government. The proposal was based on the idea that, being a governmental project, supported by the Presidential Administration, “availability should be found on the public domain of the state, a property on which the Government can take a direct decision” (Ivanov 2019). The Ministry of Culture confirmed that in the respective area of the “Antipa” Museum there was no other immediate project for a museum or other institutional development. This consolidated the proposal to build it in the courtyard of the “Antipa” Museum. According to Alexandru Florian’s statement for *HotNews.ro*, his proposal also took into account the areal context, respectively the fact that “there are already three museums in the area and, if there were another public one, of the state, a national museum, the lot would be whole, the area would be diversified, there would be a museum neighbourhood that would attract the public for all the museums, thus increasing the potential” (Ivanov 2019).

Mediafax (cited by *Ro Insider* 2019) reported that “[p]rior to receiving this request, the museum’s manager, Luis Ovidiu Popa, was invited to the Headquarters of the National Cadastre Agency to sign off on a plan to have the museum’s land divided, a plan the institution did not

request, does not want, and of which its manager was not informed”. According to a news article published on 17 July 2019 by *Mediafax*, the management of the “Antipa” Museum welcomed the idea of public consultation to decide the location of the new National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania. On the other hand, they added that a museum complex²² “putting together museums so different to one another is pretty odd”, asking “[w]hat do the Village Museum, the Romanian Peasant Museum, a natural history museum, and the Holocaust Museum have in common?” (Tupa 2019b).

Dr. Luis Ovidiu Popa, manager of the “Antipa” Museum, opposed the idea of a museum complex, arguing that “a museum complex needs to have a concept (...) discussed and debated by specialists of those museums. [Moreover] ‘Antipa’s’ green area could serve the development of research and educational activities for the present museum” (Tupa 2019b), which “actually needs more space to display all of its collections, many kept in storage for lack of exhibition area” (Ro Insider 2019).

The management of the “Antipa” Museum asked for an opinion from the “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, which took part in the elaboration of the town planning and the regulatory plan of the area. The answer came from Prof. PhD. Arch. Dan Marin, on 22 July 2019, saying that the Museum of the Holocaust could not be built in the area indicated by the Government because it did not abide with any of the architectural, town planning, and legal criteria. Among the arguments against this project was that the National Museum of Natural History “Grigore Antipa”, the Geology Museum, and the Museum of the Romanian Peasant “are connected not only by their proximity and their cultural mission, but also by a common characteristic: they were built following the same model of Romantic style, as edifices located inside vast, planted areas. Together, they are part of the larger urban scheme of parks in the North of Bucharest, which was constituted over time, beginning with the setting up during the 1840s of the Kiseleff Street and Garden, continuing with laying out the Jianu Street (today Aviatorilor), and ending with the setting up of the National Park and National Village Museum in the first decades of the 20th

²² The Ministry of Culture and of National Identity declared in a press statement on 18 July 2019 that the museum complex would bring together the National Village Museum “Dimitrie Gusti”, the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, the National Museum of Natural History “Grigore Antipa”, and the future National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania for which there had been selected a location between the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant and the National Museum of Natural History “Grigore Antipa”.

century. For those reasons, the entire protected built area was characterised in the regulatory plan as ‘a significant historical park; witness of the structure and image of Bucharest’” (Marin 2019). However, the director of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania reacted to this response, arguing that the “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism does not have the capacity to evaluate the space next to the “Antipa” Museum (Marinescu 2019). Moreover, he described the abovementioned analysis and the public reactions as “mere opinions any citizen has the right to emit” (Marinescu 2019).

The Romanian Academy also promptly reacted to the initiative of conceding a piece of land from the “Antipa” Park, arguing in a press statement that this “is completely inadequate and damaging, bringing about great prejudice to one of the oldest and most appreciated museums in Romania” (Carciog 2019). The Romanian Academy publicly agreed on the importance and necessity of a National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania, which is “a fully justified cultural and historical entity and represents a moral duty in regard to the tragedy experienced by millions of humans in the context of the greatest conflagration of the 20th century, and a necessary gesture to preserve the memory of the Holocaust” (Carciog 2019). With these words, the Romanian Academy supported the setting up of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania, “which rightfully deserves an adequate space and an appropriate location for its mission”, on the condition that it be in any other space than the one from the “Antipa” Museum. Using this argument, the Romanian Academy publicly asked the Government to renounce to the idea of building a Museum of the Holocaust in the “Antipa” Park.

Apart from the “messages of continuous rejections the manager of the “Antipa” museum has offered” (as stated by Florian for *Radio Free Europe Moldova*) and the wave of critiques from academia, the request from the Ministry of Culture to the “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History in Bucharest “to give away a 5,300 sqm plot of land from its park” (Tupa 2019a) to have another building erected there aroused controversy and negative reaction from some individuals who based their entire rhetoric on an exacerbated nationalist discourse. Thus, through protests coming from such individuals or persons “who are self-proclaimed or recognised by some Bucharest citizens as opinion leaders in some civic debates, like Mr. Mihai Şora”, an idea was born and propagated that “a potential space for building a museum for the History of the Holocaust between the Museum of the Romanian Peasant and the Antipa Museum

would damage that space of protest that exists in front of the museum” (Florian 2019). In reply to these unfounded reactions, the Director of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania declared for *Radio Free Europe Moldova* that the space requested from the Ministry of Culture “is in fact a space where, for 70 years now, vegetation has been growing haphazardly, spontaneously, a space that is unused, a space of 7000 square meters located on Kiseleff Street, between the building of the Grigore Antipa Museum and the Museum of the Romanian Peasant” (Florian 2019). Maintaining that the new museum would be located “neither in front, nor behind” any other museum, Florian (2019) proved that, in truth, this dispute was unfounded and fake. To clarify the controversies about the location of the new museum hovering in the public space, launched by several personalities of the civil society and the Romanian Academy, Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă stated on 20 July 2019 that the location identified for the Museum of the Holocaust is next to the “Antipa” Museum and, if proven to be the most suitable spot, it will be built there (C.D. 2019).

The leaders of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania – the Mozaic Cult (FCER) expressed, exclusively for the “Libertatea” newspaper, their point of view in relation to the project of the Museum of the Holocaust (Andrieş 2019). First, Dr. Aurel Vainer, former member of parliament for the Jewish minority, now leader of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania, said that “the project of building this museum needs not be politicised, to avoid reaching anti-Semitic manifestations such as those of Bucharest’s Vice-Mayor, who did not want to build this museum on Lipscani Street because that is, in his opinion, an area that has been full of Romanian essence throughout our history, history of the Romanians, but he would agree to erecting a bust of Ion Antonescu in Bucharest” (Andrieş 2019). Second, Dr. Aurel Vainer added that the place of the future museum needs to be “central, easily accessible to the population and tourists, relevant for the history of Jews and their contribution to the development of the Capital city and our country” (Andrieş 2019). These arguments supported the idea that “the Lipscani area, a former Jewish neighbourhood, was much more appropriate for locating the Museum of the Holocaust than the Kiseleff area” (Andrieş 2019). Third, the president of FCER stated that “in order not to devalue this valuable and indisputable project, it needs to be finished urgently and in the most professional manner” (Andrieş 2019). The FCER management took into account the reaction of tens of personalities of Romanian civil society and of universities, who addressed an open letter to the Government pleading for

the preservation of the “Antipa” Museum Park, while “fully supporting the realisation of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania”. Moreover, FCER considered this project “timely and necessary”, as such museums are present in the majority of the capital cities of former communist countries. It is important, especially for the younger generations, to know history “so that the Holocaust can never be repeated, nowhere on the territory of our country. And this is even more important as we can see nowadays, less in Romania, more in the most part of the Western European countries, a revival of anti-Semitism, including its most violent forms” (Andrieş 2019).

Green light for setting up the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania: Bill PL-x no. 356/2019

After more controversy about the location of the future museum, Bill PL-x no. 356/11 September 2019 was adopted in the plenary session of the Chamber of Deputies. The Bill was initiated by all the parliamentary political parties and taken on by the signature of the leaders of the parliamentary groups (Alfred-Robert Simonis – PSD, Raluca Turcan – PNL, Cristian-Gabriel Seidler – USR, Szabó Ödön – UDMR, Mihai-Gheorghe Cucşa – ALDE, Eugen Tomac – PMP, Ovidiu-Victor Gaţ, Varujan Pambuccian, Silviu Vexler – Minorities, Mihai Tudose – PRO Europa). As a result of a large support for the Bill, at the final vote there were 265 votes in favour and only one abstaining. During the Sitting of the Chamber of Deputies on 11 September 2019, Silviu Vexler, a member of parliament on behalf of the Jewish minority, stated that the adoption of the Bill represents “a historical gesture of reparation” (Vexler 2019).

Pursuant to this Bill, the headquarters of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania were established at 218 Calea Victoriei, District 1, in the Banloc Goodric building. The Museum was declared a “public institution of national importance, with juridical personality, and subordinated to INSHR EW”. According to Article 2(1) of the Law no. 174/9 October 2019, “the museum’s purpose is to present and promote the history, culture and tradition of the Jewish community in Romania, to nationally and internationally uncover the contribution of this national minority to the evolution and modernisation of the Romanian society along time, to protect the memory of the Holocaust victims, as well as to promote the combating of anti-Semitism”.



Fig. 2

As expected, the Bill PL-x no. 356/2019 did not receive special attention from the media, but some individuals with an ideology developed along the ethno-cultural line showed their opposition to it, as they had done in the case of other official proposals to find a suitable place to set up the projected museum. They did not want the Bill PL-x no. 356/2019 to become a promulgated law. To this effect, an application was filed for organising a meeting in front of the “Cotroceni” Palace on 23 September 2019. A press release of the Association NEAMUNIT (UnitedNation), published on Facebook on 20 September 2019, denied the fact that its members would take part in the meeting as organisers alongside Mihai Tociu, Mihai Race, and Felix Roncea. In one of the comments related to the post on Facebook (20 September 2019), the manoeuvre to pin the organisation of the protest on the “Neamunit” Association was considered outright “Securitate-like” and “obvious to the people who read and know what manipulation and tagging means. This is what they do. They hijack causes, and take credit using the ‘big mouth’ technique”.

Moreover, in their attempt to hinder the legislative process, there was a flyer circulating in the online space presenting the foundation of the museum as illegal and supported by the Global Jewish Congress, which imposes its will in Romania by way of the political parties, which are mere instruments to them.

Congresul Mondial Evreiesc comandă în România!

Secretarul general al Guvernului, Toni Greblă, a recunoscut public:
Congresul Mondial Evreiesc a cerut conducerii României să dea o lege prin care să se înființeze în București un mega-muzeu al holocaustului și al istoriei evreilor, cu bani de la buget – 30 milioane euro.

Viorica Dăncilă a semnat că Guvernul este de acord și că nu contează de la ce minister ia banii.
Acum Viorica Dăncilă candidează la președinție și se întâlnește în SUA cu șefii Congresului Mondial Evreiesc. Oare de ce?

Parlamentul a votat legea în UNANIMITATE, în regim de URGENTĂ!
Pentru USR, PSD, PNL și PMP înființarea unui mega-muzeu evreiesc cu bani de la buget este o prioritate.

Au dat pentru el cea mai mare clădire istorică de pe Calea Victoriei (8 000 mp), care este a statului român.

Pentru Muzeul Național de Istorie a României, care e închis de 15 ani, nici Parlamentul și niciun guvern (Boc, Ungureanu, Ponta, Cioloș sau Dăncilă) nu au făcut nimic.

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1. favorizează minoritatea evreiască: e singura minoritate din România căreia i se înființează un muzeu prin lege, finanțat direct de prim-ministru, pe motiv că aceasta "și-a dedicat întreaga existență dezvoltării și binelui României"!!!
2. încalcă Constituția României: Parlamentul nu are dreptul să dea o lege prin care să ia decizii în locul Guvernului, muzeul fiind în subordinea unui departament al Guvernului;
3. încalcă un document de stat – "Raportul final" al Comisiei Wiesel - care cere ca prezentarea perioadei holocaustului să fie integrată în Muzeul Național de Istorie a României, nu izolată într-un muzeu propriu.

Acum legea se află pe masa lui Iohannis pentru promulgare. O poate semna, o poate trimite înapoi în Parlament sau o poate trimite pentru verificare la Curtea Constituțională.

Ce ați vrea să facă Iohannis ca să îi mai dați votul Dvs?

Oare de ce presa tace despre acest subiect?

Mai multe informații: procesmuzeuholocaust.info

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*"The Global Jewish Congress rules in Romania!
The General Secretary of the Government, Toni Greblă, has publicly admitted:
'The Global Jewish Congress has asked Romania's leadership to pass a law for the foundation of a mega-museum of the Holocaust and history of the Jews with money from the public budget – 30 million euro.' Viorica Dăncilă signed that the Government agrees and it does not matter what Ministry would pay the money. Now Viorica Dăncilă is a presidential candidate and meets the heads of the Global Jewish Congress in the USA. I wonder why? The Parliament has voted the law*

UNANIMOUSLY and by EMERGENCY procedure. For USR, PSD, PNL, and PMP, the foundation of a Jewish mega-museum with public money is a priority. They have given for the museum the biggest historical building on Calea Victoriei (8000 sqm), which is property of the Romanian state. For the Museum of National History of Romania, which has been closed for 15 years, neither the Parliament, nor any government (Bog, Ungureanu, Ponta, Cioloș, or Dăncilă) have done anything.

The law for the foundation of a museum of history of the Jews and holocaust in Romania is illegal because:

- 1. It favours the Jewish minority: it is the only minority in Romania that would have a dedicated museum decreed by law, financed directly by the Prime Minister, on the pretext that it 'has dedicated its entire existence to the development and the good of Romania'!!!*
- 2. It infringes the Romanian Constitution: the Parliament does not have the right to adopt a law by which it would make decisions instead of the Government, the museum being subordinated to a department of the Government.*
- 3. It is against a state document – the “Final Report” of the Wiesel Commission – which argues for the presentation of the Holocaust as an integrated part of the Museum of National History of Romania, not isolated in its own museum.*

Now the law is on Iohannis' desk for promulgation. He can sign it, he can send it back to the Parliament, or he can send it to the Constitutional Court for verification. What would you want Iohannis to do for him to get your vote again? Why is the press silent on this subject? More information on: procesmuzeuholocaust.info.”

Talking about the location of the future museum, several months after the dispute had subsided, in an interview given on the 13th of October 2019 to Sorin Șerb for *Radio Free Europe Moldova (Radio Europa Liberă Moldova)*, Alexandru Florian remembers that “the most extravagant moment was when a group of 15-20 Bucharest citizens, animated by nationalist ideals and who did not want a museum of the Holocaust in Bucharest, organised a meeting in front of our Institute, in September” (Florian 2019).

Despite various public manifestations attempting to block the establishment of a National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania (protests, pickets, court actions), the Law concerning its establishment was promulgated as Law no. 174/2019 by President Klaus Iohannis during a public ceremony on Tuesday, the 8th of October 2019, at 17:00h, in the Unification Hall at the “Cotroceni” Palace, and then published in the Official Gazette no. 820/9 October 2019.

Asked about the significance of adopting and signing the Law for the establishment of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania, Alexandru Florian declared for *Radio Free Europe Moldova* that the act means “the official, public recognition of the fact that this museum project is supported by state institutions, respectively the Presidency, the Government, and the Parliament”. The other aspect the Director of the “Elie Wiesel” Institute has emphasised “is the fact that this Law expressly provides that the location of the future quarters of the Museum is 218 Calea Victoriei, and, because the Law is always right, like it or not, the very tense and fake debate started during the summer is now put out” (Florian 2019).



Fig. 3

Referring to the messages officially transmitted on the occasion of the ceremony for the promulgation of the Law at the “Cotroceni” Palace, Alexandru Florian (2019) commented in the interview given to Sorin Şerb that “The National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania accomplishes at least two very important social functions: one is that of memory and the other one is educational-informational”. Pointing out that during the interwar period the Jewish minority in Romania represented an important part of the country’s population (in 1930, there were 756,930 persons representing 4,2% of the population), he added that “the museum aims at illustrating, informing everyone that would visit it, about the contribution of Jews to the process of modernising Romania, developing its economy and industry, and last but not least to Romanian

culture”. The memorial component “is related to the History of the Holocaust (...) which is still little-known in Romania, little-assumed by the citizens, not at an institutional level, but by the citizens”. From Alexandru Florian’s perspective expressed in the interview for *Radio Free Europe Moldova*, the lack of knowledge is related to the lack of interest “for a history that represents a moment, a black spot in the history of Romania. It is about a period when an ethnic group in Romania, by the responsibility of the Romanian state, was practically exterminated. Around 40% of the Jewish community in Romania no longer existed after 1945” (Florian 2019).

Discussing about the legitimacy of such a museum, as well as of a museum of communism, Sorin Şerb from *Radio Free Europe Moldova* asked Director Florian “how come Romania has both long-term and short-term memory problems?” (Şerb 2019). First off, Alexandru Florian (2019) explained to Sorin Şerb that “the subject of Holocaust vs. Gulag or Holocaust vs. the repressive events during the communist regime in Romania is a sensitive point of the Romanian civil society [that] emerged immediately after the Revolution in December 1989, as well as in the public discourse of a certain segment of the intelligentsia”. However, in *Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania*, Florian (2018) had admitted that during the period of transition, “the Romanian state was extremely permissive and left the public space open to all manifestations of divergent memories” (Florian 2018, p. XVI). He had talked about a misunderstanding of “the usefulness of historical memory” (Florian 2018, p. XVI) by those in power in the years of transition. This prevailing praxis for a part of the political class and intellectuals allowed for civic and political actors to use “excerpts of recent history in developing a collective memory to strengthen their public, social, or political statuses” (Florian 2018, p. XVI). As dealing with the past generally involves interests and power, in his view, “each of these actors promoted the memory they argued represented historical truth” (Florian 2018, p. XVI). Yet, adhering to selective (at times, even fabricated) ways of looking at the past had moral and ethical implications for a country in transition to democratic values. This is how Alexandru Florian explained in “Memory under construction”, the introductory remarks to his book, the post-communist political slippages when addressing the issue of Romania’s politics of memory with regard to the recent crimes committed in its past. Second, in the interview given to Sorin Şerb, he opined that any museum designed for either of the abovementioned events is righteous so long as it integrates democratic values, such as the promotion of diversity, respect for other persons, equality of the citizens with respect to fundamental rights, freedoms, and obligations: “In a free society, in a diverse society, there is a

place for any kind of memory, so long as it refers to a memory through which democratic values are promoted”. He added that “a Museum of the way in which the communist regime had worked, the repressive or less repressive moments, can and should be set up... But each institution, each actor with their own mission! The objective of the “Elie Wiesel” Institute is not to reflect, to think about, or to bring to the spotlight documents regarding the way in which the communist system has functioned in Romania. Therefore, our work focuses on another memorial segment” (Florian 2019). This two-folded process clearly indicates that memory is not consensual, nor is there a single memory. Analysing the politics of memory from this double perspective that characterises the post-communist Romanian society, Florian (2019) did not hesitate to stress out that he does not consider “beneficial this attempt of some to transform the existence of the Gulag and of the Holocaust in a communicational competition, a memorial competition, a historical research competition”. In turn, he declared that “because there is no kind of competition, it is about knowing our own history and taking responsibility for it” (Florian 2019). On the other hand, pointing at the tension ensuing from the double legacy of dictatorship, Alexandru Florian (2019) noted that, in spite of the official acknowledgment of both traumas, disagreements over the past supported by some of the political elites and intellectuals had penetrated the social texture and had negatively impacted on developing shared identity feelings and common knowledge about the past. This often led to nationalist manifestations, usually also involving racism, xenophobia, racial discrimination, and intolerance. In addition to the legislative and institutional instruments able to prevent and sanction anti-Semitism, the objective of setting up the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania is to produce a change in mentalities. According to the official statement of President Iohannis, read out in Iași by presidential advisor Andrei Muraru at the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Iași Pogrom (28 to 30 June 1941), this “is impossible in the absence of solid education and of a sound platform for debate on these tragic events of the 20th century” (AGERPRES 2016). Moreover, “[p]reserving the memory of the Holocaust and of the Hebrew cultural heritage is not only necessary, but also a patriotic act, because it helps cultivate national memory. (...) If we succeed in the coming years, as we set ourselves a target, to define ourselves as a regional model for research and preservation of the Holocaust memory, we will show not only that we have integrated the lessons of the past, but also that we turned this into an example of good practice that others could use in these complex times”, added Klaus Iohannis (AGERPRES 2016).

Concluding remarks: New threads on an old loom

The present chapter examined the question of ideological debates in coming to terms with the Holocaust in post-communist Romania and the stakes of integrating it into mainstream ‘historical consciousness’ over a period of three decades (1989-2019). In addition to the analysis of “the top-down state policies” (Warnier 2011, p. 96) of uncovering and remembering the genocide of Jews and Roma during the Second World War, the present research paper delved into the ongoing aim endorsed by the Romanian officials of establishing a National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania as a social and cultural “site of memory” (Nora 2001 [1984]) from which one can learn about the Jewish past and culture. The chapter also explored “bottom-up movements” (Warnier 2011, p. 96) of social responsibility and their contribution to memory projects directed toward Jewish communities in Romania. The stake of the study was to comprehend the ideological debate on the Holocaust, to examine whether the projected museum, as part of the state’s politics of memory, may orient social representations regarding the Holocaust, but also the Jewish minority in Romania, and to finally grasp the interplay between the institutionalisation of Holocaust memory and civic awareness. Of particular interest was finding out the extent to which the official discourses on memory and identity influence representations, assumptions, imaginaries, and contingencies within mainstream society when they interact with conflicting statements and social attitudes. The analysis of the establishment of a museum dedicated to Jewish history and the Holocaust worked as a lens for understanding the ways in which Romania’s traumatic past is (re)collected and shaped today through politics, but also social action. The analysis of different voices, meanings, understandings, and implications in memory-work showed the challenges entailed by the establishment of a museum dedicated to Jewish history and the Holocaust at the interface with formal endeavours to shape public memory and the critical engagement with the past. From this perspective, analysing perceptions on the setting up of this museum has unveiled the extent to which the process of creating a sense of belonging to a moral community of memory is impacted by the co-habitation of dissonant understandings and representations about genocide and the Jewish contribution to Romanian culture.

In addition to the social and economic reality engendered by the authoritarian regime overthrown in December 1989, the lack of official statements regarding the past in post-communist Romania, which gives an “official stamp of legitimacy to particular versions of history” (Gourievidis 2014, p. 155), is explained by mentalities, values, and feelings inherited

from the communist times. Although with deep roots in communist ideology, the political forces that competed for power in the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution tried to “present themselves as organic outgrowths of their nation’s history and portrayed communism as an enforced detour in the nation’s destiny” (Brunnbauer 2012, p. 494). As a consequence, longstanding ideological frames impacted on “the transitional Romanian political culture” (Tismăneanu 2015, p. 146). In terms of memory politics, the Romanian-state endorsed “the double genocide theory” (Shafir 2002, pp. 113, 118). In addition to symmetry between the Nazi crimes and the communist ones, another slip-up embraced by some of the political representatives and intellectuals was that of the “martyrology competition” between Nazism and communism. This approach to the traumatic past in Romania engendered a “clash of memory” (Shafir 2003, pp. 177-187; 2007, pp. I-X). Moreover, this divided Romania, in terms of memory, shows the extent to which the forging of public memory is embedded in ideological debates. At the same time, the minimisation of the wartime crimes against Jews and Roma has undermined the discourse about historical and moral responsibilities toward the victims of the Holocaust in the democratic Romanian society. All these elements had a negative impact “on the integration of the ‘dark past’ into mainstream historical consciousness and history writing but also on the popular memory of the Second World War in general” (Michlic 2015, p. 121).

On the other hand, although important steps have been taken in accepting the Antonescu regime’s accountability for the genocide of Roma and Jews, the lack of a decisive official engagement toward the institutionalisation of the memory of the Holocaust, and the weak initiative to put into practice various legislative projects in order to create “realms of memory” (*lieux de mémoire*) (Nora 1989, pp. 7-24) prove that the Romanian state failed²³ to properly develop a coherent ‘political memory’. The lack of

²³ This statement is also supported by Catrina’s (2016) previous research regarding recent outcomes of private initiatives of memory-making. An example of such private initiatives undertaken with the purpose of supporting local authorities’ agency within the memory arena is that one of the “Tikvah” Association, which unveiled, on the 15th of October 2015, Eva Heyman’s statue, a twelve-year girl originating from Oradea, who was deported to Auschwitz where she died in 1944 at the age of 13. Meticulously analysing the “Tikvah” Association’s ‘bottom-up’ actions of memory-making, Catrina (2016) stated that such ‘inward-looking’ perspectives on the Jewish local history are an “expression of social responsibility to create a medium or a space of communication to transmit societal values related to democracy” (Catrina 2016, p. 278). Although designed “to express emotions otherwise not possible, create provocative spaces of dialogue and self-reflection for local people, strengthen remembrance, and foster social activism and civil responsibility” (Catrina 2016, p. 279), the analysis revealed that the Eva Heyman memorial “fail[ed] to be perceived as a symbol of an accurate local history (...) and to draw attention to the threats of

the nation-state's determination to institutionalise the memory of the Holocaust through building a museum dedicated to Jewish history and the Holocaust leaves room for nationalistic feelings articulated through language (in various statements and declarations) and practices expressing disapproval, contestation, or objection to official decisions (such as protests, court actions), as expressions of social responsibility toward the institutionalisation of public memory. This explains the fact that, instead of being considered as a tool for collective remembrance and identity formation, and imprinting a sense of a shared past, the setting up of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania, as part of memory politics, has mobilised disparate perceptions, functioning as an increasingly prominent platform for identity and memory debates. Consequently, bringing to public attention official accounts on these issues has "activate[d] a civic consciousness" to take part in memory-work and "encourage[d] a critical perspective on the past events" (Popescu 2017, p. 27). Accordingly, the acceptance of the official memory of the Holocaust in the public consciousness has entailed a polemical engagement with the past, especially from the part of 'nationalists' or other persons claiming to be opinion-makers, both categories from the so-called civil society. Not being perceived as a place of shared identity, the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania has given voice to disagreements over the past in the public space, leading to 'memory rifts' in the official development of Romania's Holocaust culture.

racism, xenophobia and intolerance in the human development and universal human rights", or to "transmit a motivational power devoted to internalize the Jewish local history into locals' prosocial understanding and behaviour" (Catrina 2016, p. 280). To have the expected outcomes, besides financial and logistical support provided by civic stakeholders (in agreement with local authorities), the study revealed that such private "projects relating to the memorialisation of the Holocaust need to be registered in a coherent educational and cultural policy" (Catrina 2016, p. 280). In other words, internalising the Holocaust knowledge and memory in public consciousness is not primarily the responsibility of Jewish communities and organisations. Although we cannot disregard the role of social activists and stakeholders in locally producing and circulating the memory of the Holocaust, in order to have an integrative effect within the society at large, mnemonic regulations must be the Romanian State's major task. In our opinion, the state has the leading role in incorporating Romania's traumatic past into national history and providing 'social frameworks' for the memory of the Holocaust. Therefore, state's agency cannot be replaced by private stakeholders', which have limited possibilities when it comes to disseminating knowledge about the complex realities of the Holocaust. The solution to circulate shared representations of the past on a national scale could be a combination of mnemonic practices developed by local, communal and state agents.

The reluctance of some voices from civil society, but also of intellectuals and political elites, to endorse official narratives related to the Holocaust is predicated on personal identity references and beliefs, built in contrast to what was officially acknowledged following the *Final Report* of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania. The results of the study indicate that the ways in which individuals engage with the Holocaust stem from their ideological backgrounds, shaped by a sense of Romanian nationhood built on nationalistic feelings and personal stereotypes. This part of civil society refers to the historical past through its own 'cultural imaginary' and stereotypes about that past embedded in specific socio-historical contexts and ideologies. Yet, self-referential images of history recuperate the past in distorted ways. Dealing with misrepresentation, we can interpret such civic agencies deployed within the memory arena as an unwillingness to 'deal with history'. Although unrepresentative, we cannot deny the existence of these anti-Jewish attitudes in contemporary Romanian society, prevailing among Romanians with nationalist feelings. Such approaches to the past interfere with the development of 'historical consciousness' necessary to forming the foundations of a moral conscience.

Accordingly, the official acknowledgment of the imperative to set up such a museum as (1) a platform of interaction, conveying new knowledge in the contemporary Romanian society, and (2) a space of communication aimed to mediate meanings with the general public and transmit societal values related to democracy challenges the realm of memory. The clash of statements about the genocide in Romania and the public expression of dissimilar perceptions on the Jews and Jewish history slow down the achievement of a shift in emotional and memorial attitudes within contemporary Romanian society. Moreover, given that the acknowledgment of historical trauma as a basis for the formation of collective identity is still a ground for disputes shows the extent to which the utilisation in the public sphere of inaccurate historical knowledge, biased thoughts about the genocide of Jews and Roma people, and nationalistic identity stereotypes undermines the historicisation and the internalisation of the Holocaust into Romanians' consciousness.

List of illustrations

Fig. 1: Elie Wiesel with President Ion Iliescu in Sighet following the presentation of the *Final Report* of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (Source: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/photo/elie-wiesel-with-romanian-president-ion-iliescu>, accessed 26 August 2019).

Fig. 2: Public ceremony of enactment of the Law on the establishment of the National Museum of Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania, 8 October 2019, at 17:00h, in the Unification Hall at the “Cotroceni” Palace (Source: <https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/album-foto/ceremonia-publica-de-promulgarea-legii-privind-infiintarea-muzeului-national-de-istorie-a-evreilor-si-al-holocaustului-din-romania>, accessed 8 October 2019).

Fig. 3: Alexandru Florian, General Director of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, 9 October 2019 (Source: <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/alexandru-florian-%C3%AEntr-o-societate-liber%C4%83-%C3%AEntr-o-societate-divers%C4%83-este-loc-pentru-orice-tip-de-memorie-/30212373.html>, accessed 14 October 2019).

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Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS–UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, Contract 31/2018, 02/05/2018 – 30/04/2020, within PNCDI III.

Chapter 2

The Issue of Antisemitism in the Jurisprudence of the National Council for Combating Discrimination

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The primary purpose of this research is to introduce and examine the issue of antisemitism as reflected in the jurisprudence of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, one of the first studies on this topic. The National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) was established in August 2002, following the adoption of the Government Ordinance no.137/2000 and Government Decision no. 1194/2001 regarding the organisation and operation of CNCD. These documents are in fact the transposition into the national legislation of certain European directives. At European level, there are institutions similar to CNCD in all the Member States of the EU, yet CNCD is singular thanks to the fact that it can ascertain discrimination on 14 different criteria and can impose sanctions. No other institution of this nature covers such a large scope. CNCD is an autonomous state authority, under parliamentary control, which carries out its activity in the field of preventing combating, and sanctioning all forms of discrimination. The main method employed in this study is content analysis, simple or comparative, used in a manner specific to research in the fields of social sciences and humanities, Law and History, respectively. Several statistical aspects will be underlined where they complement the qualitative analysis.

Keywords: Antisemitism; National Council for Combating Discrimination; discrimination; jurisprudence.

Introduction

Antisemitism is a relatively novel quite research topic in Romania. The relevance and justification of certain studies concerning antisemitism are perceived as tangential to other issues such as combating discrimination, fighting against racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia, or propitious within studies emerging from civil society or public institutions (the barometers of tolerance measurement). Antisemitism, the need for legislative regulation and the recommendation of educational measures for

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promoting the human rights and the consolidation of an inclusive and equal society have been the recent driving forces behind his research topic *per se*.

In this regard, we are facing the pressing challenge to mark the real boundaries of antisemitism in Romania. Due to the lack of synthetic reports or research reviews that would focus not only on case studies but instead provide thorough, methodical, longitudinal surveys, relying on statistical data and tracking the dispersal of the hate discourse in multiple instances, it is rather vexatious to provide an exact image quantitatively expressed, of the incidence of antisemitism, of the relative proportion of its victims, and of the associated communication channels.

The number of research studies on antisemitism that discusses it in close relation with the fight against racism and combating discrimination and hate speech conducted and published in Romania is scarce. To provide an overview of this significantly under-researched area of academic work, here are some publications that were issued in the course of the last few decades. In 2004, I was the coordinator of a study called *Complementary System of Protection of Human Rights and Fight against Discrimination in Romania*. In the same year, another book was published by Gabriel Andreescu with the title *Nations and minorities*. Radu Cimpoesu published an article entitled 'Right-wing extremism in Romania' as part of a larger research inquiry on *Right-wing extremism in Europe*. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung ran country analyses, counter-strategies, and labour market-oriented exit strategies in 2013, under the supervision of Ralf Melzer and Sebastian Serafin.

It is also worth mentioning the *Hate speech in Romania* report authored by the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society in 2014, the *Report of hate discourse in Romania 2014-2015*, compiled by ActiveWatch and the Romani Centre for Social Intervention and Studies – Romani CRISS – and financed by the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society, the *Electoral discourses without discrimination* report issued by E-Civis in 2014, etc.

Another working instrument are the 'Activity Reports' or the 'Surveys' overseen by the National Council for Combating Discrimination or the 'Elie Wiesel' National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania.

I. Defining the legal nature of the National Council for Combating Discrimination

1. Legislative perspective

The National Council for Combating Discrimination was established following the adoption of the Government Ordinance no.137/2000,

published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 431, on 2 September 2000, and approved with amendments and completions by Act no. 48/2002, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 69, on 31 January 2002. At a later date, the initial normative document was amended and completed with a series of additional normative documents, namely:

- *Act no. 324/2006* for the amendment and completion of the Government Ordinance no.137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 626, on 20 July 2006, with a new numbering to the texts;

- *Government Ordinance no.77/2003* for the amendment and completion of the Government Ordinance no.137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 619, on 30 August 2003, approved with amendments and completions by Act no. 27/2004, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 216, on 11 March 2004;

- *Act no. 324/2006* for the amendment and completion of the Government Ordinance no.137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 626, on 20 July 2006.

In 2007, the Government Ordinance no.137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination was republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 99, on 08 February 2007.

2. Institutional perspective

The institutional perspective entails research carried out on the manner of organisation and operation of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, as agreed by the legislator.

2.1. What is the National Council for Combating Discrimination?

The National Council for Combating Discrimination (henceforth CNCD) is the “*state authority in the area of discrimination; it is an autonomous body, with legal capacity, under parliamentary control*”. The institution acts also as a guarantor of the compliance and implementation of the non-discrimination principle, in accordance with the internal legislation in effect and with the international documents which Romania is a signatory to (art. 16 on G.O. no. 137/2000). During the exercise of its duties, the Council conducts its activity independently without any restrictions or

influence from other public institutions or authorities. The Council is responsible for the implementation and control upon enforcement of the stipulations in the G.O no. 137/2000 in this field of activity, as well as for the harmonization of the stipulations in the normative or administrative documents that contravene the non-discrimination principle².

In 2008, the Constitutional Court of Romania provided the clarification for the legal nature of the National Council for Combating Discrimination. Following an invocation of an exception of unconstitutionality of the stipulations in the Art. 16-25 in G.O. no. 137/2000, republished, by the Decision of the Constitutional Court of Romania no. 1.096 on 15 October 2008³, published in the Official Gazette no. 795 on 27 November 2008, the Constitutional Court ordered to decide on the legal nature of CNCD in terms of compliance with the constitutional stipulations. Among others, the Constitutional Court has ruled the following: *“The National Council for Combating Discrimination is an administrative body with jurisdictional duties, which benefits from the independence required to draw up the jurisdictional-administrative document and complies with the constitutional duties in the Art. 124 regarding the enforcement of justice and in the Art. 126 par.5, which forbids establishing extraordinary instances. The Council exercises its duties independently, free of any influence from any institution or public authorities, in compliance with the stipulations in the Art. 1, par 4 in the Fundamental law, which defines the principle of separation and balance of powers within the constitutional democracy”*.

2.2. What are the duties of the National Council for Combating Discrimination?

To avoid acts of discrimination, the Council carries out its duties in the following areas:

a) prevention of acts of discrimination through information campaigns and awareness-raising regarding human rights, the effects of discrimination, the equality principle, training and instruction courses, projects and programmes at local, regional, and national levels, issuing studies and reports, etc.⁴;

² In accordance with the Art. 18 in the Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all the forms of discrimination, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 99 / February 8, 2007.

³ www.ccr.ro.

⁴ In accordance with the Art. 19, par.1, letter a in the Government Ordinance no.137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all the forms of discrimination, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 99 / February 8, 2007.

b) mediation of acts of discrimination, which represents a manner to solve cases of discrimination amiably for the parties involved in such acts, in the presence of representatives from the National Council for Combating Discrimination. This procedure aims to reduce and eradicate the acts of discrimination and avoid the imposition of fines;

c) investigation, determination, and sanctioning of acts of discrimination. For a more correct analysis of the cases and making decisions upon the petitions and self-notifications being received, the Board of Directors prescribes measures to investigate the cases, upon which they decide on the existence of the act of discrimination and order the implementation of a sanction⁵;

d) monitoring discrimination cases following determination of such acts of discrimination by CNCD, by means of the subsequent observation of the involved parties⁶;

e) providing professional assistance to the victims of discrimination by having the legislation explained to the interested people by CNCD legal counsellors, via the assisted guidance in terms of filing the petition and further information resulting therefrom⁷.

The National Council for Combating Discrimination has the role of informing and influencing Romanian society so as to eradicate any form of discrimination, and of investigating and sanctioning acts of discrimination, thus contributing to building a general climate of trust, respect, and solidarity, essential for a democratic and European society.

2.3. The organisation of the National Council for Combating Discrimination

To decode the legal nature of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, an analysis of the rules governing the organisation of this state authority appears necessary.

The National Council for Combating Discrimination is run by a President with the rank of State Secretary, elected by the members of the Board of Directors from its members, for a 5-year mandate. The President is

⁵ In accordance with Art. 19, par.1, letter c in the Government Ordinance no.137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all the forms of discrimination, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 99 / February 8, 2007.

⁶ In accordance with Art. 19, par. 1, letter d in the Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all the forms of discrimination, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 99 / February 8, 2007.

⁷ www.cncd.org.ro.

assisted by a Vice-President, elected by the members of the Board of Directors from its members, for a 2.5-year mandate⁸.

This organism is subject to parliamentary control and its annual activity report is debated and approved by the Parliament. The activity report is filed with the permanent offices of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate prior to April 15 of the following year⁹.

The collegiate, deliberative, and decisional entity responsible for carrying out the duties stipulated by law is the Board of Directors of the Council, comprising 9 members with the rank of State Secretaries, appointed and elected in a joint meeting by the two Chambers of Parliament¹⁰.

The acquisition of membership in the Board of Directors is based on the cumulative meeting of the requirements below by the interested person:

- to have a full capacity of exercise;
- to be a holder of a Bachelor's Degree Diploma;
- not to have any criminal record and enjoy a good social reputation;
- to have conducted a recognised activity in the area of defending human rights and combating discrimination;
- not to have been an agent or collaborator of the communist political police (*Securitate*);
- not to have colluded with *Securitate* entities or to have been their member.

The appointment of the members in the Board of Directors also takes into consideration the criterion that two thirds of them must hold a graduate diploma in Law. The nominal appointments for the Board of Directors are forwarded to the permanent offices of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate no later than 30 days since the respective mandates have become vacant. The appointments are accompanied by the Curriculum Vitae, criminal record certificate, and affidavits of the candidates, to prove that they had never been agents or collaborators of the communist political police, had colluded with *Securitate* entities, or had been their members.

⁸ In accordance with Art. 22, par . 1 in the Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all the forms of discrimination, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 99 / February 8, 2007.

⁹ In accordance with the Art. 22, par. 2 in the Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 99 / February 8, 2007.

¹⁰ In accordance with the Art. 23 in the Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 99 / February 8, 2007, which describes in 7 paragraphs the procedures for appointment, revocation or release from the office.

The permanent offices of the two Chambers of the Parliament publish the names of the candidates on their websites and forward the appointments to the sub-commissions, for the hearing of the candidates in a joint meeting. Within 15 days from the publication of the candidacy, well-argued written queries can be filed with the sub-commissions with respect to the candidacies.

Following the hearings of the candidates, the sub-commissions draw up a joint notice to be presented in the joint meeting of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

The candidacies are approved with the vote of the majority of deputies and senators in attendance. The duration of the mandate for the members of the Board of Directors is 5 years and their appointment is arranged according to a schedule based on the expiration of the mandates. In case a seat becomes vacant in the Board of Directors before the mandate expires, this seat is occupied by another person, in accordance with the procedure regulated by G.O. no. 137/2000 for the rest of the mandate left unfinished.

Revocation or release from office of the members of the Board of Directors is only possible under the following circumstances:

- resignation;
- expiry of the mandate;
- inability to work, as stipulated by law;
- receiving a definitive sentence for an act in accordance with the criminal law. In this case, the membership of the Board of Directors shall terminate *ipso jure* on the date of the final decision;
- the appointment requirements are no longer met;
- upon the proposal of at least two thirds of the Board's members.

Should criminal proceedings be initiated against a member of the Board of Directors, he is considered to be suspended as of right from the office until the Court's final decision. In case the person is proven not guilty, the suspension from the office is terminated, and the individual repossessed of his legal rights held prior to suspension and be given the monies due for the out-of-the-office time.

It is also worth mentioning that, in compliance with Art.25 par.1 in G.O. no. 137/2000, the members of the Board of Directors of the Council are guarantors for the public interest and, for carrying out its duties, the Council operates independently, with no restrictions or influence from other institutions or public authorities.

2.4. How does the National Council for Combating Discrimination operate?

In accordance with the Art. 29 par. 1 in G.O. no. 137/2000, republished, the organisational structure and the other operational duties of the Council and the Board of Directors are regulated by an Order issued by the Council President. To this purpose, the Order no. 144/11.04.2008 regarding the approval of the Internal procedure to settle petitions and notifications¹¹ was delivered to the National Council for Combating Discrimination.

The operation principles of CNCD are as follows:

- a. Procedure transparency;
- b. Promptness;
- c. Contradictoriality;
- d. Provision of the right to defense;
- e. Personal data protection;
- f. Availability.

The Council exercises its competences upon a notification received from a natural or legal person or *ex officio*. There are three categories of parties in the procedures taking place at CNCD, namely the petitioner, the interested party, and the complainant. The *petitioner* is the person who considers himself/herself being discriminated, thus notifying the CNCD in regard to the act of discrimination against him/her. The Council can be referred to by any natural person, NGOs, or any legally constituted entity who has a legitimate interest vis-à-vis the act being brought to attention.

The *interested party* is the person with a legitimate interest in combating discrimination who notifies CNCD about a discrimination act or who represents a person, a group of people, or a community which are considered to have been affected by an act of discrimination. The goal of the NGOs is to protect human rights or to have a legal interest in combating discrimination. They can refer to and represent victims of discrimination, provided that discrimination occurs in their area of activity and brings prejudice to a community or to a group of people. Such organisations also have an active legal standing when discrimination affects a natural person, upon the request of the latter (Art. 28 in the Ordinance).

The *complainant* is the person against whom the referral has been formulated in regards to an alleged act of discrimination.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that the acts of discrimination are generally included in the category of disorderly conduct and sanctioned

¹¹ Published in O.G. Part I, no. 348/ May 6, 2008.

depending on their severity with a warning or a misdemeanour fine, where CNCD is in the position of an officer and a legal body implementing sanctions.

The amounts of money paid for the misdemeanour fine are not transferred to the victim but turn into revenue for the state budget and do not stand for compensation for the victim's ordeal, but rather for the sanction implemented for non-compliance with the law and societal moral values. In order to receive a civil compensation, the victim must address the civil courts.

The person who considers himself/herself discriminated against can refer to the Council within one year since the act of discrimination act occurred or from the date when the person was able to acknowledge its occurrence¹².

Within 90 days following the receipt of the complaint, CNCD is bound to decide whether the situation being described is or is not an act of discrimination and take the appropriate measures (Jura 2004, p. 31).

The decision of the Board of Directors to resolve a complaint includes:

- the names of the members in the Board of Directors who issued the decision;
- the name, residence or domicile of the parties;
- the object in the complaint and the accounts of the parties;
- the description of the act of discrimination;
- the legal or factual bases underlying the decision of the Board of Directors;
- the manner of payment for the fine, if applicable;
- the appeal and the timeframe for it to be carried out.

The decision is made known to the involved parties within 15 days since its adoption and is effective since the notification date. The CNCD decision can be appealed in the administrative court, according to the law. The decisions that are not appealed within 15 days are legally enforceable (European Commission 2006).

In practice, CNCD settles a complaint through a Decision of the Board of Directors. For the purpose of resolving discrimination cases, the members of the Board of Directors are in the position of officers implementing the sanctions for the respective misdemeanours as decided in

¹² In compliance with Art. 20, par. 1 in Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning all forms of discrimination, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 99 / February 8, 2007, which gives details on certain procedural matters on resolving a complaint addressed to the National Council for Combating Discrimination.

the ordinance. They can delegate the duties of officers to people on the staff of the Council. Upon the request of the President, the members of the Board of Directors who are licensed law graduates can represent the Council in courts for the discrimination cases.

2.5. The role of the courts

When considering the competence of CNCD to rule only to remove the consequences of the discrimination acts and reinstate the situation prior to discrimination, whenever civil compensations are requested as following certain acts of discrimination resulting in moral or material prejudice to a certain person, irrespective of his legal or social status, it is the civil courts that hold the competence in regard to ascertaining and sanctioning cases of racism, xenophobia, and discrimination.

In other words, the ability to settle disputes arising from discrimination is divided between CNCD and the courts, while being the recipient of compensation and real remedies for the material or moral prejudice brought about by an act of discrimination falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts.

In accordance with the Art. 27 in G.O. no. 137/2000, republished, the person considering himself/herself discriminated can formulate, before the court, a request for being granted a compensation and reinstating the situation prior to discrimination or to remove the situation generated by discrimination, as stated in the common law. The request is exempt from the legal stamp duty and is not conditioned by the referral from the Council.

The deadline for introducing the request is of 3 years from the occurrence of the act of discrimination or from the date when the interested person may have acknowledged its occurrence. The proceedings take place with the mandatory summoning of the Council.

The interested person is bound to prove the existence of certain deeds that allow to assume the existence of direct or indirect discrimination, and the person against whom the complaint has been made has the obligation to prove that those deeds do not constitute discrimination. Before the court, any means of proof can be invoked, including audio and video recordings or statistical data.

Upon request, the court can dispose the withdrawal or suspension by the issuing authorities of the operating license of the legal persons who, through a discriminatory act, bring a significant prejudice or who, albeit a minor prejudice, repeatedly violate the stipulations in the Ordinance. The decision made by the court will be made known to the Council.

II. The double system of sanctioning antisemitism in Romania

In Romania, antisemitism can be sanctioned both contravenientally, via the action of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, and penally, prosecuted by implementing the Emergency Ordinance no.31 on 13 March 2002 regarding the ban of organisations, symbols, and acts with a fascist, legionary, racist, or xenophobic character, or the promotion of the cult of persons guilty of committing crimes of genocide against humanity and war crime.

It is interesting to look into the definition given by the GO 31/2002 to the Holocaust (section d) and to the Holocaust on the territory of Romania (section e):

“d) The Holocaust represents the systematic persecution endorsed by the state and the annihilation of the European Jews by Nazi Germany, as well as by its allies and collaborators, between 1933 and 1945. Similarly, during World War II, a part of the Roma population was subjected to deportation and annihilation.

e) The Holocaust on the territory of Romania stands for the systematic persecution and the annihilation of the Jews and Roma people, endorsed by the authorities and the institutions of the Romanian state and on the territories under its jurisdiction between 1940 and 1944.”

According to the G.O. 31/2002, the following acts have a penal character:

- Initiation or setting up an organisation of a fascist, racist, or xenophobic nature, the adhesion to or support in any shape or form for such a group.
- Production, sale, distribution, as well as possession for the purposes of distribution of fascist, legionary, racist, or xenophobic symbols.
- Use in public of fascist, legionary, racist, or xenophobic symbols.
- Distribution or making available to the public, in any manner, via a computerised system, of racist and xenophobic materials.
- A person's deed of promoting in public the cult of persons guilty of acts of genocide against the human race and war crimes, as well as the public promotion of fascist, legionary, racist, or xenophobic ideas, concepts or doctrines.
- Obvious denial, contestation, approval, justification, or minimization by any means, in public, of the Holocaust or its effects.

- Obvious denial, contestation, approval, justification, or minimization by any means, in public, of genocide, crimes against the human race and war crimes, as defined in international law, in the Statute of the International Criminal Court and in the Charter of the International Military Tribunal, established by the London Agreement on 8 August 1945 and acknowledged as such through a final decision issued by the International Criminal Court, of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, of the International Criminal Court for Rwanda, and of any international criminal court established by relevant international instruments whose competence has been recognised by the Romanian state, or of their effects.

Similarly, the public authorities have certain duties set up through this normative act:

- It is forbidden to erect in public places – except for museums – statues, statuary groups, or commemorative plates representing persons guilty of acts of genocide against the human race and of war crimes;
- It is forbidden to name streets, boulevards, squares, plazas, parks, or other public places after persons guilty of acts of genocide against the human race and of war crimes;
- It is forbidden to name organisations, with or without legal capacity, after persons guilty of acts of genocide against the human race and of war crimes.

A person who has been the victim of antisemitic attacks can find it difficult to choose the path to follow – should they address the CNCD or the prosecuting bodies? Depending on the chosen path, it is evident that the procedure is different, along with the implications and the procedural complications associated with it.

III. Statistics of the cases of antisemitism in Romania

Statistics for the cases of antisemitism are not abundant for Romania. On average, the CNCD receives 2-3 cases per year, while the number of acts regarding the offences stipulated by the G.O. no. 31/2002 is much higher. However, to date there are no statistical data about the number of accused persons who have been eventually acquitted.

The data for the offences included in the E.G.O. no. 31/2002 are as follows:

- 2010 – 32 cases;

- 2011 – 15 cases;
- 2012 – 26 cases;
- 2013 – 36 cases;
- 2014 – 64 cases;
- 2015 – 66 cases;
- 2016 – 43 cases;
- 2017 – 42 cases;
- 2018 – 42 cases.

Relevant jurisprudence of CNCD with regard to antisemitism:

Case 1¹³

Following the publication of newspaper articles, CNCD took note of the message posted on 19 January 2012 on the Facebook page of the Cabinet Director of the Mureş Prefecture. The message has the following content: “*Arbeit macht frei* (Work sets you free) – this is what protesters should understand”.

During the hearing meeting, as well as in the notes filed, the complainant stated that there was no intention to discriminate or to bring prejudice to the dignity of a person or a group. He, thus, considered that in this context, the phrase ‘*Arbeit macht frei*’ did not carry the intention to affect the dignity of some people.

Moreover, the complainant maintained that the use of the infamous phrase, which has more than one meaning cannot be considered an act of discrimination. This phrase has a varied cultural and philosophical significance. An example of this is Georg Anton Lorenz Diefenbach’s work, entitled *Arbeit macht frei* (published in Bremen, 1873), where he presented the evolution of certain characters, gambling addicts who reached virtue and a respectable social status through work.

CNCD considered that the aspects under discussion fell under the incidence of the stipulations in Art. 2, par 1 and par 15 in the G.O. no. 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, republished, and sanctioned the complainant with a misdemeanour fee of 1,000 RON.

Case 2¹⁴

In 2019, CNCD took note about a possible act of discrimination carried out by Mr. Aurelian Bădulescu, Vice-Mayor of Bucharest, in his statement: “My recommendation is for you to go back to where you came

¹³ More jurisprudence could be found at: http://nediscriminare.ro/jurisprudenta_ro.

¹⁴ More jurisprudence could be found at: http://nediscriminare.ro/jurisprudenta_ro.

from and let me take care of the dead of my people. (...) I will not salute you with great consideration, as it is normal, because you have not earned my consideration. On a separate note, I am glad that people like you are concerned with issues you are obviously dealing with as a guest in my country.”

In the large number of decisions with regard to freedom of speech, the European Court of Human Rights has shown that this right “covers not only the information and ideas well welcomed or received with indifference or considered harmless, but also the ones shocking or annoying. These are the requirements of pluralism, tolerance, open spirit, without which there is no democratic society.” (CEDO, *Lingens c. Austria*, no. 9815/82, decision on 08.07.1986).

Freedom of speech is not at all an absolute right and involves limitations in cases expressly defined by law. To this purpose, we should mention the practice of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg for the implementation of Art. 14 in the European Convention of Human Rights. The necessity of any restriction concerning the exercise of the freedom of speech has to be established in a convincing manner, and the national authority is bound to evaluate the existence of an “imperious need” susceptible to a certain margin of appreciation (Bârsan, 2005, p. 801). The protection of human dignity is one of the values protected in terms of freedom of speech. Thus, freedom of speech is supported to the limit where it violates another fundamental right to such a serious extent that freedom of speech becomes secondary. Freedom of speech also covers derogatory statements until the moment when they lead to violent incitement (*Surek and Ozdemri vs. Turkey*, *Karatas vs. Turkey*, *Oberschlick-Austria* and *Nilse – Johnsen vs. Norway* – CEDO).

The statements/actions of a person in a public position, in this case the Vice-Mayor of Bucharest, were examined. Freedom of speech is invaluable for each person, but it is even more sensitive or the persons appointed/elected in public functions.

One of the main characteristics of democracy consists in the possibility to solve through dialogue, and without violence, the issues that a state is facing, even when they are extremely difficult or disturbing, and democracy feeds itself from the freedom of speech.

CNCD was asked to give its verdict upon the divergence between freedom of speech and the right to dignity of a person, the ban on discrimination versus the complainant’s statement, the object of this petition. The analysis aimed to establish whether the limit of the freedom of speech had been exceeded and, consequently, an intervention by the state

was required, through the implementation of measures proportionate with the remit of the case in question.

According to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, to accept such an interference in the exercise of the right to freedom of speech, this has to be:

- stipulated by law in this respect, it has to meet certain requirements, namely to be predictable and accessible);
- to seek a legal purpose;
- to be necessary in a democratic society; and
- to be proportionate with the remit of the case in question (Bârsan 2005, pp. 769-801).

The first requirement regulating state interference in the exercise of the right to freedom of speech, i.e. stipulated by law, is fulfilled by Art. 2, par (1), in conjunction with Art 15 in G.O. 137/2000. Nevertheless, we believe that these legal texts have to be corroborated with the Art. 2, par (8) in G.O. 137/2000 according to which “the stipulations in the ordinance cannot be construed in the sense of limiting the right to freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and right to information.” We consider that both normative documents are predictable and accessible, even though they protect a fundamental value in a democratic society and are notions of an abstract nature.

It is the protection of human dignity that is involved in the case in question with regard to the possible interference of the state in the exercise of the right to freedom of speech.

The protection of dignity for a person belonging to a certain category constitutes a legitimate purpose in a democratic society. To constitute an infringement, a violation of human dignity, as a protected constitutional right, the statements included in the petition should have the following elements:

- a behaviour displayed in public, with a character of nationalist-chauvinistic propaganda, of instigation to racial or national hatred, or
- a behavior aiming or intending to affect the dignity or to create a hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive atmosphere against a group of people, connected to their origin – as stipulated by Art. 15 in G.O. 137/2000, republished.

As far as the complainant’s statement was concerned, it constituted discrimination in accordance with the Art. 2, par 1, corroborated with Art. 15 in the O.G. no. 237/2000, republished, since we are in the presence of a behaviour displayed in public and its occurrence online makes that information public. Upon examining the complainant’s message, the Board of Directors considered that the act had a nationalistic propaganda character

and aimed at affecting the dignity of a person, more exactly the the leader of the Center for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism in Romania (MCA) and, implicitly, of the Jewish community in Romania.

As a consequence, the respective acts were considered to exceed the limits of freedom of speech, and therefore constitute acts of discrimination. Thus, a contravention had to be ascertained and a misdemeanour sanction implemented as a legal instrument (see jurisprudence of CNCD, Decision no. 211/29.04.2015, Decision no. 104/07.03.2018).

We believe that the lack of rigour in the discourse or the manner of expression for persons holding public positions when talking about a certain group of people and the dignity of such people cannot be corrected by limiting the freedom of speech and implementing a misdemeanour sanction. Democracy feeds itself from freedom of speech, the communication limits can be overcome, step by step, through reasoning and, therefore, dialogue. The danger of limiting freedom of speech is even more serious when topics of equal opportunity and non-discrimination are used as instruments in internal political disputes, thus compromising them.

CNCD separates itself from such statements, but does not consider it necessary to limit freedom of speech via state interference.

CNCD considered that the facts it was notified about met the constitutive elements in the Art. 2, par (1), corroborated with Art. 15 in the G.O. 137/2000, republished, the statements did not fall within the limits to freedom of speech stipulated in Art. 2, par (8) in the same normative document and decided to sanction Mr. Aurelian Bădulescu, with a fine amounting to 5000 RON, according to the Art. 2 par (11) and Art. 26 par (1) in G.O. no. 137/2000 corroborated with Art. 8 in G.O. no. 2/2001 regarding the legal regime of contraventions, with its subsequent amendments and completions.

Case 3¹⁵

CNCD was asked to give its verdict upon the publishing on the complainant's Facebook page of a discriminatory caricature addressing the president of the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania, as well as the Jewish community. The caricature was posted on 26 April 2015 on the complainant's Facebook page. As understood from the messages responding to the respective caricature, the president of the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania is associated with various symbols of the state of Israel, of Jewish ethnicity, and the Judaic religion – uniform and kippah (yarmulke) in the colours of

¹⁵ More jurisprudence could be found at: http://nediscriminare.ro/jurisprudenta_ro.

the Israeli state, the Star of David, and the Talmud. At the same time, the caricature showed the director as a personification of the ‘Judaic Nazi’ and displaying hostility against Romanians, with a suitcase in his hand bearing the words ‘anti-Romanian laws’. The post was entitled ‘The Solution of Holocaust Institute...’, suggesting that the state of Israel and the Jewish community, animated by a criminal fundamental ideology – ‘Judaic Nazi’ – acted through the director and the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania against the interests of Romania.

The petitioner brought to the attention of CNCD a xenophobic and antisemitic public manifestation, of incitement to national hatred, by which an intimidating and hostile environment had been built against certain people in connection with their belonging to a certain nationality, ethnicity, and religion.

The petitioner said that on 26 April 2015, the complainant, self-entitled ‘Leader of the Legionary Movement’, posted on his Facebook page a caricature showing the director of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania.

The petitioner stated that the public impact of the respective post was significant. The Facebook page of the complainant had 949 people in the list of friends, the content of the post was accesible to any visitor, and the post had been accesed and shared by 32 other people.

The petitioner mentioned that the complainant’s Facebook page incited to national hatred and the message at the top of the page – a truncated quote from the Talmud – stated that the Jewish Holy Book encourages the killing of non-Jews.

The petitioner attached the caricature as evidence, together with an image of the complainant’s Facebook page and the message at the top of the page “The best among the Gentiles, kill him!”

The petitioner showed in the conclusions that the caricature posted by the complainant on his Facebook page was not merely simple satire, but rather a form of expression of national and religious hatred. The petitioner considered that the letterhead ‘Legion of the Archangel Michael – Iron Guard’ and the logo of the Legionary Movement used by the complainant had an antisemitic and xenophobic nature and were a manifestation of his fascist beliefs. Moreover, although the complainant suggested a similarity between this caricature and the ones published by Charlie Hebdo, the petitioner emphasised the fact that while Charlie Hebdo presented satirically and with no preference whatsoever a large number of religious, ethnic, and national categories, the complainant decided to disseminate a single caricature, hostile to the Jews, the state of Israel, and Judaism.

As for the message at the top of the complainant's Facebook page, which contained the quote "The best among the Gentiles, kill him!", we can make the following comments:

- the quote is taken from the Rabbinic writing Mekilta Beshallah 27a (Exodus 14:7). The text in the original represents a conclusion to the question: taking into consideration the potential moral probity, is it allowed during wartime to kill the enemies without discrimination? The response in Mekilta says that during war, irrespective of the enemy's abilities, he must be killed.

- because of the way the message is posted on the complainant's Facebook page, it has an inflaming nature and incites to hatred since, by taking the fragment out of the context, it creates the impression of the existence of a threat hovering over the Christian population.

Therefore, in the context of posting on the complainant's Facebook page and of his acts of legionary propaganda, the quote was meant to incite to national and religious hatred. In exchange, the complainant considered the petition filed against him as indefensible, illegal, subjective, vengeful, and practically hallucinating. The complainant stated that it is only a caricature and nothing else, and mentioned that the simplest answer to the respective accusations, which appeared "as taken out of Franz Kafka's 'The Trial'", is the famous message Je suis Charlie / I am Charlie.

The complainant argued that the caricature was a satire in response to the repeated actions of the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania aimed at certain personalities of the interwar period and more – personalities with a strong Christian, philosophical, and national profile – and against the Legionary Movement, a perfectly legally organisation and its members.

The complainant maintained that the petitioner had taken steps against awarding the title of honorary citizen of certain localities or the naming of streets and the erecting of statues for Christian philosopher Mircea Vulcănescu, Christian philosopher Petre Țuțea – a martyr, considered a 'prison saint' –, Valeriu Gafencu, Iustin Pârvu – the abbot seen as a saint –, Christian poet Radu Gyr, etc. The complainant attached such complaints from the petitioner or the answers provided by the authorities to such complaints. The complainant stated that all these complaints from the petitioner had been permanently rejected by the local authorities or the relevant courts.

The complainant showed that the petitioner had filed criminal complaints against both the Legionary Movement and against him, as the leader of this organisation, while mentioning that all of these had been

rejected by the Prosecutor's Office and the relevant courts. The complainant attached the viewpoints cited in the court decisions.

Moreover, the petitioner had initiated a legislative project (PL 193/2014 at the Chamber of Deputies) by which he had tried to render the Legionary Movement illegal. In accordance with the G.D. of establishing the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania, it is not the duty of this institute to interfere with the decisions made by the local authorities, city halls for instance, etc. As for the truncated quote from the Talmud, "The best among the Gentiles, kill him!", the complainant showed that the quote was not taken from the Talmud, but from page 70 of a book entitled *Judaism*, authored by Rabbi Josy Eisenberg, a book published by the Humanitas publishing house in Bucharest in 1995, which aims at explaining certain passages from the Talmud.

In conclusion, the complainant considered the petition as indefensible, illegal, and an attempt at revenge against the failed actions of the petitioner against certain cultural Christian personalities, the Legionary Movement, and also against the complainant, as a natural person. It was of the competence of the CNCD to establish whether the interference in the exercise of the right to freedom of speech was necessary in a democratic society. For this case, CNCD examined whether there were "relevant and sufficient" reasons to justify the interference in the exercise of the right to freedom of speech from the perspective of a pressing social need.

The identification of a "pressing need", namely the necessity of any restrictions regarding the exercise of freedom of speech has to be determined in a convincing manner, and the national authority has to evaluate the existence of a "pressing need", susceptible to a certain margin of appreciation (Bârsan 2005, p. 801).

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the EU member states have a margin of appreciation in establishing the limitations to freedom of speech. The authorities of the member states have direct and permanent contact with social realities and they are the first ones to express their opinion upon the existence of a "pressing social need". The margin of appreciation is established in line with the minimum standards of the ECtHR (see *Handyside v. United Kingdom* par. 48 and par. 49). To determine whether the respective caricature, the object of the petition in question, constituted a case of incitement to national and religious hatred, CNCD examined the purpose of the complainant, the context of its occurrence, the content of the caricature, where the caricature was posted, and the role of the respective person – the author of the caricature – in society.

The purpose of the complainant is important – did he want to disseminate opinions related to the petitioner’s ethnicity or religion, or just to inform the public upon a topic of public interest (see *Jersild vs. Denmark*). At this point, CNCD did not examine the complainant’s intention to discriminate, since this aspect has no relevance in determining whether something constitutes an act of discrimination. CNCD appreciated that, for this case, the caricature had neither the role of informing the public nor this purpose, but that it was rather a pamphlet directed toward the petitioner, a public person. CNCD could only ascertain the fact that in this case the informative nature of a message which could be of interested for public opinion had been exceeded, thus affecting the petitioner’s dignity.

Through its jurisprudence, CNCD noted the fact that “the Facebook page is a personal page susceptible to be seen by more friends, which turns the information public. Facebook is not a private space comparable to an electronic inbox. The electronic inbox can be controlled in terms of the information disseminated, whereas Facebook is an open social network, a space of public expression. For Facebook, there is always a small part of its content that is made visible to the public. Sometimes, people are not exactly aware of their private wall on Facebook, thus there is a possibility that a person sends information from his Facebook account into that of another to whom he has access.”

the perspective of limits to the exercise of the right to freedom of speech, the role played by the author of the caricature in society is decisive. The complainant was a person with a large influence upon a high number of people, hence no stereotypes regarding ethnicity or religion can be accepted in such cases.

CNCD reiterated the fact that freedom of speech is a fundamental value of a democratic and pluralist society. In this context, freedom of speech plays a considerable role among the fundamental rights included in the Constitution and makes up the common core for exercising the fundamental rights in the area of communication. In this context, we have the right to a free press, the right to free expression in artistic creations or literature works, the freedom to teach science, and freedom of creation. Similarly, there is freedom of conscience, religion, and the right to congregate. This group of rights ensures the legitimate presence of the citizen in social and political processes. The free expression of opinion and beliefs, even unpopular or atypical, is a fundamental requirement for the existence of a living society, able to further develop.

For the case considered herein, the state interference into the exercise of the right to freedom of speech was required, as the party being complained against had highlighted certain aspects as negative, yet the

manner of drawing the caricature had led to harming the petitioner's dignity, to creating a feeling of inferiority, so much so that the petitioner's ethnicity and religion had been damaged. Freedom of speech is a right recognised by society, and the European Court of Human Rights often states its essential role in a democratic society, on condition that it does not violate certain limits related to the protection of the reputation and rights of other people. Caricatural forms cannot infringe this obligation, as the role of a caricature is not to harm human dignity but to point out the flaws of a given society and certain public persons. Caricature is a special genre of the visual arts, usually a drawing, even though it can be done using various techniques, which represents a person or a situation by means of an exaggeration in features or characteristics, in order to ridicule, satirize, or bring attention to it. Looking at the definition, we see that a caricature uses irony to defame certain moral weaknesses, political beliefs, negative aspects of the social reality, character traits in a person, but not to make contemptuous fun at the ethnicity of that person, which constitutes a reason for which it cannot be defended.

Through the manner of its conception, the respective caricature met two criteria of discrimination, namely ethnicity and religion. The petitioner was a public person, as he had attracted the interest of the press. Nevertheless, this attention should have been channeled on the accomplishments or failures of that person, as ethnicity or religion – and ultimately, human dignity – must be approached with deep respect. Criticism can be surely brought without inflicting damage to personal dignity.

Generally the caricature in question created a hostile atmosphere, as the right to dignity of a person was tarnished. Both the petitioner's ethnicity and religion were practically trampled on. Ethnicity, the cultural and linguistic identity, and confessional freedom are unique and defining for each person. The internal legislation and also the treaties Romania is part of protect such intrinsic values for the human being.

In accordance with Art. 15 in G.O. no. 137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination, with its subsequent amendments and completions, "Under the ordinance herein, any public behaviour with a nationalistic and chauvinist character, any incitement to racial or national hatred, or any behaviour aiming to prejudice a person's dignity or to create a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offending atmosphere, perpetrated against a person, a group of persons or a community on account of race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, social category or belonging to a disfavoured category, on account of beliefs, sex or sexual orientation shall constitute contravention, unless the deed falls under the incidence of criminal law."

In the doctrine in review on the right to expression and opinion, as well as its exertion, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (published in the Collection of Laws and Decrees IV/1974) states in Art. 19, par 3 that “the exercise of the freedom of speech right carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others, for the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals.”

The European Convention of Human Rights, ratified by Romania in Act no. 30 on 18 May 1994, stipulates in Art. 10 that “everyone has the right to freedom of expression” and expressly states the limits of this right in par 2 of the same article: “the exercise of these freedoms (to expression, to origin and freedom to receive or communicate information or ideas) carries with it duties and responsibilities, and it may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or sanctions as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, for (...) the protection of the reputation or rights of others.”

CNCD noted that the statements of the person complained against had a discriminatory character, according to Art. 2, par 1, corroborated with Art. 15 in the G.O. 137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination, republished, thus ascertaining that an act of discrimination had occurred. For the case under consideration, two criteria were affected, as stipulated in Art. 2, par 6, and discrimination involved both ethnicity and religion. Consequently, CNCD ordered the person complained against to pay a misdemeanour fee in the amount of 2000 RON.

Case 4¹⁶

In petition no. 3940/04.07.2011, the petitioner, who is Professor of Political Sciences at the University of Maryland and president of the Scientific Council of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile, brought to the attention of the Council a material in the *Kamikaze* magazine issue no. 26, 29 June – 5 July 2011, pp. 14-15, which he considered to have inflicted great prejudice to his image. The interview was conducted by the journalist Al. Căuțiș and was illustrated with a caricatural montage perceived as antisemitic by the petitioner, as he seemed to have been ridiculed via a clear referral to Nicolae Grigorescu’s painting ‘The Jew with the Goose’.

As for the journalistic approach of the interview, the petitioner noted that the journalist formulated a large number of his questions uncritically,

¹⁶ More jurisprudence could be found at: http://nediscriminare.ro/jurisprudenta_ro.

peddling ideas spread within antisemitic circles, according to which communism had been dominated by Jews. As an example, he indicated that the journalist mentioned a fictional etymology of Stalin's name 'Djugaşvili', which he pretended to mean 'the son of a Jew' or assumed, while twisting the truth, that 'the first prominent communists to come to Romania were Jews.' The petitioner detected that half of the questions in the interview, as well as the standfirst of the material referred to Jews, thus betraying the journalist's obsession with this issue.

The petitioner said that, especially after the Holocaust, the caricatural handling of the Jewish population is considered offensive. He mentioned that the respective year marked the 70-year anniversary of the moment when Romania had joined the Nazi genocidal project, a fact that had tarnished the recent history of Romania beyond repair.

The *Kamikaze* magazine sent its response with regard to the quality of the editorial product under discussion – an interview with Mr. V.T. – with a view to the allegation of antisemitism. The context was introduced first, in order to facilitate the understanding of the journalist's intention. During the editorial board meeting where the content of the issue was agreed on, several events stirring public debate were discussed. One of such events was generated by a statement that the President of Romania, Mr. T.B., had made several days earlier on a TV station. You see, we are still undecided how to place our values. For instance, for all of us and history, Antonescu is still responsible for the Holocaust against Jews and Roma people, taking them to Transnistria... No one says that the Romanian state had a head of state back then. He was only a Prime Minister at that time. We give some fortunes, and think of others as war criminals – the head of state and the prime minister. Just because one of them was a servant for the Russians and left the country when abdicated, we forgive him of all his sins. The statement of Mr. President T.B. aroused a strong debate in Romania and on the international stage, whereby the suspicious antisemitism allegations qualified to be included on the publication agenda and the editorial format was not binding, just an interview with a person to be relevant for the topic. V.T. was meeting more criteria – he is a Jew, knowledgeable about history, he was the author of the Report on the crimes of communism in Romania, and he was well informed about the president due to his position as his advisor.

In terms of the referrals to ethnicity, the person complained against maintained that during the interview, the main mission of the journalist was to bring face to face a competent evaluator – Mr. V.T. – and the Jew – the 'culprit' B. The journalist's insistence at the beginning of the interview about Mr. V.T.'s ethnic group was precisely linked to the desire to build the

image of a competent evaluator whose opinion would benefit the reader. The reference to ethnicity was thus absolutely relevant and necessary for the topic of the respective material.

The discussions about Jews were branching out during the interview, which had a section dedicated to a lasting perception in Romanian collective memory that ‘communism was brought to the country by Jews’. The reference to this perception did not mean that the author of the interview endorsed it, but that he had given an opportunity to the audience to receive a competent answer on this issue, which Mr. V.T. provided, with no opposition from the interlocutor. Moreover, the author of the interview talked about the leaders of the Communist Party and the journalist did not make any derogatory statements about Jews during the interview.

For the caricature, the person complained against claims that the illustration of the interview was one of the main counts from Mr. V.T. He was shown an explicitly photoshopped image (drawing).

The elements added on by the graphic designer were an allusion to a famous painting of Nicolae Grigorescu, ‘The Jew with the Goose’. This statement generated two accusations from Mr. V.T. – one about the offensive nature of being associated with a painting that is antisemitic, and the other related to the editorial style, a caricatural handling of Jews that was perceived as disrespectful.

The person complained against maintained that caricature is a genre and a genre cannot be disrespectful. It is only the message that can fit this description. There is a vast contemporary culture of transcribing philosophical topics into caricature, there are novels transposed into caricature. If we agree to the idea to be possibly initiated into Judaic culture through cartoons, then we understand the plea in favour of caricature.

Regarding the idea of Grigorescu being an antisemite, the same person stated that it was a real surprise to hear Mr. V.T.’s statement that ‘The Jew with the Goose’ might be considered antisemitic. The available sources, i.e Wikipedia, Google, do not have any entries that would point to such an interpretation of the painting. On the contrary, fascinating references can be found about the documentary value of the painting, as well as its valence as ‘social satire’. Placed in the historical context, the painting was made at the time when Romania – a deeply antisemitic country – had been coerced by the Treaty of Berlin (1878) after the Romanian War of Independence to amend the Constitution so as to allow Jews and Muslims to acquire citizenship through naturalization. In 1879, Romania abolished the respective article and reluctantly started a campaign of civility – Parliament was granting citizenship on an individual basis, after deliberations that could sometimes take up to ten years. Under such

circumstances, corruption was a natural result of this process. Nicolae Grigorescu had not only witnessed the War of Independence, but also the corruption in Romania after the war. The Jew he painted had his 'naturalization' application in his pocket, with a revenue stamp on it, and the goose under his arm, which was the bribe. The issue was of interest for Grigorescu, as he also had another painting entitled 'Jew on his way to petition for naturalization'.

The person complained against maintained that the only interpretation of Grigorescu's interest in Jews is that it referred to "a satire of the corrupt society of that time, where even a justified and lawful request from a Jew for his naturalization had to be bribed for".

The same person rightfully said that the questions in an interview can be, as any journalistic product, "shocking, offensive, and disturbing" in order to allow freedom of expression about an information with a public nature, since ECHR states that "not only the information and ideas well welcomed or received with indifference or considered harmless have to be accepted, but also the ones shocking or annoying. These are the requirements of pluralism, tolerance, open spirit, without which there is no democratic society." (Lingens vs. Austria, Sunday Time vs. UK, Observer and Guardian vs. UK, Thorgeirson vs. Iceland, Goodwin vs. UK, Dalban vs. Romania.)

For the case under consideration, CNCD ascertained that the invocation of the freedom of expression could not be admitted, in the sense that the deed would be confined within its limits. Freedom of expression is not an absolute right and has limitations in situations expressly stipulated by law. To this purpose, the practice of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg is relevant in implementing the Art. 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights. The necessity of any restriction concerning the exercise of the freedom of expression needs to be established in a convincing way and the national authority has the duty to evaluate the existence of a "pressing need", susceptible to a certain margin of appreciation.

The limitations to freedom of expression come from the necessity to preserve peace and to defend the moral rights of groups that were historically discriminated. Such limitations are endorsed by the efforts undertaken against any attempt to restore a totalitarian ideology and the efforts to eliminate racial discrimination and negationism. The European Court of Human Rights stated that certain pieces of writing had the potential to oppose the fundamental values of the Convention, as its Preamble mentions, namely peace and justice. "This argumentation is adopted by the Court for Garaudy case (Garaudy vs. France, ECtHR 24 March 2003) as

considering that the contentious book has a strong negationist character and, therefore, it does not abide by these fundamental values.” The judges in Strasbourg considered in that case that the petitioner was trying to divert the Art. 10 from its meaning by using his freedom of speech in purposes contrary to the Convention, which could contribute to the invalidation of the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Convention – hence, in this case, the person complained against could not avail himself of the stipulations in the Art. 10 in the Convention.

That painting was made in a different historical and social context, and it conveyed the artist’s perception of the relations between the Jewish minority and the Romanian state. In ‘The Painter Grigorescu’, Alexandru wrote the following about the painting and the context of its conception:

“He stops in Lemberg [Grigorescu]. The old, silent, sad streets compel him, like any beginning of death, the large inns sleeping under a heavy roof of shingles and mainly those Jews you can tell are coming from poor Galicia, from the very origin of our Jews where the true race was preserved, in spite of the primitive bigotry of the nation. Here will start his first studies on Jews – salesmen for hand-me-downs, publicans, treasury bursars, teachers – every one in his movements and singular facial expressions featuring the general portrait of the race who is staring at you, from the shadow of the Biblical times, with those half-open eyes, observant, bright, eyes that never sleep – behind which you can feel the worried and tensed soul of the aged nation, always in a fight with the youth of the other nations. What a piercing, deeply serious gaze they are giving to the painter! And the painter, alas, what an intuition and power of fusion he has in his calling for the ancient tribe of Israel in the eyes of a poor merchant of pickled apples in Lemberg streets! Many things will be questioned until they settle into what we will call eternal. But there is no denial in having placed next to what the human hand had ever created more vividly and profoundly in the world ‘Grigorescu’s Jew’. In all of art history’s attempts to depict life through lines and colours, never have I met another painter to have heeded more deeply in a Jewish face the typical spirit of the race and portrayed more strongly *sub specie aeterni*. Abroad, it is known as ‘The Jew with the Goose’, exhibited for the first time in the Salon of the French painting in the spring of 1880 and then at his exhibition in Paris (1887) in Boulevard des Italiens, about which the press is talking as a special event in the artistic world. There is no doubt that this is a truly powerful painting, ‘The soon-to-be Romanian citizen’, as the painter calls it. To entertain his model, to light the Semitic spark in his eyes, Grigorescu would always tell him exciting stories about the dizzying game of millions in the country of dollars. An ugly Jew, of a brutal and repulsive hideousness, his hair and beard unkempt,

big and crooked mouth, his swollen nose and those eyes typical for the race – ailing, small, washy, no eyelashes, reddish and bloated eyelids; in his left hand, he holds a piece of paper, the rooting letter on which you can see the words ‘Your Honor, Dear Deputies...’, and in his right hand he greedily clutches on a goose – the kickback for this transaction – and I do not know how to describe the five fingers spread out and buried in the white and soft feathers on the goose chest that is aching – you would expect to see her leap from his grip, shaking her feathers and screaming for joy of being free. The Jew’s face is animated by a light from within – the light of inspiration... the flash of a thought coming from far away and going even farther than his humble life – a link in the big and holy chain. All Jews, from the salesman in Harlau to Rotschild, are there” (Oişteanu, 2004).

It is a robust painting, of a magnificent verve – and undoubtedly it deserves the fame that it already enjoys. But the more factitiously you see it, and more intensely and honorably it is dealt with, that type of Jew from Moldova who is in the Gallery – ‘Jew in kaftan’ – and especially the other one, ‘Head of the Galician Jew’, who must have relented himself to pose for the painter out of great need and defeated by his greed for money!....So much tamed hatred in those frowned eyes, looking askance at the space in front of him, so much affliction on that strong-willed face, focused, of a dramatic ghastly gravity – you would say that an unending harrowing battle is going on between two races hating each other to death, thoroughly reproduced in the mysterious stare of a portrait.” (Oişteanu, 2004).

CNCD did not rule over the nature of the painting ”The Jew with the Goose” by Nicolae Grigorescu, but rather to the adjustment to the present and to the petitioner of this masterpiece. Among other things, this painting stands for the historical conditions of discrimination the Jews were subjected to, who were coerced to buy their citizenship and other fundamental rights.

Starting from this historical image, the person complained against featured the petitioner in the role of a traditionalist Jew who was trying to gain some benefits from the officials of the Romanian state, as visible in his behaviour and attitude (see the goose). We noticed the satirical character of the material and the image, namely the shrewdness of the communication technique. Even so, with a picture acting as its premise, the person complained against brought the historical topic of the artwork into the present, he customized it via the petitioner’s image and sent to the public subliminal negative stereotypes and prejudices (the corrupting Jew, the Jew aiming to bargain for favours, the Jew who is the master of finance, etc.), at the expense of the petitioner (of Jewish ethnicity) and aiming at the Jewish community in Romania.

Following his deed, the person complained against had created a hostile atmosphere, degrading and humiliating toward the petitioner and the Jewish community in Romania, based on the ethnicity-religion criterion. Such context had done a disservice to the petitioner's human dignity.

CNCD would not admit the plea of freedom of expression in the defense of the person complained against, where such construing would turn into an attempt of diversion from the initial purpose of the freedom of speech, and the person complained against would use his right to freedom of expression in purposes contrary to the Constitution of Romania, which might contribute to affecting the freedoms provided by the fundamental law.

Conclusions

The cases of antisemitism in Romania fall into two important categories – antisemitism acts that can be determined by the National Council for Combating Discrimination and cases of antisemitism that are criminal in nature that can be handled by the bodies in charge of criminal investigation, with the respective sanctions determined by a competent court.

As for the cases to be determined and sanctioned by the National Council for Combating Discrimination, they can be divided into several categories, such as:

- Statements of public figures in which certain antisemitic phrases or symbols are used: the case of the Cabinet Director of the Mureș Prefecture. He posted on 19 January 2012 on his Facebook page a message with the following content: “*Arbeit macht frei* (Work sets you free) – this is what protesters should understand”. The aforementioned message of Mr. Aurelian Bădulescu, Vice-Mayor of Bucharest, is another example that falls within this category.

- Acts in which the authors justify antisemitism through their right to literary or artistic creation – published books, caricatures, paintings with an antisemitic content: the discriminatory caricature addressing the president of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania, as well as the Jewish community, posted on 26 April 2015 on a Facebook page, or another caricatural montage published in the *Kamikaze* magazine issue no. 26, 29 June – 5 July 2011. It is important to mention in this context also the book *Holocaustul – gogoriță diabolică* (The Holocaust – diabolical lie) by Vasile Zărnescu, published by the Tempus Publishing House in 2015.

- Antisemitic insults and comments made by friends, neighbours, or co-workers. In a 2016 case settled by the National Council for Combating

Discrimination, a person instigated her child to say “stinky kike, go to Auschwitz to see doctor Mengele”. As already shown in our research, the number of cases of antisemitism handled by the National Council for Combating Discrimination is rather low, around 1-2 cases per year. On the other hand, the number of cases referred to the criminal investigation bodies is rising, reaching up to 66 cases in 2015. It is an unfortunate thing that such cases are difficult to monitor and there are no clear statistics to show us how many have been resolved and what decisions the courts have taken.

Despite the fact that it is extremely problematic to draw a connection between the antisemitic manifestations in other European states and the ones taking place on the territory of Romania, we surely notice a surge in the antisemitic actions in Romania, trailing the European trend.

What is worth pointing out is that in Romania, despite the presence of certain antisemitic manifestations, they are reduced to statements, assertions, caricatures, or insults, in contrast to the much more severe cases in other parts of Europe.

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Chapter 3

The Efforts of Romanian Politicians in Developing the Holocaust Public Discourse

Valeriu ANTONOVICI¹

For a state to assume responsibility for an aspect of its past, there is a need for deep understanding and acceptance of it. Moreover, accepting the past at an institutional level must be preceded by actions meant to raise awareness, by initiatives meant to educate, by memorial and commemorative events, by inauguration of monuments and memorial sites, so that the past can be recognised and accepted by the population, thus becoming part of the collective memory. People remember what they have lived through, what they have learned, or what they have been told constitutes 'true history'. A society's memory is always changing, just like society itself. That is why public authorities must be "depositories of the will of the people, and by extension, of the collective memory and the collective voice of the people" (Steinbock 2013, cited in Low 2014, pp. 152-155). In Romania, until two decades ago, the only victims commemorated on public monuments were antifascists, who, following the ideology of class struggle, were sometimes described as 'representatives of the working class'. This was a strategy to deny the Holocaust in Romania by pointing towards another perpetrator than the real, historical one: the Romanian government led by Ion Antonescu between 1940 and 1944 (Florian 2018, p. xii). The present chapter aims to analyse the approach of the Romanian public institutions, as reflected in the speeches delivered by Romanian officials, during the last 30 years, before and after accepting the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania in the Parliament.

Keywords: Holocaust; official discourse; social memory; Member of Parliament; Romania.

1. Creating social memory – mechanisms and benchmarks

“Why has Romania waited so long to reconcile with its own past?” this is the question raised by Elie Wiesel on November 11, 2004, in his message delivered at the presentation of the Final Report by the International Commission on the Study of the Holocaust in Romania

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(Friling et al. 2004). The question is still without an answer fifteen years after the Romanian Presidency accepted the findings of this Report.

Whether we are talking about the official history, or about the one that we have actually lived through, referring to symbolic identity, history is not just memory, but is by itself able to recreate this symbolism (Antonovici 2015, p. 79). In this chapter, I shall use the notion of memory as a tool for representing the past as constructed by a particular social group (a nation, a social class, a community, or any other group) through a process of invention, credit and faith, as well as a very complex selection mechanism. Memory acts as a transmission belt on society's power ladder (Confino 2005, p. 47). It is not a novelty that, irrespective of its ideological underpinnings, a state can rewrite its own history. What is new, however, is that political action not only creates official memory, but it also generates, as a reflex, a living memory, different from the official one, but still existing within the same framework (Antonovici 2015, p. 77). Obviously, the memory of ethnic Romanians and Jews (who did not even talk about their missing relatives, due to the pogroms or emigration) was different during the communist era, but both lived in a totalitarian regime in which the "Jewish issue" was kept under the rug (Rotman 2004). In Romania, until two decades ago, the only victims commemorated on public monuments were the antifascists who, following the ideology of class struggle, were sometimes described as 'representatives of the working class'. This was a strategy to deny the Holocaust in Romania by pointing towards another perpetrator than the real, historical one: the Romanian government led by Ion Antonescu between 1940 and 1944 (Florian 2018, p. xii).

It is important to know when, where, how, and who spoke about the Holocaust. How did the message evolve and how much commitment did it carry? It is important where and to whom the message was delivered. It is not the same to speak about the Holocaust in Israel or in front of Jewish communities from different countries as it is to speak in Romania, for a Romanian public, about the same subject.

I started from the premise that a speech of an official of the Romanian state (President, Member of Parliament, or government minister) can act as a 'memorial milestone' for collective memory. By 'memorial milestone' I mean facts, concepts, or attitudes which may remain as references for future actions or speeches of officials or citizens. The hypothesis is based on the assumption that the first public speeches were somewhat 'shy', without detailed figures and facts, lacking 'solid' conclusions, and delivered only in certain contexts (on certain memorial days, within bilateral or international meetings, scientific events, or private groups), whereas later, after accepting the findings of the *Final Report*, state

officials started talking about the Holocaust more and more. It is interesting to observe how these ‘memorial milestones’ shifted, how heavy they have become, and in what contexts. A new hypothesis is that in the ‘Facebook era’, the messages delivered on the occasions of commemoration days could just as well be another chance to collect ‘likes’. Messages are no longer conveyed as in the 1990s/2000s, when they were ‘driven’ by the national or international interests of the Romanian state. It is of high interest what drives current politicians to tackle this type of message and what speech elements they employ (victims vs. culprits; national heroes vs. Holocaust survivors; education of the young generation vs. facts understood by the entire nation or by a particular community etc.). We need to follow the types of symbols public officials use in their speeches and how they justify using these elements.

In this regard, we need to take an interest in how public officials prepared their speeches: based on what figures, studies, or historical facts. This is because their accuracy subsequently influences public perceptions and how the population relates to such a painful historical event. What exactly was the social relevance of actual facts in building up collective memory and what exactly have the facts focused on (to analyse the political, social and international context – Romania’s intent to join NATO and the EU)?

In my research, I have approached the stages of memory transmission, the types of memory constructed through political discourse: a memory of ethnic Jews, Roma or other categories – or one of a nation that accepts its responsibility for the Holocaust? Alexandru Florian (2015-2016) has identified three types of discourse related to Holocaust memory in Romania, ranging from denial to acknowledgment: 1. The memory of the victims; 2. The unwritten memory of the Legionary Movement and 3. Minimizing victims’ memory by ‘ethnicizing’ the memory of the Holocaust. Immediately after 1989, there was a trend toward “recovering national heroes”, whose attachment to the Legionary Movement was overlooked (see the Report of the Center for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism in Romania for 2002 – ‘Antisemitism in Romania’).

A significant number of the speeches delivered by the Romanian Presidents, as well as some of the speeches given by other Romanian officials at various commemorations or debates were collected in the volume *Testimonies and Images of the Holocaust in Romania* (Vainer and Vexler 2013). They represent the starting point for my analysis of such speeches. In the first stage of my research, I have recorded the historical concepts and facts, I have analysed the symbols and revealed how Romanians transformed from totally ‘forgetting’ to trying, as a nation, to

develop a ‘memory of accepting responsibility for’ the phenomenon? After analysing the speeches, I have cross-referenced the data to determine whether the items were ‘borrowed’ from reports and scientific articles, from local biographical testimonies, or from ‘globalized’ rhetoric (Goldberg and Hazan 2015).

The second stage of the research process consisted of a survey distributed to current and former MPs with the purpose of analysing how they had developed their messages regarding the Holocaust, what were their documentation sources, what were the target audience and the content of their messages. The survey is available both in a printed and an online version and has been sent to all MPs. After analysing the data collected via the survey, I have undertaken a series of interviews with dignitaries from different political parties (MPs, government ministers, prime ministers, etc.). I decided to interview the MPs for two reasons: 1. they are the people’s representatives in Parliament, and in that capacity they should act as the ‘transmission belt’ for the messages between the Romanian state and its citizens and vice-versa; 2. I have been working for eight years with Romanian MPs and dignitaries and I had direct access to interviewing them.

2. Speeches on the Holocaust by Romanian officials: Evolutions and synopses in the public discourse on the Holocaust

During the communist period the discussions about the Holocaust were few or strictly from the perspective of the ideology of a single party. After the Second World War some of the perpetrators were convicted, but within public discourse, the main culprit was NOT the genocide of the Jews or Roma, but rather the war against the Soviet Union or the struggle with the communist movement in Romania. In communist Romania, the contacts of social scientists with the Western world were limited and subject to state control, and certain topics could not be researched or written about. Censorship did not allow publishing articles, books, speeches, or films about the Holocaust from a Western perspective. Therefore, the 1990s represented a ‘pioneering stage’ in this type of discourse, a time when either very little was known, or what was known had to be revised and adjusted to international requirements. There were, and still are, contradictory directions in public discourse due to ignorance, carelessness, or lack of information.

There were MPs, government ministers, or even Presidents who confused the terms, participated in events commemorating persons condemned for genocide, and invoked philosophers or politicians who were supporters of legionaries or even leaders of the fascist movements. The term Holocaust was not only denied, but it was also often used improperly by

politicians (for example as “dog holocaust” or “pig holocaust” – referring to the removal of stray dogs from the streets or the slaughtering of pigs infected with the African swine fever virus). Others have diminished the significance of this tragedy or directly denied the Holocaust. However, they did not resign from senior positions and were not dismissed as a result of such statements. Others, when the scandal that ensued was considerable, were sent by party leaders to ‘re-education courses’ at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Thus, the assumption of this past is often either ignored or denied in the public space in Romania, or, in some cases, it is considered to be a problem concerning minorities, or history, and thus a more marginal one. For this reason, when ‘unfortunate’ statements of some dignitaries emerge, their colleagues or managers pretend not to hear or understand, or consider that the error is not so serious.

The first official statements related to the Holocaust were made, mostly, during commemorations or when the head of state was travelling on official visits abroad. In the first speeches there are very few concrete elements related to the atrocities of those years. In the first years after 1989, in the public discourse of the President or other officials, it was rather ‘personal memory’ elements that emerged about Jewish communities, or facts revealed in the post-war years by communist propaganda. No specific figures, dates, or events were mentioned. There were no references to studies, exact data, or very clear episodes.

It is true that several times there was a discrepancy between the message and the reality. The International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was set up in 2003. On 11 November 2004, this Commission chaired by Elie Wiesel presented its *Final Report* to the President of Romania, and the Report was published afterwards. There were also discussions about museums and memorials, but without finality, either due to the alleged lack of money, lack of space, or lack of interest (see Sonia Catrina’s study on the National Museum of the Jewish History and the Holocaust in this volume).

3. How Romanian members of Parliament “develop” their discourses on the Holocaust – research data

In an attempt to answer the research questions, I designed a questionnaire consisting of ten questions and delivered it to 100 former and current senators and deputies from all political parties, during the period September to October 2019. The questionnaire was delivered both online and in person. The aim was to discover how the members of the Chamber of

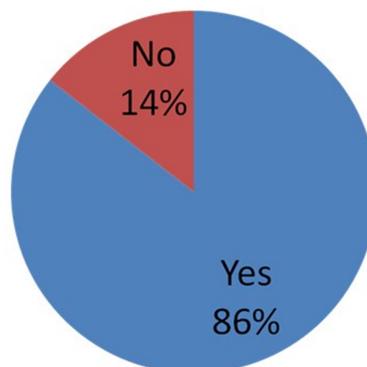
Deputies and senators have developed their speeches related to the Holocaust.

As a conclusion, the statements related to the Holocaust made by Romanian politicians in public space are frequently marked by confusions. It was very interesting to discover what lessons the MPs drew from this tragic phenomenon. Over half of the MPs said that through their messages about the Holocaust they aimed to explain what really happened (54.2%). Thus, they acknowledged that, due to their position, they have an educational role in society. At the same time, they mentioned that their messages sent a signal of accepting responsibility for the past. Those statements should be considered in a contextual manner: 1. How have they been trained and how do they feel the need for education? 2. Which is the role of a Member of Parliament in Romania?

Analysing the average age of the Members of Parliament, we conclude that most of them have been trained during communism or immediately after the fall of the totalitarian regime. At that moment, the Romanian schools and universities did not mention the Holocaust, and there were no courses on this subject either in the mandatory or in the optional curriculum. Most Members of Parliament have acquired certain concepts as a result of individual study or from the artistic world (films, novels, theatre performances, exhibitions). Obviously, a Member of Parliament should not become ‘a teacher of the nation’, their main tasks being those of ‘making laws’, solving problems at the legislative level, and designing public policies. As shown below, the Members of Parliament assume the role of conveying messages, educating and transmitting ‘the genuine history’ to the population.

Figure 1.

Do you think a Romanian politician should issue Holocaust statements?



85.6% of the Romanian MPs who responded to the survey mentioned that politicians should send messages related to the Holocaust. This is an encouraging figure that shows that they understand the importance of the subject and believe that politicians have a responsibility to deliver messages related to the history and memory of the Holocaust. However, 44% of the respondents acknowledged that they did not deliver a single message related to this topic throughout their career: “we know it is ok, we should have done it – but we didn’t”. The reasons varied: they were not invited to an event related to this topic, they did not have time to write something on a social network, or they did not want to write something of the kind. However, they mentioned the fact that they knew something about this important subject. A former Prime Minister and member of Parliament told me during the interview that he did not have such messages as there were no opportunities during his term to talk about the Holocaust or Jews, but that he was interested in the subject, that he also spoke to officials of the state of Israel in private and read a few books about the economic implications of this tragedy.

The memory of Holocaust is “controversial” (Florian 2015-2016, p. 36). Many politicians are afraid to approach such topics as the past the past is open to interpretation. Consequently, they do not want to take any risks and to deal with such a sensitive topic. Even when delivering a speech on topics related to ‘national days’, they praise interwar political ‘elites’ who had a xenophobic rhetoric or fascist sympathies. And the consequence of that discourse, although it has other aims, could be to update the memory of the interwar extremism of the Romanian right. The message could be taken over by the media or social networks and amplified into a huge scandal. Thus, we witness a lack of knowledge about history, a lack of clear barriers, of values and principles, or of well-trained councillors in this field. It is true that after accepting the *Final Report* of the “Elie Wiesel” International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, such deviations disappeared for the most part. Following the Report, ultranationalist formations no longer managed to pass the threshold necessary to enter Parliament. It is true that some persons who were formerly members of such organisations ‘re-joined’ the mainstream parties, but several times they were ‘censored’, and whenever they happened to have ‘syncopes’ in their discourse they were compelled to apologise. The last such *faux pas* belongs to a politician of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), who had formerly been a member of an extremist party, The Greater Romania Party (PRM). In the course of an

electoral campaign in November 2019, she addressed one of the presidential candidates, who is an ethnic German by stating the following: “I believe that Mr. Klaus Iohannis considers himself the head of a concentration camp and all PSD members should be introduced there for re-education” (Lia Olguța Vasilescu).

On 24 August 2018, Vasilescu criticized President Iohannis’ statement saying that the Social Democratic Party had gassed Romanians at the protests of 10 August 2018. The former Minister of Labour said that his statements were not worthy of a head of state and “as a German, to talk about gas, you should have a lot of courage”. The representative of the Jewish minority in the Romanian Parliament, the MP Silviu Vexler, reacted to Olguța Vasilescu’s gaffe by stating: “It is completely unacceptable!” He highlighted: “I cannot accept, regardless of the moment and context, the forbidden gesture of associating the President of Romania with some of the most odious criminals in human history – the commanders of the concentration camps. All attempts to introduce, directly or indirectly, Jews, Jewish communities, the relationships with the State of Israel, the memory of the victims of Holocaust and the drama of the Holocaust, as elements in political discourse and election campaigns must stop. Horrors that happened in Auschwitz or Sobibor, in the fields of Bug, through deportations from Transnistria, the pogroms or the trains of death, I do not think they have a verb, in any language worldwide, that could express the damage brought to humanity”, Silviu Vexler wrote on his Facebook page. The statements were taken over by the press and criticized.

The Union Save Romania (USR) notified the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) concerning the “denigrating” statements of the Minister of Labour, Lia Olguța Vasilescu, addressed to President Klaus Iohannis and to all persons of German ethnicity. Shortly, Lia Olguța Vasilescu rephrased the statement: “I did not want, in any form, to harm the feelings of the Jewish community, which was most affected by the crimes and horrors of the Nazi period. If anyone has understood anything else, I apologize publicly! I just wanted to defend the feelings of over two million PSD members and supporters who should not be considered guilty for voting a democratic party!” The statement was also made on the Facebook page of Minister Lia Olguța Vasilescu.

Such gaffes occurred in the fall of 2019. Four days before the first round of the presidential elections, PSD again resorted to xenophobic rhetoric in order to criticize the opponents of PSD candidates. The Sibiu and

Focșani PSD organisations criticized President Iohannis, Prime Minister Orbán and Dan Barna for having “foreign names”. Shortly after, the post was removed.

Obviously, the entire public opinion was shocked by these statements, and the leaders of the respective organisations were questioned by press and party colleagues. These examples reveal that society reacts to such problematic statements and that they can become lessons for those who would dare to make such statements in the future.

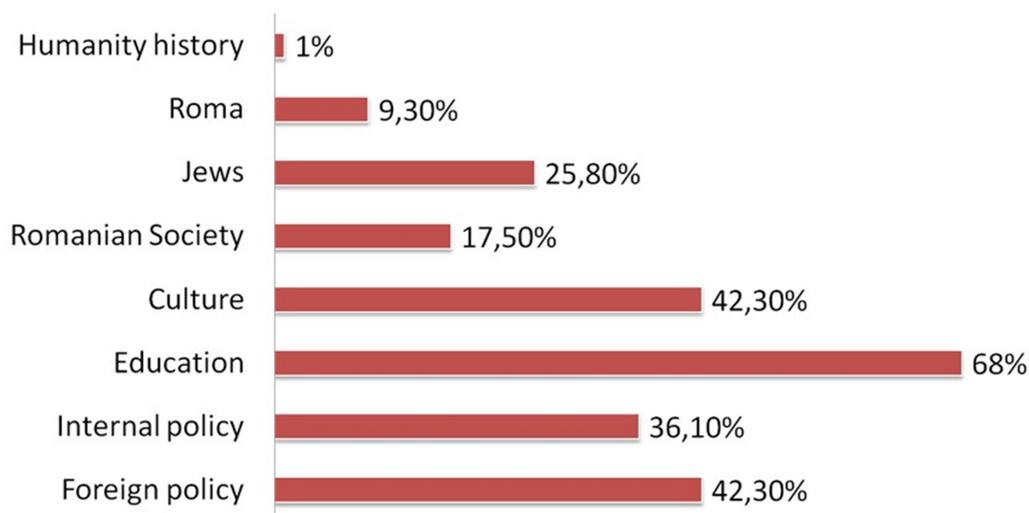
“Self-censorship” and “marking the deviations” also happen on social networks. Several persons who interact and comment on such networks are not necessarily people with well-defined values, they could be ‘guerrilla’ groups trained by political parties in the electoral campaigns. Perhaps, for this very reason, people with democratic and moral values do not want to be in touch with these groups and do not always react in due time.

We should also appreciate the fact that films directed during communist Romania are no longer promoted in the media. However, there are only a few niche TV channels that still broadcast movies like those directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu before and after the 1989 revolution – which promote confusing messages. If those made before the revolution justified communism, those made during the 1990s did exactly the opposite – Ion Antonescu was transformed from the enemy of the country into a national hero and legionaries were portrayed as the true elite. It is true that there was no audience for those films and the cinemas remained empty even at their premiere.

It is interesting to note what the respondents really know, and we have some extremely important figures demonstrating a total confusion related to how this phenomenon should be framed. Most MPs believe that the Holocaust is about education (68%) [it was a question with multiple answers], culture and foreign policy (42.3%), internal policy (36.1%), jews (25.8%), romanian society (17.5%), roma (9.3%) and history of humanity (1%) (response of a member of Parliament written under the heading “others”). We should not be surprised at all by these figures, as in the last 30 years most of the state institutions have not been able to decide on these aspects. It took them some time to decide who should coordinate a national institute in view of adopting laws or drawing up reports and studies on the history of the Holocaust in Romania.

Figure 2.

The Holocaust is a matter that should concern:



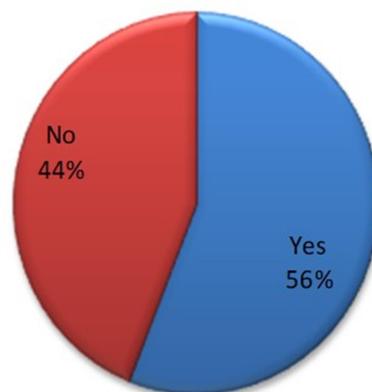
In the early 1990s, the issue of the Holocaust was discussed within several ministries. Confusion exists even now among politicians. The issue seems so complex that I do not know how to frame such a speech or draft law. Perhaps, it is precisely this result that shows the general ‘confusion’ of the decision-makers in Romanian society and the lack of concrete actions. It is also a combination of values, knowledge, directions, and, moreover, it is perceived as a ‘minefield’. Consequently, not many MPs take the risk of delivering speeches on this subject (see Figure 3). In addition, most MPs are part of a generation that did not learn such a subject in school. They were trained in a period when the interest of the media or society was not directed to such issues, a period when they ‘kept quiet’ on this subject, either for ideological reasons of the Communist Party or later due to a lack of information.

Whenever analysing the present topic, we are confronted with the level of education and knowledge of the political elite. A person who is not well-acquainted with the topic will be reticent to provide public statements on this matter. Especially in communist Romania, the time when most respondents were educated, a number of forms of antisemitism were present, such as: (1) popular antisemitism – the “foreign” Jew or “grasshopper” was guilty of all evils or (2) antisemitism of power – based on antisemitic clichés (Rotman 2004, p 163). Even public authorities were responsible for

discrimination against Jews, and for antisemitic actions and opinions. As a result, those clichés were carried over and can be encountered among the current members of Parliament. During the discussions on this topic, there were some persons who did not show compassion, regret, who did not understand the tragedy of the people, as mysticism or their own experiences were elevated above those historical facts. Responses such as “they lead the economic world” were given implying a certain meaning. Such responses were also present in the meetings of the Communist Party before 1989 (Rotman 2004, p. 164). Obviously, during the communist period, we cannot speak of citizenship rights in the genuine sense of the word: women, men, Jews, Germans, or Romanians had no equal rights, there were no equal opportunities in society, or the right to vote. In democracy, every person enjoys the same legal protections against discrimination and community members manage to maintain this equality by active commitment. Throughout history, citizenship has depended on gender, religion, ethnicity, class, wealth, education, etc. (Miroiu and Bucur 2019, p. 16). For the time being, in contemporary Romania, these rights are ensured. The fact that the Romanian people, deeply Christian Orthodox, have twice elected a German ethnic of Lutheran confession as President represents sound proof of tolerance!

Figure 3.

Did you send a public message related to the Holocaust?

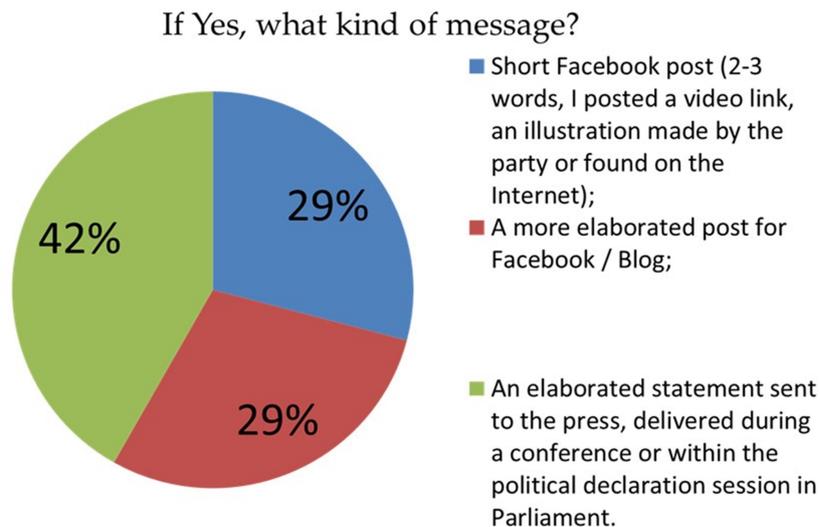


The chart above demonstrates the MPs' reluctance to convey public messages related to the Holocaust. When responding to the questionnaire, many respondents told me that they did not have the opportunity to say something about such an important subject. At the same time, it seems that

their education, especially when it occurred before the fall of communism, could be a factor in (not) knowing the subject.

It is interesting to study why many politicians choose to transmit messages on specific occasions. Sometimes one can get the impression that a Romanian politician’s Facebook page is a kind of ‘Christian Orthodox Calendar’ or an ‘Encyclopaedia of the Important Days in History’. There are politicians, usually in the second or third tier in their respective parties, who do not have access to the mainstream press, do not have national visibility, and who try to mark each national or international event by conveying a message. In Romania there is also a saying: “all Romanians are good at politics and football”, and politicians have rephrased this as “all politicians are good at everything”. Obviously, the percentage shows that not all politicians have chosen to transmit messages on this topic, which is at least honest – if they do not understand it or did not have the occasion (e.g. thematic conferences, commemorative days etc.), it is better to refrain from comments. Probably in the ‘hunt’ after ‘likes’ on this topic they would not have been very successful.

Figure 4.



Of those respondents who managed to send messages related to the Holocaust, almost 60% had delivered messages in the online environment (29.1% simple and very short messages and 29% slightly more elaborate messages), while 41.8% had more substantial messages that had been transmitted to the press or had been the subject of conferences or political statements made in Parliament.

The interpretation of these data should be carried out by taking into consideration the political communication. What are the aims of the MPs when they decide to convey such a message? Another qualitative study will approach this question.

It is worth mentioning that, in general, in the practice of MPs and other officials, messages related to the Holocaust are delivered in three situations:

1. In the framework of a ceremony / an official day to commemorate the victims, or an event related to a monument or a memorial place;
2. When discussing a draft law related to the Holocaust or the Holocaust Museum;
3. In the context of official bilateral meetings or visits to other countries or places related to the Holocaust or the history of deported Jews / Roma;

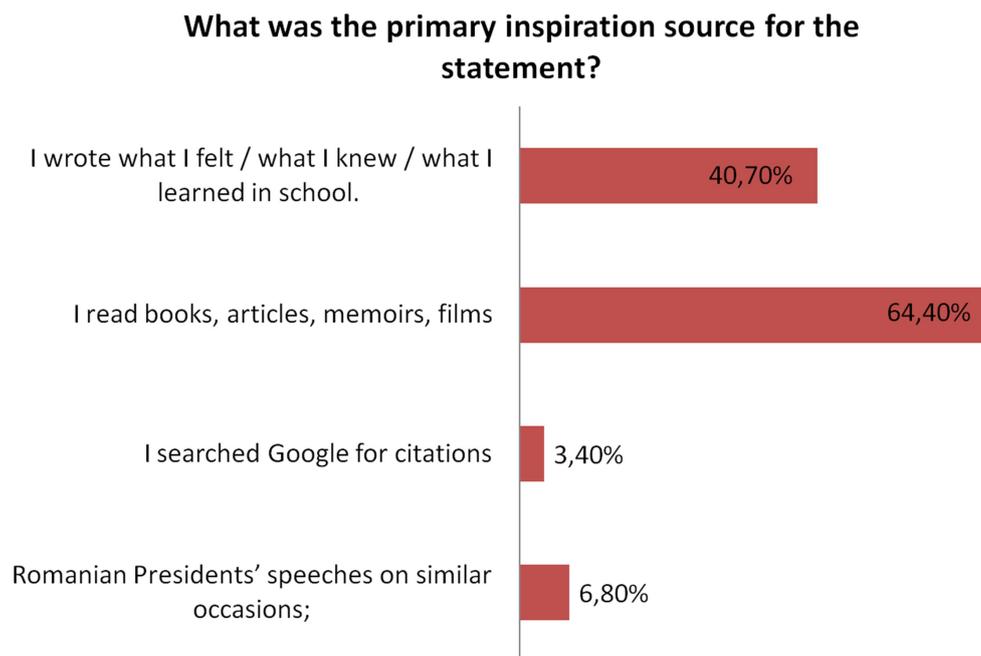
In the age of Facebook and shorter message platforms, it can be seen that almost 60% of the Romanian MPs who responded to this survey had sent messages on Facebook or blogs. The institution of the ‘press release’ or official discourse has begun to lose ground to new technologies. The purpose of public communication in this era is to obtain ‘likes’.

In line with this medium of communication, the message should be (necessarily) shorter, with strong phrases, and with impact statements along the lines of newspaper headlines. This is no longer a matter of detailed information – you have to say clearly and briefly ‘if it is white or black’, there is no room for grey or other colours! And if you analyse the comments, there are two types: ‘for’ and ‘against’. As some MPs told me during the interviews, “from this type of messages you have no way to make more friends, but you can draw insults instead”.

When viewed from this perspective, the institution of the Presidency of Romania has not complied with social media ‘requirements’, although the President has the highest visibility on these networks even in Europe. The President’s speeches have not become shorter or ‘trendier’, nor have they attracted more ‘likes’ on Facebook. They remained sober and well argued. The Presidency still upholds the ‘institution’ of the press release and of the solemn speech. Therefore, the hypothesis that the President’s speeches could be true ‘memory milestones’ should not yet be tested. It could be validated or disproved by future research, after several decades. As the most important speeches made by Presidents have already been collected in volumes and brochures, others will have the same fate. The foreign officials visiting the country will first of all check the attitude of the public institutions (President, Government, Parliament) and less the Facebook pages of the Romanian members of Parliament or the speeches made in the election campaigns, revealing blunders. The collective memory will be built

on the basis of those speeches. They should be strengthened by members of Parliament, local authorities, and educational institutions. An attitude, an opinion, and a form of identity are created over the years by repetition, commemoration, and learning a message.

Figure 5.



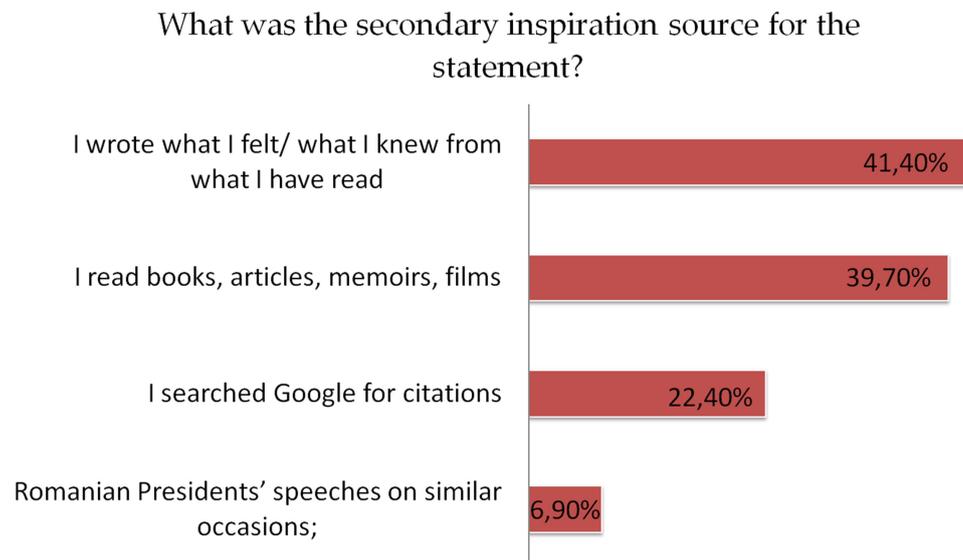
Another question in the survey referred to the main documentation sources for such a speech/message. Over 64% of the respondents said that the documentation sources were books, articles, memoirs or films, 40% that they wrote what they felt, almost 7% searched the speeches of the Romanian Presidents, and only 3.4% said they searched on Google for quotes and information. This is curious, since one of the hypotheses of this study is that the speeches of the head of state could become a landmark, a 'message guide' for public officials when talking about this topic. They should have acted as national 'memorial posts' or 'message lines' from which the other messages / positions of the Romanian dignitaries should not have deviated. Another question concerned the second source of inspiration. 22.4% of respondents admitted to have also searched for information on the subject on Google. In short, they had not read books or scientific articles, did not remember the last film on this subject, or they were not inspired to write, so they 'searched' on Google. From this point of view, it is relevant to publish on the Internet many texts in open-access format, without the need for

accounts, passwords, or other specific skills to look for information. If the first information that appears in a superficial search is ‘dubious’, history can be distorted by the speeches of politicians who have not studied anything about the Holocaust in school.

The hypothesis of the study is that the speeches of the MPs should be written according to a direction imposed by the President of Romania. Thus, whenever making statements about this topic, one should undertake some ‘mini-research and respect a line imposed by the state’. Based on the data available at this moment, this hypothesis is invalidated.

At the same time, it is quite possible that the respondents have chosen the desirable option, saying that they had read books and articles on this subject, as it ‘looks good’!

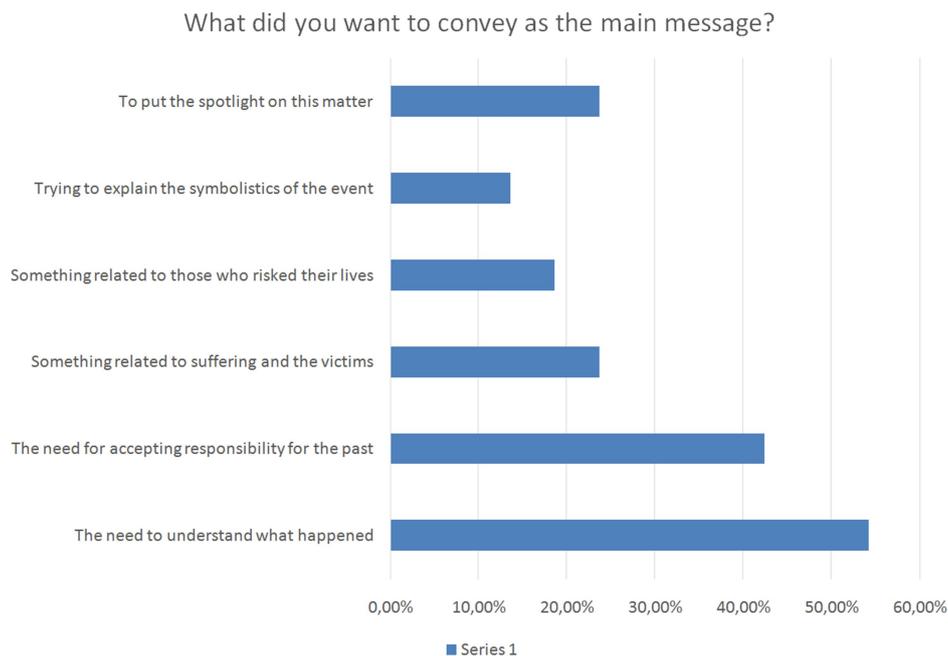
Figure 6.



The two charts above should be analysed and compared. One of the hypotheses of the research is that the MPs, in their documentation for a discourse of such sensitivity, ‘should consult the position of the state on this matter’ – the research results show that very few would be interested to see what is the ‘state line’ on this topic. And over 40% of respondents consider that the Holocaust is a matter of foreign policy, and, in parliamentary practice, when it comes to foreign policy issues, they receive a script from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a message line that must be kept in public bilateral / international discourses. However, it is positive to note that over 64% mentioned that they had read books or memoirs on this subject.

If for the first source of inspiration “Google searches” were mentioned by only 3.4% of the respondents, for the second option this number increases to 22.4%. This can also be interpreted as meaning that they did not want to acknowledge that Google was a reliable source of documentation. For the second option, more MPs admitted that they had indeed searched for information on Google. They could also find there the speeches of former presidents or colleagues in Parliament.

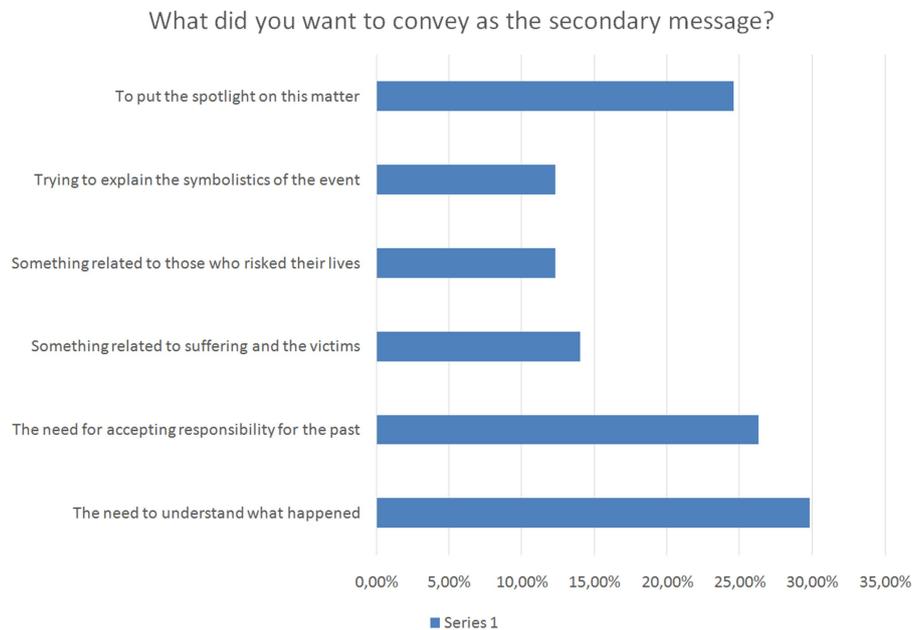
Figure 7.



The need to understand what happened can also be correlated with the response that this topic is highly educational. Thus, as shown by the charts presented above, it is often either ignored or there is a refusal in public space to accept responsibility for this past.

However, not everyone is interested in this topic. The duty of those in power is not to make certain confusions, not to distort historical facts or to spread false messages. If you do not feel the need to speak on this topic or you are not prepared, it would be best to remain silent, unless you are thoroughly prepared.

Figure 8.



Concerning the laws related to the Holocaust, these were adopted with great difficulty, after many debates in Parliament and following scandals in the press and society at large. For example, Law 217/2015, which complements and amends the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002 regarding the prohibition of organisations and symbols with a fascist, racist, or xenophobic character, and those promoting the cult of persons guilty of committing crimes against peace and humanity, was a step towards preventing negationist discourses. If such laws had not existed, the young generation would probably have been intoxicated with all kinds of messages and ‘national models’ or ‘heroes’, who, in fact, played a role through their activity in perpetrating the Romanian Holocaust. If such laws had not existed, in the absence of a proper education, the social networks would probably have been ‘smouldering’ with all kinds of xenophobic messages.

During the first ten years after 1989, the speeches, interviews and communiqués of the Romanian Presidents comprised topics such as: the need for education, Antonescu and the legionaries, Germans, memory, or conflict. As expected, most of the references to the Holocaust were made at memorial days, commemorations, during Presidents’ meetings with members of the Jewish communities (the Roma were not mentioned at all during these first ten years), or during international meetings (with representatives of the United States of America or Israel).

Before the 2000s, in the Presidents' speeches, during visits to United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for commemorations or international days, there were more debates about the Holocaust in general, about this tragedy in its European dimension. The statements were made either on the occasions of commemorative days or before Jewish communities. There was no clear acceptance of responsibility for the tragedy. The Presidents often had to react to certain accusations and justify why they had participated in certain events or why they had delivered a speech about the Holocaust. In Romania, the discourse on the Holocaust was one delivered with the 'hand brake' on. Most interventions adopted a discourse of 'outsourcing the guilt', whether to those who were in power – Antonescu and the legionaries, or Horthy –, as well as arguing that the people were not to be blamed, and that there were some who saved the Jews from death.

For example, in an open letter addressed to the Greater Romania Party on 23 April 1993, regarding the accusations of this nationalist party following President Ion Iliescu's visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., the spokesman emphasised the following: "The President spoke both against exaggeration and against minimizing the number of Jews in Romania who fell victims of the Holocaust during the Second World War. It is the duty of politicians and historians, as well as our diplomacy, to clarify the exact number of these victims and to correct the errors within the exhibits of the Washington Museum, despite the cooperation of our archives with the organizers of the Museum. I would like to inform you that at the Holocaust Memorial Museum there are presented not only the atrocities of the Romanian fascists, but also the acts of human solidarity of the Romanian people, i.e. the Romanian vessels with which the Jews, escaped from the Holocaust, were transported to Palestine, and the list of people in Romania who helped thousands of Jews to escape the terror of Horthy's Hungarian fascists from the territory of Romania, temporarily occupied following the Vienna Act".

Let us not forget that the times immediately after the fall of communism were very confusing. For example, in Cernăuți (present-day Ukraine), on 17 June 2003, to the reporters' question whether there "Was Holocaust in Romania", the then-President of Romania, Ion Iliescu, replied: "Not in Romania. It was a Holocaust; the participation of some Romanians or moments from the respective period of history must be assumed, but we cannot identify with Germany, with others who were the promoters of this action". Basically, the blame was externalized and the atrocities committed by Romania were erased. Also, on 22 October 2003, the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was set up. Later on, the law on the establishment of the National Museum of Jewish History

and the Holocaust was promulgated in 2019, after a series of scandals and ‘fake news’ related to the physical location of the museum in spaces with a potential for ‘social conflict’. Such a museum was necessary, as the past must be known and accepted for what it was, without hiding what the ugliest episodes under the carpet. We shall not be ‘less Romanian’ if we recognise that the Romanian state ordered to be liquidated and participated in the killing of between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews. In the Holocaust, about 135,000 Romanian Jews living in Northern Transylvania, under Hungarian rule, were also killed. More than 11,000 Roma died in Transnistria. The duty of the state was to protect them. The construction of museums, memorials, libraries, and research institutions represents an obligation of the Romanian state, at least as a form of moral restoration.

Sometimes things have been difficult. But when there was a national interest (integration in the European Union or the accession of Romania to NATO) at stake, the public discourses changed.

In addition to the constitutional attributions of the President of Romania, who represents the Romanian state and oversees the observance of the Constitution (Article 80), or holds the power to address to Parliament messages on the main political problems of the nation (Article 88), messages are expected from a President regarding national identity, accepting responsibility for the past, and assuming a direction to be followed by the nation. This is why the first hypothesis of the present study was that the messages of the President may constitute certain ‘memory milestones’ on adopting a form of Holocaust memory.

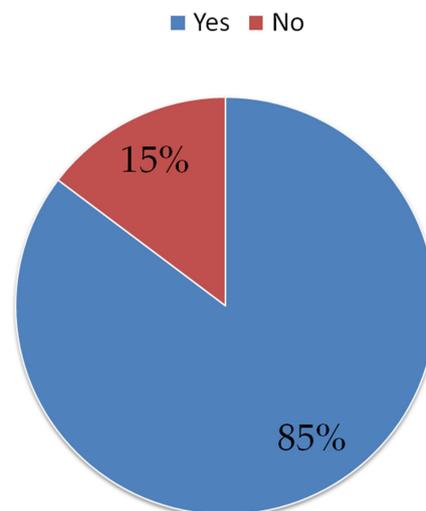
Regarding the analysis of the speeches of the heads of state, it is very true that they depended to a large extent on their openness. Indeed, from 1993 until September 2019 there are 250 references to the word ‘Holocaust’ when carrying out a simple search on the webpage of the Presidency. The frequency of these statements varies with each President. However, I noticed a greater concern for this aspect from the last (and current) head of state. Of these mentions, in the last five years there were 104 communications, interventions, declarations, interviews, and decrees signed by the President mentioning the Holocaust, while the rest of 146 such occasions can be attributed to the other three Presidents (in five electoral cycles) who were in office from 1993 to December 2014. The public speeches of the last President refer to topics, events, figures, studies, and personalities about which the other Presidents did not speak. Things have gone ‘normally’.

After the publication of the *Final Report* of the “Elie Wiesel” Commission, the speeches of the Presidents, as well as those of members of Parliament, were more ‘applied’ and ‘settled’. They were no longer based

on ‘standard’ phrases or ‘wooden language’, as it had happened during the first years after the fall of communism. The Romanian elite participated at commemorations in certain areas of Romania where such tragedies had happened, symposia, workshops, and solemn sessions of Parliament were held, where important speeches about concrete facts, historical dates, and scientifically well-substantiated figures were delivered. Various exhibitions and memorial activities were organised in the Parliament. There were also no ‘incidents’ revealing scandals or demanding clarifications, as it had been the case immediately after 1989.

Figure 9.

What if you were not an MP? Do you think you would be interested in writing about the Holocaust?



The percentages in the graph above are almost similar to those for the first question where we asked: “Do you believe that a Romanian politician should send messages related to the Holocaust?”. This was a control question to see how and if they changed their mind following the completion of the 10 questions. The questionnaire also had an open question, asking if their message was appreciated / taken over by people or the press – most of the answers were positive.

That open question reveals that the population does not reject *a priori* the messages related to the Holocaust. The citizens are willing to learn, to listen and participate in debates. The Romanian elite still have an important role to play in education. Perhaps the 100 members of Parliament

who responded to the questionnaire mentioned that the Holocaust was connected to education. On the other hand, perhaps the topic of the Holocaust has not been debated enough. The courses introduced in schools and universities should continue and become a generalised practice in the entire educational system. The national press should also take on this educational role and should include certain shows, documentaries, or interviews related to the Holocaust.

For example, George Voicu, in his chapter ‘Post-communist Romania’s leading public intellectuals and the Holocaust’ (Voicu in Florian 2018, p. 65), concludes: “in the intellectual debates in post-communist Romania, the Holocaust has never been a standalone subject of reflection or research, even if it was – and still is – a most sensitive one... by far the more prevalent in the public discourse equates the crimes of communism to the Holocaust following a strictly equalizing logic whereby the conclusion is always the same: the Holocaust and the Gulag are ostensibly alike, as there is nothing that essentially sets them apart. In the opinion of these intellectuals, the two totalitarian ideologies that inspired the two series of crimes are almost identical in nature (even with regard to antisemitism and racism) ... The research highlights the distortions of the concept of the Holocaust as a consequence of these parallel competitive approaches.”

The members of Parliament who declared that they had not written about the Holocaust, even if not holding civil service positions, justified their choice by stating that they did not want to become ‘involved’ in areas outside their expertise and knowledge. Some of them were more interested in “communism and national martyrs who died in the communist prisons”. As such, we witness in this case as well the confusion between the two tragedies of the modern world: the Gulag and the Holocaust, and some members of Parliament consider them without any connection and that they do not represent interesting topics.

Conclusion

Romanian politicians were reluctant to express their opinions on the Holocaust. Public discourse in Romania during the 1990s was a confusing one – there was confusion concerning values, characters, and events.

Only when there were prominent national goals at stake, goals which depended on the international community, as accession to NATO and the EU, did the politicians become more interested in this subject.

42% members of Parliament consider that the Holocaust is a ‘cultural’ matter and the same percentage consider it an issue of foreign policy, with only 17.5% considering it a problem of the “Romanian

society”. There is obviously confusion and a lack of direction involved. Therefore, the society at large will take full responsibility only when the image vectors (including politicians) will consider the problem of the Holocaust as one that belongs to the entire Romanian society, not just to Jews, Roma, or the field of education. And even at the present moment, when writing a speech, few are the ones who consider consulting other institutions about the content and direction of their message.

Taking into consideration that only one in three Romanians knows that the Holocaust also took place in Romania – according to the “Opinion survey regarding the Holocaust in Romania and the perception of interethnic relations” undertaken in 2017 by Kantar for the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania – the politicians have an *educational* role, as also identified by the MPs who responded to this research. To this effect, there is a need for a greater openness of organisations and institutes dealing with the Holocaust towards politicians, and this could occur through organising joint conferences, seminars, information and dissemination actions. In order to disseminate information to the entire population, it is necessary that certain issues are accepted and understood by the ‘elite’, opinion shapers, and those who have the capacity to distribute such information and validate it further within society.

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ANNEX 1. Survey

1. Do you think a Romanian politician should issue Holocaust statements?
 - Yes
 - No
2. The Holocaust is a matter that should concern:
 - foreign policy
 - internal policy
 - education
 - culture
 - by the Romanian society
 - by the Jews
 - by Gypsies
 - Other - Which?.....

3. Did you ever convey any Holocaust-related messages?
 - Yes
 - No
4. If Yes, then what kind of statement? (If NO - the survey ends here)
 - short Facebook post (2-3 words, I posted a video link, an illustration made by the party or found on the Internet);
 - a more elaborate post for Facebook / Blog;
 - an elaborate statement sent to the press, delivered during a conference or within the political declaration session in Parliament.
5. What was the primary inspiration source for the statement?
 - Romanian Presidents' speeches on similar occasions;
 - searched on Google for relevant sources;
 - read books, articles, memoirs;
 - I wrote what I felt / what I knew / what I learned in school.
6. What was the secondary inspiration source for the statement?
 - Romanian Presidents' speeches on similar occasions;
 - searched on Google for relevant sources;
 - read books, articles, memoirs;
 - I wrote what I felt / what I knew / what I learned in school.
7. What did you want to express as your primary message?
 - the need to understand what happened (an educational/informative message);
 - the need to assume the past and our own mistakes;
 - something related to suffering and victims;
 - something related to those who risked their lives to save Jews/Roma from Pogrom;
 - to explain the symbolism of those events;
 - to draw attention to current dangers;
 - Other - Which ?.....
8. What did you want to express as your secondary message?
 - the need to understand what happened (an educational/informative message);
 - the need to assume the past and own mistakes;
 - something related to suffering and victims;
 - something related to those who risked their lives to save Jews/Roma from Pogrom;
 - to explain the symbolism of those events;
 - to draw attention to current dangers;
 - Other - Which ?.....

9. What reactions did your statement generate? (Was it appreciated, criticized, debated, picked up by the press or went unnoticed?)

10. If you were not a Romanian MP but, for example, worked in the private sector, would you have felt the need to write something about the Holocaust at a commemorative moment?

- Yes
- No

Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, within PNCDI III.

Chapter 4

The Memory of the Holocaust and the Myth of the ‘Outside Enemy’: From Anti-Semitic Attitudes to Redundant Politicisation

Alina-Simona POPESCU¹

This paper aims to analyse some of the most famous slip-ups the Romanian politicians have had in their public discourses starting from 2012 until present referring to both the myth of the ‘outside enemy’ embodied in the person of George Soros and the memory of the Holocaust in Romania. On the one hand, the Jewish origin investor and philanthropist George Soros has gradually become the perfect target of famous politicians from the ruling party presenting him as an evil character whose aim is to generate political instability and chaos that would eventually force the change of the current political regime in Romania by means of financing massive street protests. On the other hand, between 1990 and 2004, there were many official statements of different Romanian politicians denying the Holocaust, most of them in a selective manner. Despite the fact that after 2012 it is less likely for one to find official statements of the political elite selectively denying the atrocities committed against the Jews by the Romanian authorities of that time, the memory of the Holocaust has been instrumentalised and continues to be used as a weapon against political opponents with the risk of losing both its meaning and its importance of being correctly remembered by future generations. In addition, this paper strives to look into the positive and negative reactions of ordinary citizens to the deflective discourse of politicians, thus revealing emotions, feelings, attitudes and personal opinions of the majority population in relation to both the Jewish community and the memory of the Holocaust in Romania. Furthermore, the aim of this paper is to explore to what extent the virulent attacks on George Soros imply a positioning towards the genocide of the Jews on Romanian territories, the Hungarian-Jewish born tycoon thus acting as an interface between the subjective representations of a part of the political and intellectual elite and the history of the Jewish community in Romania during World War II.

Keywords: memory of the Holocaust; myth of the ‘outside enemy’; street protests; political discourse; anti-Semitic comments.

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Introduction

The Romanian public discourse of the last decade has been marked by the futile struggle for power between the ruling and the opposition parties, while citizens were gradually losing their hope in state institutions and their representatives. As a result, more and more young professionals have decided to leave the country in search for better-paid jobs, while other citizens have taken the streets in order to fight against corruption and bills that may have put a threat to their civil rights. In fact, the international context of the last ten years is dominated by massive street protests bringing about important changes in the Arab world and anti-austerity, pro-democracy movements taking place in European countries, such as: Germany, France, Spain, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. How have some politicians from the ruling party explained the recent street protests taking place in Romania starting from 2012? Simply ignoring the evidence showing the fact that the last decade manifestations of dissent in Romania are a result of the awakening of the civic spirit, as citizens could no longer tolerate ‘the undesirable behaviour of the political class’ (Jurcan 2017, p. 49), some politicians advanced a theory stating that a number of NGOs and foundations financed by the Jewish origin investor and philanthropist George Soros are behind the massive anti-government protests from Romania.

The Romanian society is dominated by mistrust. On the one hand, disbelief in democratic representative institutions and their agents, resulting from ‘the assessment made by more than two-thirds of Romanians who considered that the country was going in the wrong direction’, according to a study carried out in 2017 by the Romanian Strategy and Evaluation Institute (Dâncu 2017, p. 8), on the other hand, mistrust in other people. In a society dominated by anxiety, insecurity and alienation, the politics of fear and the myth of the ‘outside enemy’ promoted by some politicians from the ruling party continue to make victims especially among the elder generation, who has experienced a life full of fears, worries and shortages under the communist regime.

On this fruitful ground, the Jewish origin investor and philanthropist George Soros has gradually become the perfect target of famous politicians from the ruling party, such as the former Prime Minister Victor Ponta and the ex-leader of the Social Democratic Party Liviu Dragnea presenting him as an evil character serving foreign interests whose aim is to generate political instability and chaos that would eventually force the change of the current political regime in Romania by means of financing massive street protests. Even if the nowadays advance of digital communication

technologies makes it easier for a protest movement to cross the national borders of one state and rapidly spread to neighbouring countries, as well as for one powerful person to be able to coordinate the global wave of protests, the theory advanced by some Romanian politicians ignores the open character and creative local manifestation of recent urban street protests and therefore does not seem valid.

In addition, analysts draw attention to Romanian politicians' attempt to seize the main themes of the public agenda, thus hoping that empty words will help them win another mandate and keep power at all costs. As a result, we are more likely to see politicians constantly attending prime-time talk shows in the attempt to prevail over their opponents through endless polemics than actually take action in improving the living conditions of their voters. Subjects with a high social impact, such as the memory of the Holocaust are therefore excessively politicised with the risk of losing both their meaning and their importance of being correctly remembered by future generations. Klaus Iohannis, President of Romania, despite his numerous speeches with the occasion of the National Holocaust Remembrance Day pointing out the progress Romania has made over the past years in the fight against anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial and/or minimization, proves a poor knowledge of the historical realities of the Holocaust, when he uses the verb 'to gas' with reference to the intervention of the gendarmes with tear gas against anti-government protesters, on the 10th of August 2018, as well as when he compares the policies of the former PSD-ALDE coalition with the Nazi regime, in a statement made during the Holocaust survivors' decoration ceremony that took place on the 28th of January 2019.

Furthermore, this paper strives to look into the positive and negative reactions of ordinary citizens to the deflective discourse of politicians, thus revealing emotions, feelings, attitudes and personal opinions of the majority population in relation to both the Jewish community and the memory of the Holocaust in Romania. In order to accomplish this particular aim of the paper, I have used mainly some of the best known news websites from Romania, belonging to famous newspapers, public and private television channels that have stored over time the controversial statements of politicians regarding George Soros as member of the worldwide Jewish community, as well as the positive and negative comments of simple Internet users to the allegations of the political elite pointed at the Hungarian-American businessman and philanthropist of Jewish descent. In addition, the aim of this paper is to explore to what extent the virulent attacks on George Soros imply a positioning towards the genocide of the Jews on Romanian territories, the Hungarian-Jewish born tycoon thus acting as an interface between the subjective representations of a part of the

political and intellectual elite and the history of the Jewish community in Romania during World War II.

Probably one of the most shocking statements of a Romanian politician denying the atrocities committed against the Jews on the territory of Romania was that of Dan Şova, graduate of both the Law School and the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest, former lawyer, former lector of law at the University of Bucharest and former Senator of the Social Democratic Party.

On the 5th of March 2012, at the ‘People and People’ talk show of the Money Channel moderated by Andrei Gheorghe, Dan Şova, former Senator and spokesperson of the Social Democratic Party, declared that in the 1941 pogrom from Iaşi ‘were killed around twenty four Jews, but not by Romanian soldiers.’ (Şova 2012) I render below Dan Şova’s exact statements, excerpts from the interview with Andrei Gheorghe that have shaken the public opinion and caused many contradictory reactions:

‘Historical data show that, unfortunately, twenty four Romanian citizens of Jewish origin were killed by German soldiers at Iaşi. What remains a stain on the military history of the Romanian people is the behaviour of a part of our soldiers in the massacre from Odessa. (...) Romanian soldiers did not take part to the massacre from Iaşi. This is a historically certified fact’. Şova added that, ‘in a book about the Jewish pogrom from Romania, Teşu Solomonovici, a historian of Jewish origin, recognises that, on the territory of Romania, no Jew had to suffer and that was due to Antonescu’ (Şova 2012).

Michael Shafir is Senior Analyst for Central and Eastern Europe in the Regional Analysis Department of the Free Europe radio station/Radio Liberty from Prague, also chief-editor of the online publication ‘East European Perspectives’, Emeritus professor of Political Science at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of European Studies and former lecturer of Political Science at the Tel Aviv University. In his book *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’: Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe*, the Romanian political analyst of Jewish origin, introduces four types of Holocaust negation that are to be found in the post-communist countries of Central-Eastern Europe: the absolute negation of the Holocaust, the deflective negation of the Holocaust, the selective negation and the comparative trivialization of the Holocaust. (Shafir 2002)

If the absolute negation of the Holocaust does not need any further clarification, ‘the deflective negation of the atrocities committed against the Jews does not question the historical reality of the Holocaust, but either transfers the responsibility for the reprehensible facts on members of other

nations, part of the process of ‘externalising the guilt’ especially on historical enemies (be they internal - national minorities and/or external – expansionist countries putting a threat to national security) or minimises the involvement of one nation, mainly the nation of origin of the supporter of this type of negationism, up to an insignificant percentage.’ (Shafir 2002, p. 49)

The selective negation of the Holocaust is ‘a hybrid between the absolute negation of the Holocaust and the deflective negation of the atrocities committed against the Jews. In other words, the adepts of this type of negationism accept the idea stating that the Holocaust took place in other countries, but their country of origin, while they deny any participation of their fellow countrymen to the Holocaust’. As a result, they keep ‘the externalisation of guilt’ on members of other nations, but eliminate the minimal involvement of their fellow countrymen in the atrocities committed against the Jews. According to the adepts of this type of negationism, ‘Ion Antonescu committed no crime against the Jews’ and the behaviour of the authorities of that time, as well as that of the Romanian people as a whole, in relation to the Jews, was faultless. (Shafir 2002, p. 89)

The comparative trivialisation of the Holocaust refers to the attempts to ‘intentionally distort history and its significance by either ‘humanising’ local history in comparison with the atrocities committed by the Nazi, or by comparing the suffering of the Jews with the agony of the humankind in other violent events that happened along history’, such as world wars. (Shafir 2002, p. 107)

By accepting the Holocaust from Odessa, Ukraine, while denying the atrocities committed against the Jews on the territory of Romania, as well as the participation of the Romanian soldiers to the genocide, together with externalising the responsibility for the Holocaust in Romania exclusively on the German soldiers and thus absolving Marshal Ion Antonescu of any guilt for the crimes against the Jews, we may easily conclude that former Senator Dan Şova, graduate of the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest is an adept of the selective negation of the Holocaust.

The following research task is to point out and analyse some of the main contradictory reactions to Dan Şova’s explicit anti-Semitic statements. The first ones to express their indignation against the ‘regrettable’ statements (Florin 2014) of the former Senator were the representatives of the ‘Elie Wiesel’ National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania and the intellectual elite.

In a press release published on the website of the institution, the ‘Elie Wiesel’ National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania

expressed its strong disagreement with former Senator Dan Şova's statements denying the Holocaust in Romania and the responsibility of the Government led by Ion Antonescu for killing over 250000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews, thus contradicting the provisions of Law no. 107/2006 which prohibits the denial of the Holocaust in Romania. According to Article 6 of Law no. 107/2006, 'the public denial of the Holocaust or its effects is a crime and is punished with imprisonment from six months to five years and the prohibition of certain rights.' (TVR - The Romanian public television 2012) Alexandru Florian, director of the 'Elie Wiesel' Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, declared for 'Free Romania' newspaper that 'The denial of the Holocaust is the worst form of anti-Semitism. Mr Şova did not recognise the responsibility of the Romanian state for the crimes committed during the Ion Antonescu regime.' (Drăgan 2012) In addition, Alexandru Florian pointed out that 'Mr Şova called for a questionable bibliography regarding the history of the Holocaust in Romania. His sources of information are precarious'. (Drăgan 2012) During his interview with Andrei Gheorghe at the Money Channel, Dan Şova called for the 'History of the Holocaust in Romania' of Teşu Solomonovici, historian and writer of Jewish origin, who often practised an ambiguous speech aiming to rehabilitate Marshal Ion Antonescu and thus wipe away the atrocities committed against the Jews by the Romanian authorities of that time. Besides appealing to questionable bibliography regarding the history of the Holocaust in Romania, Dan Şova confirmed his poor knowledge on this sensitive subject simply by misspelling the name of the author as 'Teşu Solomonovici' instead of 'Teşu Solomonovici'.

In addition, Adrian Cioflâncă, a historian born in Iaşi, former member of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (2003-2004) and nowadays director of the Center for the Study of the History of Romanian Jews considered Dan Şova's statements far more serious than the ones of former President Ion Iliescu leading to the establishment of the 'Elie Wiesel' Commission and virulently asked the Social Democratic Party to take an official position in relation to its spokesperson's offensive allegations. In a post on his personal blog, the historian showed his willingness to teach Dan Şova about the pogrom from Iaşi 'with the help of a few linear meters of official documents' (TVR - The Romanian public television 2012), if he really expressed his wish to learn. Moreover, one could discover several black and white photographs of Jews killed in the pogrom from Iaşi and a minimal bibliography on this subject in the same post of Adrian Cioflâncă on his personal blog:

'Unfortunately, at Iaşi, there was a pogrom in between June and July 1941 and this fact is already known even by high school students; tens of

thousands of pages of documents and over one hundred photographs from the scene of violences stand as a proof. A couple of thousands of Jews died in the massacre. The crimes were committed by Romanians - militaries, policemen, gendarmes, public guards and locals; German soldiers were also involved, but their role in the violences that occurred was lesser than the one played by Romanians - witnesses state, and historians have established. The events taking place in the summer of 1941, in Iași were investigated in the period between 1945 and 1948 and everything ended with a trial; the conviction document mentioned fifty people: forty four were sentenced to different penalties going as far as life prison, three died before the final verdict, and three were exonerated; in addition, there were more individual trials with persons involved in the violences. The responsibility for the pogrom belongs to the Antonescu regime; Ion Antonescu integrated state anti-Semitism into a radical policy of ethnic purification through crime and deportations; the pogrom started from Antonescu's order to summarily execute all the Jewish citizens who were suspects.' (TVR - The Romanian public television 2012)

Moreover, in an editorial on Contributors.ro, Vladimir Tismăneanu, a Romanian political analyst of Jewish origin and professor of Political Science at the University of Maryland, also expressed his indignation against Dan Șova's 'shameful' statements (TVR - The Romanian public television 2012):

'Crimes against humanity are being questioned. Whoever denies the Holocaust can deny the Gulag as well. These statements are shameful, repulsive and destructive from the point of view of a democratic community. To state that during war no Jew has suffered on the territory of Romania is a lie and a stupidity. Has Dan Șova read 'The Journal' of Mihail Sebastian? Has he read the 'Final Report' of the Wiesel Commission, published by Polirom? Denying both types of totalitarianisms is infamous and must be firmly rejected.' (TVR - The Romanian public television 2012)

Furthermore, Emeritus professor of Political Science at the Faculty of European Studies of the Babeș-Bolyai University, Michael Shafir declared for HotNews.ro that 'Mr Șova is not a private person. A simple person can be excused for his ignorance, sometimes even for his stupidity. When intelligence was divided, God did not divide it equally. Nor did He do so with the culture. Mr Șova is the spokesperson of a political party, one of the most important in Romania. When he makes such a statement and the party does not distance itself from him, the party must assume Mr Șova. Mr Șova has nothing to do in the position of spokesperson any longer, even though he has apologized. Because even if he has apologized, this still proves that he is not qualified for the position he has held. The Social

Democratic Party, through its leadership, has the duty to explicitly distance itself from Mr Şova's statements. Relieving Mr Şova of his position as spokesperson is simply not enough.' (Cozmei 2012)

In a press statement issued the following day, on the 6th of March 2012, former Senator Dan Şova expressed his regret if his statements had been misunderstood and recalled the great sufferings of the Jewish people from World War II, which were undeniable facts that could not bear any comparison. Dan Şova insisted on the fact that what he really meant to say in the interview was that the Romanian people did not cause the atrocities committed against the Jews, 'but the unhappy historical context and the Nazi politics.' (Ziare.com 2012) Furthermore, he once again underlined the fact that he had not denied and would never deny the suffering of the Jewish people and the guilt of the Romanian authorities of that period because 'it was his belief that these historic facts must be stated in order to be able to learn from the mistakes of the past'. (Ziare.com 2012)

'I respect the suffering of the Jewish people and not for one moment have I had the intention to deny the Holocaust, the pogrom from Iaşi or the anti-Jewish policy of the Antonescu regime. Unfortunately, these are unquestionable realities also accepted and acknowledged by historians. In addition, I would like to point out that I reject any anti-Semitic attitude, message and manifestation. Through my education and my profession, as well as from the point of view of the ideological values that I have assumed and represent me, I believe in and I strongly advocate for tolerance, democracy, solidarity and social justice. Therefore, I once again underline that the manner in which I expressed myself was profoundly wrong. This [unfortunate manner of expression] was responsible for the contradiction between the message that reached the public space and my beliefs, my thoughts and my feelings regarding the drama of the Jewish people.' (Adevărul 2012)

Ziare.com website, which enlarged on Dan Şova's official apologies for his 'regrettable' statements (Florian 2014) made during the interview with Andrei Gheorghe at the Money Channel, also stored some of the Internet users' comments to this news. From the total of fourteen comments, eight included anti-Semitic references, while six consisted of critics addresses to the former Romanian Senator. Some of the comments against the Jews consisted in some of the most common anti-Semitic themes that are to be found in Romania:

1. The important contribution of the Jews to the establishment of the communist regime in Romania and the atrocities that followed against the

Romanian people: ‘the Holocaust against the Romanian people which was carried out by Soviet leaders of Jewish origin’, the reference to Paul Goma²’s book, *The Red Week* (Ziare.com 2012)

2. The rehabilitation of Marshal Ion Antonescu despite his crimes committed against the Jews and the attempts of presenting him as a national hero: ‘Ion Antonescu is one of the greatest leaders of Romania, an exemplary man from the moment he was born until he ordered the execution squad not to miss its target’ (Ziare.com 2012)

3. The conspiracy theory or the Jewish plot advocating the idea according to which the Jews aim to gain control over the natural resources, the finances and other economic assets, the political establishment and the territory of Romania: ‘the truth of the existence of an international blackmailing system led by the Jews against the countries and the peoples all over the world in order to influence the politics of those peoples in their favour’, ‘the need for the Jews to reconsider their sneaky attitude and tendency to over-exaggerate due to the fact that Romania also offered them a way out from oppression and a home’ (Ziare.com 2012)

4. The selective negation of the Holocaust in Romania: ‘questioning the number and the ethnic origin of the people discovered in the mass grave from Popricani’ (Ziare.com 2012).

The critics addressed to Dan Şova mainly pointed out the former Romanian Senator’s ‘low IQ’, ‘anti-Semitic convictions’, ‘poor education as a result of using unorthodox practices referring mainly to bribing teachers and professors’, ‘lack of common sense’, ‘childish behaviour’ and ‘stupid statements on a sensitive subject’. (Ziare.com 2012)

The President of the Social Democratic Party at that moment, Victor Ponta, publicly announced that Dan Şova was no longer spokesperson of the historical political party and that he decided to send him to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum from Washington for documentation. The ex-leader of the Social Democratic Party was to decide if Dan Şova could regain his position as spokesperson of the party after the former Senator’s return from Washington. Victor Ponta made a post on his personal blog regarding Dan Şova’s ‘regrettable’ statements (Florian 2014) denying the Holocaust in Romania:

‘Dan Şova has made a big mistake. I have expressed the official point of view of the Social Democratic Party, which is in total contradiction with what Dan Şova has said. Obviously, I have also apologised on behalf

² Paul Goma although admits the Holocaust against the Jews under the Antonescu regime (1941-1944), he asserts that it was caused by the actions of the Jews against the Romanian troops in retreat from Basarabia and Bucovina in the summer of 1940, when Jews had been apparently accused of having mocked, attacked and even killed Romanian soldiers.

of the Social Democratic Party and he has also apologised.’ (Lumezeanu 2012)

‘I announced him that he would no longer be spokesperson of the Social Democratic Party until he left for Washington, at the Holocaust Museum, to see with his own eyes all that I had seen. After he returns, I am convinced that he will understand that there are historical events we must all know and assume. He has no excuse for what he has said.’ (Lumezeanu 2012)

In the attempt to defend the former spokesperson of the Social Democratic Party, Victor Ponta made a serious accusation that caused waves of outrage from many netizens³:

‘It’s a matter of ignorance. Şova is ignorant, not anti-Semite, as many other Romanians are’, Ponta declared for Ziare.com. (Lumezeanu 2012)

The first key-concept that is to be found in Victor Ponta’s statement is ‘ignorance’ or the so-called ‘wanting-not-to-know’. In Chapter 5 entitled ‘Wanting-not-to-know about the Holocaust in Romania’ of the volume *The memory of the Holocaust in post-communist Romania*, Simon Geissbühler, a Swiss diplomat and historian, enlarges on the assumed willingness not to know or the concept of ‘wanting-not-to-know’ introduced by Paul Ricoeur. ‘‘Wanting-not-to-know’ is a distorted form of forgetting, a ‘semi-passive, semi-active behaviour’, as it is seen, for example, in the case of forgetting by avoidance. This behaviour is motivated by the ‘obscure will not to inform oneself’.’ (Geissbühler 2018, pp. 177-178)

‘Wanting-not-to-know’ is in fact the conscious decision to remain unaware or ignorant regarding certain events. People are not always interested to enlarge their knowledge horizon, especially if we are talking about unpleasant events: ‘the will not to know comes after the will of self-delusion’, as Wolfgang Sofsky correctly observes. This observation applies especially to situations when facts that should be remembered are painful. However, ‘according to Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, memory is also a matter of justice’. ‘The current and future Romanian generations are not guilty for the crimes some of their forefathers committed, but they have the responsibility to know about the past actions of their forerunners’. (Geissbühler 2018, p. 178)

For the majority of Romanians, the Holocaust is perceived as an event with no direct relevance for them or for their country. As a result, 62% of the respondents claim that they have a low or a very low interest in the problematic of the Holocaust, according to a survey ordered by the ‘Elie

³ The term ‘netizens’ refers to persons who regularly use the Internet.

Wiesel' National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania. The 'wanting-not-to-know' attitude is encouraged by the fact that the atrocities committed by Romanian authorities against the Jews happened mainly in regions no longer belonging to state territory. The responsibility of the Holocaust is therefore more easily externalised and passed on members of neighbouring countries and other nations considered as historical enemies, such as the Germans. Asked if we also had a Holocaust in Romania, not even one third of the respondents answered affirmative. The percentage of the persons who believed there was a Holocaust in Romania remained more or less the same after six years: 32% in 2009 to 28% in 2015. From them, only 19% considered that the Antonescu regime was responsible for what had happened, while 69% thought that the Germans should have been mostly blamed for the Holocaust in Romania. According to Simon Geissbühler, the attitude of denying any implication of the Romanians in the Holocaust comes as 'a result of the persistent misrepresentations and falsifications of the Holocaust in school text books and the ambiguous rhetoric of politicians regarding this sensitive subject'. (Geissbühler 2018, p. 187)

The second important concept invoked by Victor Ponta is 'anti-Semitism', a concept introduced in 1879 by the German agitator Wilhelm Marr, defining a hostile attitude or a discriminatory behaviour against the Jews as a religious or racial group or community. Ziare.com website stored some of the Internet users' comments to Victor Ponta's hasty generalisation regarding the prevalence of anti-Semitic attitudes within the Romanian society as a whole. From the total of fifty four comments, eight were anti-Semitic posts. Only one person considered that one is more likely to find anti-Semitic rather than philo-Semitic attitudes in Romania, while three showed their opposition to this allegation. Three Internet users agreed with Victor Ponta regarding the fact that most people are ignorant to the subject of the Holocaust in Romania for which they show a low or a very low interest, while other three were against this judgment. It is important to underline that there was one comment absolutely denying the Holocaust, three statements selectively denying the Holocaust in Romania and two comments that can be enframed in the typology of the comparative trivialization of the Holocaust. The clear majority of the comments consisted in virulent critics against the Social Democratic Party and its representatives as well as the political class as a whole who carried the blame for its questionable education background, duplicitous speech, anti-Semitic attitudes, and assumed ignorance. The anti-Semitic posts included common themes used against the Jews by Romanians pretending to be good citizens looking after the better interest of their country:

1. The absolute negation of the Holocaust: ‘And Mr Şova had a courage close to political suicide when he clearly and publicly stated the truth that he knows very well as a historian: there was no Holocaust in Romania and elsewhere, simply because the meaning of this word is ‘sacrifice ritual by burning’, a practice that can be attributed to the Inquisition and not to the XX century countries. This does not mean that there were no atrocities, massacres and abuses against the Jews during World War II, the war in itself being an atrocity. But the Zionists pumped up these atrocities, creating the myth of the holohoax, with the large contribution of impostors like Simon Wiesenthal, the so-called ‘Nazi hunter’ who got rich by sponging on millions from all over in order to catch some individuals to whose finding he had no contribution (see the Eichmann case) or Elie Wiesel (this former associate of Bernard Madoff is constantly correcting his book every time a disagreement with the historical truth is revealed). Some parts of the myth of the holohoax have already collapsed (see the fiction with the soap made from Jewish human fat), others are going to be revealed. Because the truth cannot be eternally mystified.’ (Lumezeanu 2012)

2. The selective negation of the Holocaust in Romania: ‘I believe that Ion Coja⁴ is perfectly right in claiming that there was no Holocaust in Romania. Read his website and what he has written about this problem and you will see he is right, if you are not a stupid Jew or a traitor paid by the Jews, or a man of nothing without any personality who just wants to be part of the flock, not being able to think with his own head.’; ‘If you simply deny the aberration of a Holocaust in Romania why are you directly catalogued as anti-Semite?’; ‘From the historical studies anyone knows that there was no Holocaust in Romania, but only isolated incidents; there were no mass deportations, concentration camps and exterminations on the territory of Romania. After the German army had stepped on the territory of Romania, many Jews decided by themselves to leave for exile; this fact also happened after the Russian army stepped on our territory. (...) Dan Şova only told the truth that everyone who read a history book (written in Romania and not at Washington and Tel Aviv) knows.’ (Lumezeanu 2012)

⁴ Ion Coja, a Romanian language professor, writer, and political activist fighting for the preservation of the national values, is one of the most important representatives of the theory stating that there was no Holocaust in Romania. According to Ion Coja, the Germans are the authors of the Holocaust, while the Romanians carry no guilt for the atrocities committed against the Jews, to whom they offered protection and shelter. Consequently, a virulent anti-Semitic attitude was hidden under the appearance of a fierce nationalist, as Ion Coja was the person who led several campaigns aiming to both deny the existence of the Holocaust in Romania and throw discredit to anyone who stated the opposite.

3. The comparative trivialisation of the Holocaust: ‘Few Jews suffered during the ‘dictatorship’ of Ion Antonescu compared to the Hungary of Horthy, of which rarely speaks anyone.’; ‘What is happening now in the Gaza Strip is not a Holocaust?’ (Lumezeanu 2012)

4. The questionable theological exceptionalism of the Jews: ‘Please excuse me, but the Jews are the personification of God, they cannot make any mistakes in the appreciation of historical facts, or just because they have suffered a lot, everything they say cannot be questioned?’; ‘The Jews are the ‘chosen people’, they have given the prophet and the priest to the Christians, and if the Germans and the Romanians are constantly blamed for the Holocaust, one must refrain from any comments and just shut up. Maybe we will get rid of this problem after one hundred years will pass.’; ‘Why are the Jews the ‘chosen people’ and the Romanians an ‘outcast people’, the last from all peoples?’; ‘However, don’t you think that they are too much hiding under the umbrella of the Holocaust in order to justify all their stupid requests? If you say anything about the Jews, you can be imprisoned. Instead you can say anything about any other nation on earth. I may be ignorant, but can anyone answer me: why are they better than the rest of the world? Do they have a bigger head or paranormal powers?’ (Lumezeanu 2012)

5. The conspiracy theory: ‘If the politics of Romania is made at Washington, the only thing left to politicians is to implement the orders coming from across the ocean in their country of origin. (...) To be a politician in Romania means to serve the interests of international financial and economic Zionism that has subdued the country and the people.’; ‘I deeply doubt that 30% of Romanians are anti-Semitic because the Jews would have killed Jesus - it is as absurd as to claim that Americans mass shot John Fitzgerald Kennedy or the Indians Gandhi - and I suspect that Ioanid’s estimation has no sociological basis. This Jew, however, became noticed for his exaggerated statements, for instance, when he asked the National Bank of Romania to withdraw the commemorative coin dedicated to the first patriarch of Greater Romania, Miron Cristea, on anti-Semitic grounds. It is, in fact, a widespread practice among some Jewish circles, especially the Zionists, to try to pose as victims on any occasion: if a film dedicated to an anti-communist fighter is released, we are dealing with an anti-Semitic manifestation, if some homeless people break some funeral monuments, it’s an anti-Semitic attack, if some Jewish doctors are arrested for illegal practices of artificial fertilisation, we are dealing with an anti-Semitic gesture. If the Jews were given satisfaction every time - and unfortunately we had given in to their claims too often - they would remove Eminescu and Goga from the Romanian text books because they were anti-

Semitic writers. They would also change our state anthem (I do not exaggerate at all, in the book 'The Jews of Romania 1866-1919 - from exclusion to emancipation' of the Zionist historian Carol Iancu, the national anthem 'Wake up, Romanian' is defined as a 'patriotic anti-Semitic anthem'). From the point of view of these groups - which have a lot of power and exercise a very efficient lobby - the gesture of Mr Şova, directly harming the interests of what the renowned Jewish professor Norman Finkelstein calls 'the Holocaust industry' – referring to the stress of winning money, public sympathy and political and moral supremacy by appealing to the suffering of some ancestors, on any occasion – is rightly whistled in the synagogue.' (Lumezeanu 2012)

6. The externalisation of the guilt for the atrocities committed on Romanian territory, the Jews being considered the first who started the dispute with the Romanian soldiers, in 1940: 'Those who invariably blame others for their anti-Semitic attitudes should tell us who beat the Romanian soldier when he was retreating from the Dnestr, who took his horse, his gun, his boots and his vest, who mocked and spit on him. In order to clear things up, I am telling you that they [the responsables] were Romanian citizens of Jewish (Semitic) origin. Before screaming that others are anti-Semitic, I think we should separate things and they should admit their fault.' (Lumezeanu 2012)

'Anti-Semitic' and 'anti-Romanian' become two opposite concepts. Romanians can either choose to place themselves on the side of the supporters of the Jewish cause or in that of the ultra-nationalists fighting for the preservation of Romanian history, culture, traditions, and national spirit. According to the conspiracy theory, Jews serving external interests aim to economically, financially and culturally subdue our nation. In front of the 'threat' represented by the Jews, the Romanians are called to take firm action and freely express their opinions especially if they disagree with the idea of a Holocaust in Romania: 'We are Romanians and we have the right to an opinion after having consulted several sources of information. (...) No one asks us to admit the atrocities committed against the Jews on Romanian territory, except for those who betray national interests on every occasion and look forward to depriving the Romanian people of its traditions, history, culture, national spirit. One cannot have an opinion and carry on a constructive dialogue, by pleading either for or against, on a subject regarding the Jews. Good people, we inherited a lot of prejudices we must get rid of, such as 'The humble head, the sword won't cut', we must stop thinking like a slave and raise to state our opinions loud and clear, without any fear.' (Lumezeanu 2012)

Two years after Şova's slip-up on the sensitive subject of the Holocaust in Romania that cost him capital of image, in July 2014, Alexandru Florian, director of the 'Elie Wiesel' National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, publicly declared for Adevărul newspaper that, in the period between 1990 and 2004, there were many official statements of different Romanian politicians denying the Holocaust, but Dan Şova was the only politician who made such a 'regrettable' statement, and then publicly apologised, admitting that he was wrong. After presenting his public apologies and getting involved in different campaigns aiming to increase the awareness of the Romanian people about the Holocaust, including a common project with the 'Elie Wiesel' Institute that implied placing commemorative plaques in each station where the Jews had been deported, Şova was forgiven by Alexandru Florian, who considered that, from his point of view, the 'Şova' case was closed:

'From 1990 to 2004, there were many messages denying the Holocaust, including among the political elite, up to the point they asked remembrance moments for Antonescu in the Parliament of Romania. After 2004, the situation has improved, whether we are talking about the civil society or the political elite. Mr Dan Şova's reaction was sanctioned by us, at that time, through a press release. After his message which was absolutely denying the Holocaust in Romania, Dan Şova documented himself, woke up from the black night (his statement was made close to midnight), publicly admitted that he did not know what had happened, openly apologised and he retracted everything he had said. I could say that he was the only political leader who had a clear manifestation of denial of the Holocaust, and then he acknowledged that he was wrong. Until then, we had politicians who never admitted they had done a mistake. He had this strength to admit he was wrong. From Ellie Wiesel's perspective, I think the problem has been solved.' (Dancea 2014)

Another official statement of a Romanian politician selectively denying the Holocaust was that of Traian Băsescu, former President of Romania, who made an attempt to rehabilitate Marshal Ion Antonescu on the 22nd of June 2011, in a television broadcast at B1 TV channel:

'History presents Marshal Antonescu as the person responsible for the pogrom against the Jews, for their deportation to Transnistria. We forget that Romania had a Head of state at that time. Antonescu was Prime minister. To one we give his assets, while to the other we refer as war criminal. Why? Just because one was a slave to the Russians. (...) We must admit that we still do not set our values in a proper way, for example, for all of us and for the history, Antonescu remains responsible for the Holocaust against Jews and the Gypsies, for their deportation to Transnistria, I do not

know what... Nobody says that Romania had a Head of state at that time, and the other was only Prime minister. To some we give their assets, while we consider the others war criminals, the Head of state and the Prime minister, just because one was a slave to the Russians and left the country by abdication we forgive him for all his sins?' (Oprea 2011)

The declaration of the former President of Romania came as a shock, as on the 10th of March 2005, six years earlier, Traian Bănescu visited the Holocaust Museum from Washington and pleaded for the necessity of assuming the mistakes of the past:

'I can tell you there was another episode that really impressed me and we will have to discuss this aspect when I return. I went to the Holocaust Museum. I did not believe, I am a man educated according to the history that was taught to us in schools, according to the precepts that we had, I don't attend school these days and not even nowadays it is taught in school. I saw the part of the Holocaust Museum reserved to Romania. The evidence and the realities presented there leave no doubt. Wagons inscribed with the Romanian Railways were wagons from which Jews were debarked. Convoys of Jews and Gypsies accompanied by soldiers dressed in the uniform of the Romanian army, on the territory of Transnistria, are a reality taken from the pictures and proven to be true there. I was really impressed, because I knew other story of the Holocaust, I knew about the reports, I knew about ... but like ... (...) I think we have to honestly assume our past. Strong nations assume their past, including their mistakes. And I think we have the duty to assume the crimes committed under Romanian administration that aimed to exterminate a people, because they are a reality. I have seen it with my own eyes now, with historical evidence, with the pictures of that time, with clear evidence and I think this is the right way for us. Strong nations assume their mistakes - this is the theory from where I start.' (Oprea 2011)

Furthermore, the same Traian Bănescu declared himself moved by the consequences of the Holocaust and even cried during his visit to Yad Vashem - The Memorial of Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust from Jerusalem, on the 2nd of June 2009:

'My visit to the Yad Vashem Memorial reinforced my belief that education is the first step towards a better understanding of the Holocaust and reconciliation with the past. The fight against anti-Semitism begins with a proper knowledge of the historical realities that have led to such atrocities. Romania has concentrated much of its educational efforts in the spirit of tolerance and respect for historical heritage. We are convinced that we are on the right track. We are committed to expanding and improving our educational programs.' (Oprea 2011)

Unfortunately, even if the situation has constantly improved since 2012 and nowadays we are less likely to see messages absolutely, deflectively or selectively denying the Holocaust coming from either the civil society or the political elite, the former President Traian Băsescu is not the only politician who proves to have an inconsistent attitude towards the memory of the Holocaust in Romania. For instance, Klaus Iohannis, the President in function of Romania had started to prepare his political campaign for the future presidential elections as early as last year, when he used terms referring to the Holocaust against his political opponents, in an attempt to confiscate and thus politicise the memory of the atrocities committed against the Jews.

Despite his messages and speeches over the years on the occasion of the National Holocaust Remembrance Day, in which he pointed out that the recovery of the memory of the Holocaust, as well as the fight against anti-Semitism, have been primary objectives in the last decade and a half, the progress registered by Romania being a notable one, President Klaus Iohannis proves a poor knowledge of the terms, as well as of the historical realities of the Holocaust, when he exaggerates and uses the term ‘to gas’ referring to the intervention of the gendarmes with tear gas against anti-governmental protesters, on the 10th of August 2018. The memory of the Holocaust is thus instrumentalised and used as a weapon against political opponents. Using this tactic, President Klaus Iohannis aims to stigmatise the Social Democratic Party for its alleged dictatorial actions and autocratic policies:

‘The fact that the Social Democratic Government gassed and beat the Romanians is revolting and inadmissible. I have underlined in many occasions that the Social Democratic Party and this Government will end up not being able to pay pensions and wages because they have no money. It seemed to me that the man already has the fears, obsessions and nightmares of a dictator. Yes, I am referring to Dragnea.’ (Digi24.ro 2018)

Moreover, President Klaus Iohannis used the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, celebrated on the 27th of January and the 2018 ceremony of decorating Holocaust survivors in order to once again launch a serious attack against the former governing coalition whose actions and policies were compared with the Nazi regime:

‘Let us not forget that, in the name of a so-called supreme ideal, changing laws and capturing institutions one by one, the Nazi regime was consolidated.’ (Popescu 2019)

Avoiding naming the coalition in power at that time, President Iohannis continued his speech with examples he had previously characterised the PSD-ALDE coalition’s way of governing:

‘The perception that politicians, who represent the people and their interests, have the right to trample truths under their feet, to identify enemies, to blame different categories of citizens for their failures is a toxic philosophy.’ (Popescu 2019)

‘Today, in their irresponsible attempt to save themselves from justice and preserve the power, some politicians accuse magistrates, blame the ‘shrewd’ multinational companies, as they say, and demonize the European Union, described as abusive and arrogant. Now they point their finger to these [responsible people], afterwards others would follow, then others, and so on until the indistinction and the continuous search for the responsible ones would become the perfect alibi for the capture of the state.’ (Popescu 2019)

According to Vasile Sebastian Dâncu, we are nowadays assisting to a massive collective regression towards a magical way of thinking based mainly on emotions and feelings in relation to facts and events taking place in the nearby social reality. ‘We are now experiencing an identification crisis or a societal saturation of the great values promoted by the traditional paradigm, to another type of solidarity, moving from a collective unconscious dominated by the triad *work-rationality-future* (Prometheus) to a Dionysian era under the triad *dream-imaginary-phantasm* and this change will be made not by means of violent revolutions but through cultural contamination’. (Dâncu 2015, pp. 9-10)

The actions and decisions of the political class have sparked controversy among people, dividing Romania into several divergent categories: ‘elites/masses’, ‘system/anti-system’, ‘good guys/bad guys’, ‘young/elder’, ‘urban/rural’, ‘majority/minority’. The Romanian sociologist Vintilă Mihăilescu points out that the main problem the Romanians are facing nowadays ‘is the fact that we don’t know who we are anymore, but who we aren’t, who we don’t want to be or just whom we are fighting against; we no longer know how to rationally affirm our identity but by passionately denying the other, whoever he/she is.’ (Mihăilescu 2017, pp. 23-26)

Instead of striving to create a climate of social stability and avoid any unexpected political and economic changes just for the sake of prevailing against political opponents in the struggle for power, some politicians from the ruling party have transformed George Soros into the perfect target, the ‘outside enemy’ responsible for everything which is not working properly in Romania. George Soros, the powerful Jewish billionaire, is portrayed as an evil character leading the international plot against our country by means of financing and coordinating organisations looking for gaining absolute political control, as well as massive street

protests aiming to cause a coup d'état and thus force a change of regime. For example, in July 2016, former Prime Minister Victor Ponta was suggesting that George Soros, led by foreign interests, paid different Romanian journalists and websites, such as *EURACTIV* and *România Curată*, in order to avoid the implementation of some investments: 'Mr Soros does not want certain investments to be made in Romania and pays different websites. Euractiv.ro and romaniacurata.ro are financed by him. Euractiv.ro has its headquarters in the same building as hotnews.ro. Why isn't it investigated from where the funding comes from?' (Şelaru 2016)

In October 2016, closer to the parliamentary elections that were held on the 11th of December 2016, Victor Ponta was enlarging on the reasons why George Soros should have been regarded as 'an enemy for Romania'. The financial support given to his foundations had contributed to the creation of pseudo-activists present in the NGO and mass-media fields who served foreign interests and aimed to reach key positions in the state structure, thus pleading for the need to 'defend' ourselves against this alleged long-term threat:

Asked by a reporter from stiripesurse.ro 'Why would George Soros be an enemy for Romania?', the former Prime Minister Victor Ponta replied: 'I do not believe we should regard Mr Soros himself as an enemy... Mr Soros has an age and an experience. I am referring to the system that has been also used in Romania and in other countries from the region. Through the funding of Mr Soros' foundations, they built a certain type of people, pseudo-pseudo-activists, whose main feature is the fact that if you ask them to choose between the interest of Romania and the interest of another country, they will choose the other country. Let's take the best known example, Mrs. Macovei. If she were given a bombing plane in order to bomb Romania, Mrs. Macovei would bomb the country with great pleasure, because here we are either corrupt, or mean, or ignorant, or stupid. The problem was that this network, which had been built in some years, took the step, in 2016, from the non-governmental area or the media, to the state power. They began to like the power. They became members of the Government, I saw that one went vice-president at the National House of Health Insurance. Do you know how is this like? If you ask me to write an article about the North-American basketball, I'll write you a great article, but if you make me play against LeBron James and the others, you may quickly decide to get me out of the field, so that I won't feel embarrassed. In the moment you pass from an issue financed from the outside, for interests that do not belong to Romania, to the access and the takeover of power structures, any normal state protects itself. We have not protected ourselves

and it does not seem that we want to protect ourselves and this fact, I think, is a long-term threat for Romania.’ (Romniceanu 2016)

One year later, in September 2017, asked by a reporter from hotnews.ro if the billionaire George Soros ‘still runs Romania’, former Prime-Minister, deputy Victor Ponta replied: ‘For now I see that he is the enemy of Mr Dragnea, so he is no longer my enemy.’ He further added that ‘sometimes, common opponents meet people who have never been on the same side.’ (Petre 2017) Victor Ponta’s repositioning in relation to George Soros and change of rhetoric came after his exclusion from the Social Democratic Party as a result of taking the position of Secretary General in the Government led by Sorin Grindeanu.

Another important Romanian politician and former leader of the Social Democratic Party, Liviu Dragnea took a public stance against the ‘evil character’ of George Soros. Even if as early as January 2017, in an interview for Antena 3 TV channel, Liviu Dragnea, from the position of the attacker, was the first to declare war against George Soros, the Jewish billionaire who ‘starting from 1990, has financed the evil in Romania and actions that did no good to our country’ (Ardelean 2017), six months later, in July 2017, Dragnea posed as a victim, being convinced that George Soros had a problem with the Social Democratic Party and him, as President of the ruling party at that moment. According to his opinion, George Soros was an ‘evil character’ staying behind the investigation carried out by the National Anti-corruption Division following the journalistic inquiry of Rise Project. Therefore, he felt obliged to underline that the NAD investigation did not target him, as he had no business in Brazil and had not transferred any money to this country. In an interview for România TV channel from 10th of July 2017, Liviu Dragnea was asked ‘what does George Soros have with him or with the Social Democratic Party’. The Social Democrat leader answered: ‘This is a question to which I would like to have an answer. I do not know, but it’s something, because there are too many things that link together and this information comes from too many sources. I don’t believe in coincidences anymore.’ Asked from where he had received this information, he replied that ‘people talk’. (Stan 2017)

In June 2018, Liviu Dragnea continued his hate speech and imaginary fight against the Jewish billionaire George Soros, addressing young Social Democrats at the Summer School of the Social Democrat Youth and advising them to get better informed regarding the investments and other type of activities billionaires had carried out in some countries, including Romania, denouncing ‘internal and external forces’ the Social Democratic Party was facing in order to answer to peoples’ need to have a better life. The leader of the Social Democratic Party thus plays the role of

an ‘educator’ initiating the young Social Democrats in the rhetoric of hate against the imaginary enemy George Soros, a representative of the Jewish community:

‘Yes, Romanians want to work, but they also want to have high wages, because they also have children, as other Europeans do and they want for their children a good school, a good education, to have the opportunity to go on a vacation with their children, to have the chance to feel and taste life (...). And for this we fight against great forces, both inside and outside. I am not telling you stories. Besides the conversations on Facebook, which it’s good to have, read other interesting articles, interesting news about what’s happening in the world, how some billionaires are involved in some countries and how many billions they spend, what they do in America, what they have done in Romania and in other countries and try to understand that only knowledge will help you be strong in this war in which we are together - we are a team.’ (b1.ro 2018)

Immediately after the violent escalation of the street protests organised by the Diaspora on the 10th of August 2018, in the Victoria Square, Liviu Dragnea went as far as to denounce a coup d’état attempt promoted by ‘a paramilitary organisation’ who aimed to take over the headquarters of the Government enjoying external financial support, thus bringing again into discussion the myth of the ‘outside enemy’ in the person of George Soros:

‘There are enough elements allowing us to talk about a coup d’état attempt. The protests were apparently financed also from the outside. I am absolutely convinced that the following week there will be information about the way these protests were financed, about the fact that they were paramilitarily organised, about the fact that, and it was shown that, they wanted to take over the headquarters of the Government and permanently provoked the gendarmes.’ (DG 2018)

Therefore, the former Social Democrat leader urged state institutions investigate the information according to which the street protests aiming to cause an alleged coup d’état had an external source of finance and if the violent confrontations between the protesters and the police officers had been previously planned:

In a press release, ‘the Social Democratic Party asks the state institutions to urgently investigate the information of exceptional gravity that has appeared in the public space regarding the external financing of street protests and the premeditation of the violent actions of the demonstrations from 10th of August. The citizens of Romania, especially the participants of good faith to these manifestations, have the right to know the whole truth behind these street movements, who are the authors of the

public manipulations and intoxications, who has paid and what has been the purpose behind causing an emotional reaction against the institutions of the Romanian state and the constitutional order.’ (DG 2018)

The Social Democratic Party invoked the ‘information appeared in the press’ regarding the street manifestations from 10th of August 2018 and argued that there are strong indicators pointing out ‘subversive actions’ meant to undermine the national security and the authority of the Romanian state:

‘Such matters should be investigated by the authorities in charge. It is not a political dispute, but a major risk for Romania. Likewise, the Social Democratic Party considers that it is necessary to set a legal framework that will ensure the complete transparency of the sources of finance and the interests of those who initiate, support and expand street protests in Romania.’ (DG 2018)

Mircea Cărtărescu, one of the most popular Romanian poets and prose writers, literary critics and essayists of the XXI century, in the TV show ‘In front of you’ of the Digi24 channel enlarged on the concept of ‘Soros-mania’ and the mechanism behind the conspiracy theory gravitating around George Soros, the powerful Jewish billionaire. According to the supporters of the conspiracy theory, George Soros is ‘the source of evil’ in Romania by means of financing and coordinating organisations led by foreign interests whose purpose is to knock down the ruling party and its representatives in order to take full control over state structures. However, Mircea Cărtărescu seems to totally disagree to this allegation: ‘Going by the same logic, I can say that Marilyn Monroe is the source of evil. Dragnea needs an escape valve. Soros is the most ridiculous one he could find. It is an invented threat which does not deceive anyone anymore, I think that not even the public of the Antena 3 TV channel believes in it anymore. For them Soros is a kind of a monster, having nothing in common with the real person. Such characters are always transformed into scapegoats when, at the lead of a country or a block of apartments, there is a power or some people who could be characterised as sociopaths. A sociopath does not have the feeling of guilt, he does not feel that he can be held responsible, ‘the good’ and ‘the bad’ are defined according to his own interests, he cannot harm himself. A sociopath always uses scapegoats, when a situation he cannot manipulate arises. Irrespective of other particularities, they have to be persons who can be demonised, to find them a symbolic, mythical defect that would immediately generate the hostility and the aversion of a target audience. The fabricated enemy Soros is not a Romanian invention, being perceived as the absolute demon also in Orban’s Hungary and in Poland. The process of transforming George Soros into a target is based on elements

of anti-Semitism, but also on the fear the totalitarian regimes feel in relation to the civil society, which the businessman has supported over time. When a power is undemocratic and autarchic, it will surely feel the adversity of the civil society very strongly. A quasi-totalitarian governance is not afraid of parties, of opposition, the opposition was so weak, that it allowed the coming to power of this type of regime. The only one capable of fighting against a discretionary power is the civil society.’ (Republica.ro 2017)

Asked by the moderators if he thinks that Soros even knows who Dragnea is, Cărtărescu replied: ‘Probably he knows, because Dragnea is the leader of the biggest party in Romania, it cannot be that Soros, who finds out from the newspapers what is happening in the East, knows nothing about Dragnea. But any normal person cannot believe that Soros is personally involved in Dragnea’s businesses, fighting against or supporting Dragnea, Soros is interested in some principles.’ (Republica.ro 2017)

In addition, the Romanian writer, literary critic and essayist considers that, if the Social Democratic Party decides to support Dragnea in this game, it will be a mistake: ‘I don’t think the Social Democratic Party is completely backing up Dragnea, and they also realise how absurd this game is.’ (Republica.ro 2017)

Republica.ro website stored some of the Internet users’ comments to Mircea Cărtărescu’s analysis of ‘Soros-mania’ and the mechanism behind the construction of the myth of the ‘outside enemy’ which has been embodied in the person of George Soros. From the total of eighteen comments, three were against George Soros and five comments were pro-Soros and against Liviu Dragnea. In addition, there were three Internet users who totally disagreed to the idea expressed by the Romanian writer according to which ‘the process of transforming George Soros into a target is based on elements of anti-Semitism’, among the main arguments one could find: the alleged repudiation of George Soros by the Jewish community due to his supposed involvement in the confiscation of Jewish assets in the Hungary of Horthy, the conspiracy theory stating that George Soros aims to sublimate Western democracies, create chaos and deprive states of their national identity and values and, respectively, the supposed petty economic interests followed by George Soros. (Republica.ro 2017)

The main arguments invoked by the netizens against George Soros regarded four main aspects:

1. The interference of some of the NGOs funded by George Soros in the domestic politics of many national governments: ‘As a great writer, of course Mr Cărtărescu possesses a rich imagination, so that he serenely denies a reality present in many countries of the world, including in the United States of America: the hidden or public interference of the NGOs

funded by George Soros in the domestic politics of many governments. Even in the adoption country of Mr Soros, the United States of America, the US Government has brought such accusations to the US-Hungarian tycoon, and a federal investigation is ongoing. Mr Cărtărescu pretends he doesn't know the fact that Soros himself has publicly stated in his interviews that he has tried and will try to influence the governmental policies of some states; the tycoon has serenely acknowledged that his actions are not necessarily legal, legitimate or moral.' (Republica.ro 2017)

2. The alleged repudiation of George Soros by the Jewish community due to his supposed involvement in the confiscation of Jewish assets in the Hungary of Horthy (seems to be a false argument, since in 1944 George Soros was only 14 years old): 'The process of transforming George Soros into a target is based on elements of anti-Semitism, the writer tells us. I don't think that Cărtărescu doesn't know the fact that this man is detested by the Jewish community and he will never be forgiven for his participation to the confiscation of Jewish assets in the Hungary of Horthy. At that moment he pretended to be a Christian, together with his saviour, an official of the Government from Budapest. The Jews were being taken to the crematoriums and he, the Christian, was making a fortune. Can this be forgiven? In 1998, Soros gave an interview to CBS (60 minutes), you can find it on the Internet, and was asked if he regretted those actions during the Holocaust. He said he had no regrets. The Jews would have not forgiven him even if he had apologised, but it would have been a sign of humanity. He was unable to apologise.' (Republica.ro 2017)

3. The conspiracy theory stating that George Soros aims to sublimate Western democracies, create chaos and deprive states of their national identity and values: 'Jerusalem Post about Soros: His purpose is to undermine Western democracies and make it impossible for governments to maintain order, or for societies to keep their identities and values. That is what the Jews say about him. About what anti-Semitism does Mr Cărtărescu talk about?'; 'So, he is not interested in the social consequences of his business, but financially supports the civil society... It doesn't make any sense, but why does he do that? Jerusalem Post replied: in order to undermine democracy and replace it with the so-called civil society paid by him.' (Republica.ro 2017)

4. Alleged petty economic interests: 'But what does this carnivorous sociopath have to say about the way he is doing business: I can't look and I don't look at the social consequences of what I do. I am there to make money. (CBS interview 1998) About the Asian crisis caused by the sociopath [George Soros], the President of Malaysia said it took forty years for the region to rebuild its economy and a stupid like Soros appeared with

lots of money, a case we can find elsewhere. In the same show he said he had no regrets.’ (Republica.ro 2017)

However, there were also comments supporting George Soros, among the main arguments invoked by the Internet users one could find:

1. Liviu Dragnea’s rich imagination and George Soros’s lack of responsibility for Dragnea’s personal and political misfortunes in an ironic comment: ‘I am convinced that just as Juan Carlos of Spain has prevented me from distance to achieve more, so has Soros with him [Liviu Dragnea]. Until the researchers discover the causes of this phenomenon and a possible cure, this is how things will continue.’ (Republica.ro 2017)

2. Allegations of bribery against Liviu Dragnea’s supporters virulently criticizing George Soros: ‘Comrade Costel, you have studied too many texts at the library from Teleorman. You better admit that your idol has again deceived you (the one whose portrait stands over your head when you sleep [referring to Liviu Dragnea]) and once again you will not receive 100 lei (like it happened in 1989, I hope the tractor driver has the same fate [referring again to Liviu Dragnea]), that if Soros doesn’t get angry.’ (Republica.ro 2017)

3. Alleged accusations of narrow-minded logic, subjective thinking and attempts of falsifying the reality against the critics of George Soros: ‘You live in a reality close to Dragnea – you falsify and interpret facts, data, in a way that suits your narrow thinking.’ (Republica.ro 2017)

4. George Soros has higher interests than the fate of Liviu Dragnea: ‘Instead of making a simple calculation (from the wage as civil servant you can’t earn what the tractor driver has [referring to Liviu Dragnea]), you prefer to swallow everything Sputnik pours on your throat and believe that the old guy Soros can no longer sleep at night because he cares about a stinking peasant from Teleorman [referring again to Liviu Dragnea].’ (Republica.ro 2017)

5. The recurrent strategy of finding a scapegoat: ‘Yes, I am used to this Bolshevik tactic – first it was Bănescu, then Iohannis, afterwards Cioloș, and now you found Soros as the perfect enemy.’ (Republica.ro 2017)

6. The philanthropic character of the actions carried out by George Soros: ‘George Soros is one of the most important philanthropists in the world. In the last thirty years he has provided more than eight billion dollars to his worldwide network of foundations: Foundations for an Open Society, which have applied the concept of an open society, the cornerstone of Soros’s thinking on democracy, freedom and human rights, in the United States of America and abroad.’ (Republica.ro 2017)

As a final conclusion, we may say that most of the slip-ups of Romanian politicians on the theme of the atrocities committed against the

Jews can be enframed in the typology of selective negation of the Holocaust. The official statements of politicians selectively denying the Holocaust have caused many controversial reactions from the Internet users, some of them anti-Semitic comments that went as far as to absolutely deny the Holocaust in Romania and elsewhere.

However, most of the anti-Semitic comments to politicians' regrettable statements simply reviewed common anti-Semitic themes that are to be found in Romania, such as: the important contribution of the Jews to the establishment of the communist regime in Romania and the atrocities that followed against the Romanian people, the attempt to rehabilitate Marshal Ion Antonescu and present him as a national hero, the conspiracy theory or the Jewish plot, the selective negation of the Holocaust in Romania, the comparative trivialisation of the Holocaust and the questionable theological exceptionalism of the Jews.

Fortunately, after 2012 it is less likely for one to find official statements of the political elite selectively denying the atrocities committed against the Jews by the Romanian authorities of that time. Despite this improvement, the memory of the Holocaust has been instrumentalised and continues to be used as a weapon against political opponents with the risk of losing both its meaning and its importance of being correctly remembered by future generations.

In addition, some politicians of the ruling party seem to be unaware of the long-term risks of using George Soros as a 'scapegoat' – the perfect 'outside enemy' that can be held responsible for everything which is not working properly in Romania. These risks may range from the perpetuation of anti-Semitic attitudes against the Jewish community to the conservation of a climate of political instability and social mistrust with further negative consequences for the generally weak social involvement of Romanians in civic activities.

Furthermore, the solution for Romanians' low and very low interest in the problematic of the Holocaust and their poor knowledge of the atrocities committed against the Jews by the authorities of that time is education. As former President Traian Băsescu correctly underlined, 'education is the first step towards a better understanding of the Holocaust and reconciliation with the past. The fight against anti-Semitism begins with a proper knowledge of the historical realities that have led to such atrocities.' (Oprea 2011)

Education about the Holocaust should be included in the high school curricula and delivered accordingly by well-trained professors as an answer to teenagers' incipient awareness and growing need to explore many sensitive subjects. Moreover, a proper education about the Holocaust should

bring together school efforts and parents' active involvement in the development of their children on the base of a proper knowledge of national history and past actions of forerunners, with their positive and negative valences. In order to avoid repeating the same mistakes of the past, the young generation should know, acknowledge and learn from the regrettable actions of their forerunners in the attempt to do things in a totally different manner.

The young people who are interested to further enrich their knowledge about the Holocaust should be given the chance to study this particular subject when choosing a certain university or faculty. Besides the Faculty of History, it will surely be a chance to break the rigid thinking that still prevails in the academic world and a challenge for Romanian universities and faculties specialised in a field of interest not directly connected to the Holocaust, such as: Dance, Music, Theatre, Painting, Filmmaking, Architecture, Photography etc. to offer Bachelor, Master and Doctoral study programs on the subject of the Holocaust in Romania.

Even if the virulent attacks against the American-Hungarian businessman and philanthropist of Jewish descent, George Soros, do not imply a direct, open positioning towards the genocide of the Jews on Romanian territories, the anti-Semite remarks invoked by some representatives of the political elite, as well as by some private Internet users stand as a proof of the poor knowledge of the history of the Jewish community in Romania during World War II. The online slip-ups stigmatizing one or more representatives of the Jewish community with further negative long-term consequences on the low level of social aggregation, poor interaction between different religious communities and a gradual retreat of the individual from the public life to the private, family sphere can be fought against by promoting an early internalisation of the memory of the Holocaust, through home and school education, in the spirit of tolerance for the Other and respect for the historical heritage.

The internalisation of the memory of the Holocaust should be a top-down demarche with the political elite playing the main role. Politicians should take their responsibility as role models for the ordinary citizens seriously and strive to learn as many details as possible about different events that are part of the national history, as well as about positive and negative past actions of forerunners. In addition, the political elite should treat the subject of the Holocaust with due respect and refrain from conveying it into a weapon simply by keeping it far away from the public disputes with political opponents. Moreover, politicians should promote policies and laws aiming to encourage the early awareness of and knowledge about the Holocaust in Romania starting from high school and continuing at university with specialised courses addressed to the passionate

young scholars who want to further enrich their learning in order to be able to present different perspectives over the Holocaust in as many innovative means of expression.

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Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS–UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, within PNCDI III.

Second part
LEARNING FROM THE PAST: TRENDS, PATTERNS
AND PRACTICES IN HOLOCAUST EDUCATION AND
REMEMBRANCE

Chapter 5

The Production, Usages and Circulation of Holocaust Testimonies within Mainstream Societies: Identity Stakes

Sonia CATRINA¹

*“La Mémoire ne vaut pas que pour le Souvenir!
Elle vaut aussi pour le Devenir!”
(Simone Lagrande)*

This research paper focuses on the production, circulation, and legitimisation of testimonies of persons who endured the ghettos and camps of occupied Europe, as sources of direct historical knowledge documenting the Holocaust.² By questioning the “acts of transfer” (Connerton 1989, p. 39) of traumatic memories to members of later generations through social interactions, memorial campaigns, or ritualized commemorations, we intend to disclose the social and political contexts that led Holocaust survivors to taking a position on this issue. Considering testimonies relating to the Holocaust as living connections with the past that act as privileged vehicles of remembrance at work in Holocaust memorialisation, the chapter raises the question of what kind of knowledge related to historical trauma is translated into a ‘language of a collective experience’ and transmitted across the generations. Building on the argument that rhetorical processes through which survivors recall traumatic events and their circumstances involve reenacting emotional experiences, we try to understand whether their production in the public sphere would have an impact on survivors’ identity building.

Keywords: Holocaust; survivors; testimonies; identity stakes.

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² I started to work on this topic as a short term visiting scholar at the Central European University (April-May 2019), under the supervision of Prof. András Kovács, Director of the Department of Jewish Studies. I am grateful for his academic guidance, as well as to Mr. Peter Bérczi from the CEU Library.

Introduction

Two simultaneous processes are currently reported in the European Union and the United States of America: a rise of anti-Semitic attitudes towards Jews, with a surge in anti-Semitic attacks, and a decline of Holocaust awareness.

Anti-Semitic attitudes have been recently identified by the CNN/ComRes poll (2018) that interviewed more than 7,000 people across Europe, with more than 1,000 respondents each in Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Poland, and Sweden. Drawing attention to the high level of anti-Semitism in Europe, the survey carried out by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in December 2018 outlined that anti-Semitism, deep-rooted in society, “plagues the EU” and affects Jews’ everyday life (FRA Press Release December 2018). According to the 16,395 Jewish people from 12 EU member states, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, who responded to the anti-Semitism survey, Europe is still haunted by widespread anti-Semitism. The findings show that Jews across the EU experience anti-Semitism in different forms, such as “verbal and physical attacks, threats, harassment, discrimination and unequal treatment, property damage and graffiti or other forms of speech or text, including on the internet” (FRA November 2018). Furthermore, anti-Semitism “pervades the public sphere, reproducing and engraining stereotypes about Jews” (FRA December 2018). Such attitudes toward the Jews hinder “people’s ability to openly display their Jewish identity free from fears for their security” (European Commission December 2018). They are found to deal with the risk of becoming targets of anti-Semitic harassment and attacks, as “pervasive anti-Semitism undermines Jews’ feelings of safety and security” (FRA December 2018). The FBI data released after the October 2018 attack on a Pittsburgh synagogue, considered as the deadliest ever attack on the Jewish community in the United States, when a gunman shouting anti-Semitic slurs opened fire and killed 11 worshippers while shouting “All Jews must die”, reported a 37% spike in anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2017 compared to the previous year (Cherelus November 2018). Having knowledge of the fact that “the gradual normalisation of antisemitism paved the way for one of the worst atrocities ever to take place in Europe” (FRA January 2019), its escalation in recent years because of the changing geopolitical climate and media environment is once again transforming anti-Semitism in the most significant societal and political issue that undermines democratic values and human rights.

The FRA report came after CNN released its own poll³ highlighting that “anti-Semitic stereotypes are alive and well in Europe, while the memory of the Holocaust is starting to fade”. The CNN report (2018) draws attention to the “widening gaps in the knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust with the passing years” (Wall 2019). According to the CNN investigation, about a third of the 7000 European respondents “knew just a little or nothing at all about the Holocaust, the mass murder of some six million Jews in lands controlled by Adolf Hitler’s Nazi regime in the 1930s and 1940s”, and around one in 20 Europeans “has never heard of the Holocaust” (CNN Investigation November 2018).

Comparable results, but on a different continent, have been released in 2018 by the national study of Holocaust knowledge and awareness among adults in the United States commissioned by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany to Schoen Consulting and released on April 12, on the occasion of “Yom HaShoah”, “the Holocaust Remembrance Day”. This study finds that “there are critical gaps both in awareness of basic facts as well as detailed knowledge of the Holocaust in the United States” (Claims Conference 2018), particularly among millennials, whom the survey defined as people aged 18 to 34. For instance, the survey found that from over 40,000 ghettos and camps that existed during the Holocaust, almost half of US adults (45%) and millennials (49%) could not name a single one. While approximately six million Jews were exterminated in the Holocaust, nearly one-third of all Americans (31%) and over four in ten millennials (41%) believe that two million Jews or less were killed during the Holocaust (Schoen Consulting 2018). Greg Schneider, the executive Vice President of the Claims Conference, noted in an interview with “The New York” Times that “the issue is not that people deny the Holocaust; the issue is just that it’s receding from memory” (Astor April 2018).

In facing the worldwide growth of anti-Semitism, an issue that previously led to “the turning point in History” that was the Holocaust, nowadays far from being an isolated issue, or confined to extremist circles, but being on the contrary mainstreamed and even endorsed by some of the political or intellectual elites, the need to teach the Holocaust in schools in the United States and Europe appears as “compelling” (Wall 2019). As racial stereotyping and demonization has been “the prelude to mass violence around the globe”, Holocaust education “can provide a necessary understanding of how a whole population has been bullied and manipulated by demagogues before succumbing to hate and fear-mongering. It can also

³ The poll was commissioned and completed before the killing of 11 people at the “Tree of Life” Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

serve as a blueprint for recognizing the dangers of demonization and incitement, and to help guard human rights and strengthen core democratic values” (Wall 2019). Harry D. Wall (2019), on the Board of Directors of the Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights, stated that: “There is much to be learned from examining the motivations and behavior of perpetrators and collaborators, as well as bystanders, protesters and heroes”.

Undeniably, there are many ways to impart the legacy of the Holocaust for generations to come: by allowing and supporting research on issues related to the Second World War and Jewish history, by organising commemorations and other public cultural events, by setting up memorials and museums, by conserving material traces of the war’s atrocities, such as ghettos and camps or other historical memorial sites, by preserving archives such as oral and written testimonies of the Holocaust survivors, etc. These sources of Holocaust memorialisation which “reflect particular kinds of political and cultural knowledge” (Young 1989) serve not only as a keystone for remembrance, but also as a commitment to future generations to shape their understanding of the human co-existence of this time. When referring to the crimes against humanity, nowadays defined as genocide, that were committed during the Second World War by the Nazis and their collaborators, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Elie Wiesel repeatedly stated the imperative to remember. Referring to his involvement, Egil Aarvik, Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, declared in 1986 that “[w]e cannot allow ourselves to forget the fate of those who died. If we do forget, we commit them to death once again, and become responsible ourselves for making their lives — and their deaths — meaningless” (Aarvik 1986). It has also been said that peoples or cultures who forget the crimes of the past “are doomed to repeat them” (Nuder 2014).

To remember the Holocaust, in other words the systematic state-sponsored and industrialized mass murder that occurred more than 75 years ago and enveloped almost all of Europe, means learning the lessons of the past and thinking of the future. “To draw lessons from history”, as it was stated in January 2019 by H.E. Mrs. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly on the “International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust”, is “vital” and “it is only in remembering and in educating that we can ensure that the hate of others, the demonization of groups, and the cynical manipulation of opinion that promotes such hatred and violence, can be countered and stopped” (Garcés 2019). Education about the Holocaust can play a key role in preventing genocide “by providing a forum to address past violence while promoting the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes

that can help prevent current day group-targeted violence”⁴. Although there has been evidence that memories “redefine the relations between different generations” (Bond et al. 2017, p. 1), and while “learning about the Holocaust can have a positive impact on the outlook of young people” (Cowan and Maitles 2007, p. 117), education on its own is not the only important way for societies to confront bigotry and “cannot be a panacea for racism in general and anti-Semitism in particular” (Cowan and Maitles 2007, p. 117). Beside educational institutions, individual actors such as historians, writers, and Holocaust survivors from Nazi-occupied Europe have an important role in revealing what anti-Semitism and other forms of racism, hatred, prejudice, and intolerance could entail. In addition, civic organisations’ commitment to spread awareness of the legacy of the Holocaust, and outspoken leadership in politics, media, and other socio-cultural sectors are also essential (Wall 2019). All these agencies have a significant role in bridging the new generations with past events, shaping “collective emotions” (Hutchison and Bleiker 2008, p. 385) and “affect(s)” (Hutchison and Bleiker 2008, p. 496), in fighting prejudice and contributing to citizenship values in a positive way.

As the process of learning about and from the Holocaust gives memory an educational role, we decided to embark on this topic in order to inquire into the mechanisms of memory transmission from Holocaust survivors to members of later generations. When referring to Holocaust survivors’ commitment to speak out and circulate the burden of their past, several questions are co-occurring in our minds: When did Holocaust survivors begin to share their eyewitness testimonies? What has prompted them to overcome their suffering and to disclose their Holocaust experiences in the public sphere? What lies at the basis of their decision to bear witness and embark on talking about traumatic experiences and transmit them to the young generation? What kind of memories cross generational boundaries to inform a wider community? What messages do Holocaust survivors transmit: hope or despair, survival or terror, life or death? What is the purpose in recalling a particular memory in a public speech? What feelings might impinge on remembering? What is the impact of their personal commitment to remembering beyond their ‘lineage’ on their personal identity? How do Holocaust survivors construct their identity by integrating their personal trauma into public speeches?

⁴ The historical significance of the Holocaust is emphasised by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/7 (2005) and the UNESCO General Conference Resolution 34C/61 (2007) on Holocaust Remembrance, that also highlights the importance of teaching this event as a contribution to the prevention of genocide and atrocity crimes (The UNESCO “Education about the Holocaust and genocide”).

The kind of questions we formulated above indicates in what manner we want to approach our issue. It follows that our endeavour is three-folded: (1) first, to disclose the circumstances in which survivors manage to bring history to life by passing their testimonies on to others in an attempt to challenge thoughts and reshape inaccurate frames of reference concerning the Holocaust according to the real history they lived through; (2) second, to reveal the kind of knowledge related to such historical trauma transmitted through their public speeches and translated into a “language of a collective experience” (Ribeiro 2011, p. 11); (3) third, considering Holocaust survivors’ memories as “living connection(s)” (Gorrara 2018, p. 111) with the past that act as “a privileged vehicle of remembrance” (Gorrara 2018, p. 111), we try to understand whether the (re)production of their Holocaust memories in the public sphere would have an impact on their identity building. We do this by analysing the images of the Holocaust transmitted through their testimonies pronounced in public speeches, uttered in solemn contexts in front of large audiences.

Our analysis of the legacy of Holocaust survivors who decided to bear witness to the horrors of the Holocaust after years of remaining silent explores the “acts of transfer”⁵ (Connerton 1989, p. 39) of traumatic memories to members of later generations and the impact of their articulation in the public sphere on identity reconstruction in the framework of post-traumatic memory. Instead of analysing the intergenerational transmission of traumatic memory⁶, considering that research has

⁵ Paul Connerton (1989, p. 39) argues that “to study the social function of memory is to study those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible”, be they “commemorative ceremonies” or “bodily practices” (Ibidem, p. 40).

⁶ Given that there are abundant studies on transgenerational memory (from Holocaust survivors to their family members) that have stressed the relationship between descendants of survivors and the traumatic past of which they have no direct personal experience, a topic that has been conceptualized as “postmemory” (Hirsch 2008; 2011), “*mémoire trouée*” (Raczymow 1986) [translated as “memory shot through with holes” (Raczymow and Astro 1994)], “*mémoire des cendres*” ([“ash memory”] Fresco 1984), “absent memory” (Fine 1988), and “prosthetic memory” (Lury 1998; Landsberg 2004), “vicarious witnessing” (Zeitlin 1998), the focus here is on the transmission of the Holocaust memories to the later generations of young people who are not directly related to survivors.

⁶ This topic has become an important area of research within Holocaust and genocide studies. Scholars who dedicated their research to the analysis of the intergenerational transmission of Holocaust trauma to second-generation survivors (Hirsch 2008, pp. 103-128; 2011, pp. 5-37) and focused on the psychological and social development of the children of survivors disclosed that, in spite of the domestic familial silence of personal accounts and the absence of the intergenerational transmission of Holocaust tales in their childhood, the descendants experienced their parents’ emotional scars, or various feelings such as guilt, fear, anger, mistrust, sadness, and feelings of marginality. For instance, the analysis of the transmission of the symptoms of trauma from the surviving generation to

overlooked the impact of Holocaust testimonies on the construction of survivors' personal identities, the shift from private memory to social memory allows going beyond family boundaries in order to focus on the performative dimension of memory used as a medium for transcultural and transgenerational remembrance. We refer here to the testimonies of Holocaust survivors transmitted through social interactions, memorial campaigns, or ritualized commemorations, as "authentic voices, communicating the Holocaust rather than simply 'representing' it" (Marshman 2005, p. 4). Once publicly conveyed, personal memories, whose indexicality stands for Nazi and their collaborators' crimes, circulate and compete with each other to enter the official narratives. While some memories are silenced, others are objectified and institutionalised in order to contribute to collective remembering. On the other hand, any memorial act is a selective process about the events and people remembered, as well as which details are conveyed. "Cultural memory" communicated through stories involves a dynamic negotiation of various aspects of recalling "a shared past on the basis of common, and therefore often contested, norms, conventions, and practices" (Hirsch and Smith 2002, p. 5). According to Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith (2002, p. 5), "(t)hese transactions emerge out of a complex dynamic between past and present, individual and collective, public and private, recall and forgetting, power and powerlessness, history and myth, trauma and nostalgia, conscious and unconscious fears or desires". Memories are "mediated" (Kansteiner 2002) in culture by different channels: material and immaterial, traditional and digital media and online networks (Vösu et al. 2008, p. 249), which act as a bridge between past, present and future (Van Dijck 2004). When entering the official discourse, they have the ability to "influence collective thought and behavior by assigning normative meaning to signal dimensions of the communal past" (Vivian 2010, p. 63). Framed as "cultural memory" (Assmann 1999, pp. 48-65), memorial narratives articulated and performed in public space are internalised by individuals and appropriated as common references to the past. As "received history" (Young 1997, p. 41), "cultural memory" determines the general framework within which the past acquires a meaning and it conveys a society's self-image (Assmann 1995, p. 132). Therefore, "cultural memory" is central to the formation of identity in

their offspring led Kellermann to define four major theoretical perspectives of trauma transmission: psychodynamic, sociocultural, family system, and biological (Kellermann 2001, pp. 256-267). Moreover, as they suffered from the experiences of their traumatized parents, psychologists stressed there is a "call for intervention and salvation by an array of humanitarian agents of memory to facilitate healing and testimonial voice" (Teodorescu and Glajar 2011).

relationship to the group. Not only are identities permanently constructed and transformed in everyday social interactions and institutional practices, being in constant development because of interactive networks of influences, confrontation, conflict, tension, and positioning, but they impact on the way in which we preserve memories. Our identities, which are not fixed, but fluid and subject to reconstruction, are built on memories of past events retained by our consciousness. Conversely, memory enables the sense of personal, collective, and cultural past experiences to create a meaningful narrative about oneself. Because we are social, our memories are social. Therefore, identity and personal memory, both of which are dynamic and fluid, are inexorably connected, sharing a symbiotic relationship. At the same time, the self, which “is embedded in political, social, ideological and cultural fields of action” (Jaffe 2009, p. 13), is constantly transforming while preserving a sense of continuity. Consequently, following Hall et al. (1997), we take into consideration the social construction of identity. In addition, we consider that identities are “performatively” enacted in and through the subject’s discourse and gestures.

In trying to figure out the impact of taking a position on the Holocaust on personal identity formation, we therefore build upon recent developments in social identity theory, social psychology, and memory studies. By considering identity as the outcome of agency, we explore cognitive and motivational mechanisms that prompt a survivor to re-experience traumatic events from one’s past in front of an audience. By considering Holocaust survivors’ engagement in memory-work, we claim that communicating their personal memories through public discourses affects their identity building. Accordingly, since “affect and emotion, as experienced under the impact of violence, play crucial roles in memory formation and narrative constructions” (Jungblut 2015, p. 19) and impact on personal identity formation, we suggest that taking on “a positive and empowering role in the presence of others” (Peleg, Rachel Lev-Wiesel, and Dani Yaniv 2013, p. 411) for meaning-making in Holocaust memorialisation allows “the testifying subject” to reconstruct one’s self-identity beyond trauma (Ribeiro 2019, p. 11). Additionally, we put forward the question of memory as a source of healing. In other words, considering that experiencing trauma and suffering during the Holocaust would leave long-term psychological marks on survivors, we ask ourselves whether being concerned with spreading the memory of the Holocaust would act as a source of healing. The analysis will thus enable us to scrutinize identity stakes of confronting Holocaust survivors with the burden of not forgetting, denying, repressing, and tolerating silence in an attempt to convey the

legacy of the Holocaust in popular consciousness, as well as the ‘translation’ of their suffering and associated personal feelings into public speeches, as an indexical relationship to direct knowledge of the Holocaust.

This study contributes to scholarship on memory-work and its embedment in social action. Through the analysis of the production, “circulation, mediation, and reception of memory between and beyond ethnic, cultural, or national groups” (Bond et al. 2009, p. 3), our paper foregrounding the “acts of transfer” (Connerton 1989, p. 39) of Holocaust survivors’ memories to the later generations through testimonial accounts (re)produced in public space questions the performative dimension of memory as an ongoing mediation between the private and the public, the past and the present, the local, the national, and the global. Second, it suggests additional considerations on the extent to which features of time and space are salient for expressing formerly rejected traumatic post-Holocaust memory. From this perspective, we will discuss (dis)continuity in Holocaust memorialisation, to further develop the role of the public voices of Holocaust survivors’ historical trauma and the mnemonic significance of the Holocaust.

Consequently, by embarking on the articulation of testimonies in the public sphere, as memorial vectors establishing a relationship to the past, we will first analyse the stages of Holocaust memory-making from a global and structural approach and the building of a ‘cosmopolitan’ memory culture to sustain the global achievement of human rights. Bearing in mind that “cultural memory” is embedded in power relationships, we consider the memorial flow “as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing” (Rothberg 2009, p. 3), this level of analysis establishing a relationship between politics, power, and culture. We will pay particular attention to the Holocaust survivors’ decision to bear witness and embark on talking about their traumatic experiences during the war, to finally analyse Holocaust survivors’ commitment to speak out and circulate their lived experiences.

I. Holocaust memorialisation: from local endorsement to a global perspective

The process of raising public awareness of what happened with Jewish people during the Second World War and in pre-war times is not an easy, straightforward, uniform, or disentangled one, nor one that is taken up by all governments. In the years directly following liberation, there was a lack of knowledge and understanding of the significance of the Holocaust from a factual point of view. For several decades, the Holocaust “sank into

oblivion, or rather, was considered an embarrassment in the post-war era” (Karsson 2015, p. 32). Saul Friedländer (2000) refers to the first twenty years after the end of the war as the period of silence, characterised by marginalisation, repression, and forgetting the wartime horrors. This seeming collective amnesia can be explained by “the tendency among the various national institutions to dissimulate the genocide, instead emphasising memories of resistance movements, further contributed to this period of generalized forgetting” (Ledoux 2015, p. 1). Friedländer complements this explanation by arguing that “the survivors chose to remain silent, since very few people were interested in listening to them (even in Israel) and since, in any case, their own main goal was social integration and a return to normalcy” (Friedländer 2000, p. 5). Before they began to talk about their experiences, many Holocaust survivors “shrouded themselves in silence, repressing memories in a supposedly collective, post-traumatic response” (Ledoux 2015, p. 1). They kept what they had witnessed and felt during the wartime events inside themselves and refrained from speaking, while their private memory was subsumed under prevailing public structures. On the other hand, research revealed that the Holocaust did not disappear entirely from the public’s awareness, as “vivid memories persisted during this period within Jewish circles, undermining arguments that memories had become muted or silenced” (Ledoux 2015, p. 2).

Although there are disparities among various countries regarding Holocaust awareness⁷, it is already acknowledged that this “stunning silence” (Littell 2014, p. 869) was brought to an end by the Eichmann trial having taken place in Jerusalem (1961-1962)⁸. Because of the use of

⁷ While the Eichmann trial paved the way for an increased awareness of the word “Holocaust” in the 1960s, it is generally acknowledged that “by the time the successful NBC mini-series Holocaust was broadcast on American TV in 1978, the idea that this ‘unique’ crime deserved a ‘unique’ descriptive term had been generally accepted” (“Forgotten voices of the Holocaust”). It follows that the adoption of the word by the general public to describe the mass murder of the Jews was gradual.

⁸ Apart from the Eichmann trial (1961-1962), António Sousa Ribeiro (2011) points to the Auschwitz case, taken to court in Frankfurt am Main (1963-1965). The researcher argues that each of these events was “a watershed moment” (Ribeiro 2011, p. 10), when the witnesses’ silence was finally interrupted, and the Holocaust survivors acquired importance “not just in Europe and Israel but especially in other parts of the world” (Ribeiro 2011, p. 10). In his view, while the Nuremberg trials had shown only a facet of the Holocaust by bringing the Nazi leaders to justice, the Eichmann trial and the Auschwitz case created “the prevailing conditions” (Ribeiro 2011, p. 10) for the articulation of memory. This was not possible before, when “there existed no public space for witness bearing in the post-war period” (Ribeiro 2011, p. 10), the public context being “dominated by the wish to forget” (Ribeiro 2011, p. 10).

eyewitness narratives, the Eichmann trial was endowed with a specific mission by legal and political figures, as well as by the media and the intellectual elites, to spread the memory of the genocide of the Jews among the general population. Referring to the survivors having provided testimony during the trial, Annette Wieviorka (2006, p. 88) explains their role in the expression of Holocaust memory during and after the trial as follows: “With the Eichmann trial, the witness became an embodiment of memory... attesting to the past and to the continuing presence of the past”. As a result, “the genocide came to be defined as a succession of individual experiences with which the public was supposed to identify” (Wieviorka 2006, p. 88). Being requested by the state and supported by the force of the legal system, the testimonies gained “political and social significance no book could confer” (Wieviorka 2006, p. 84). Moreover, the accusations and testimonies presented in the trial, followed by the execution of Adolf Eichmann⁹ on June 1, 1962, broadcasted on national TV and widely covered in the newspapers, gave the chance to Israeli society “to acknowledge the survivors’ history, to live through them and internalise their experience, thereby creating a common historical memory of the Holocaust” (Cebulski 2007, p. 6). Accordingly, the integration of this historical past into the public narrative in this period of the nationalization of memory corresponds to the internalisation of the Holocaust in Israeli collective identity (Gutwein 2009).

Being brought to public awareness, the Eichmann trial did not influence only the Israeli nation-building process, but it “aroused intense interest all over the world” (Littell 2014, p. 869). By recognising a new dimension of the Holocaust survivors’ identity, “to be the bearer of history” (Wieviorka 2006, p. 89), the trial accordingly induced “a fundamental change in the approach to memory of the Holocaust” (Cebulski 2007, p. 6). The trial was thus “a major landmark of Holocaust awareness and education” (Littell 2014, p. 869). Besides, it was “knowledge that brought about awareness” (Shapira 1998, p. 3). Whereas “images of the Holocaust were haunting many of the survivors, imprisoning them in years of silence” (Cebulski 2007, p. 6), the Eichmann trial¹⁰ “forced them to confront their

⁹ Adolf Eichmann is characterised in “The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Holocaust Encyclopedia” as “one of the most pivotal actors in the implementation of the “Final Solution”. Charged with managing and facilitating the mass deportation of Jews to ghettos and killing centers in the German-occupied East, he was among the major organizers of the Holocaust”.

¹⁰ In addition to this major event in the process of Holocaust memory-making, the Six Day War in 1967, as well as the Yom Kippur War in 1973 also constituted significant turning points. Referring to these events among other local political factors, Shapira (1998) and

traumatic memories and pass them on, often for the first time, to their children and then to succeeding generations”. António Sousa Ribeiro (2011, p. 11) quotes Shoshana Felman to argue that “the Eichmann case was a privileged moment of discursive production for hitherto silenced or otherwise excluded voices, a moment when a public discourse of testimony was constituted”. In addition, the Eichmann trial “created a social demand for testimonies” (Wieviorka 2006, p. 87) on which Holocaust survivors would embark in “the era of the witness”, as Annette Wieviorka (2006, p. 87) calls the following period in Holocaust memorialisation. The growing awareness¹¹ of the significance of the Holocaust in the 1960s is also marked by “the publication and wide sale of the English edition of Elie Wiesel’s classic: *Night*¹², which after four decades remains one of the most influential publications about the Holocaust” (Littell 2014, p. 869). According to Marcia Sachs Littell, this literary work was complemented by the first edition of Raul Hilberg’s landmark scholarly work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Using the sources available at that moment, the book “carefully recorded the mass Nazi genocide of the Jews” (Littell 2014, p. 869).

In the 1980s, a cultural shift in Israeli collective identity has been discerned by scholars (Zandberg 2006; Gutwein 2009). The new period was marked by the prominence of “privatized memory”, which, once brought to the fore, “turned the Holocaust into a personal experience that is concerned with the fate of Jews as individuals: victims, displaced persons (DPs), survivors, and the ‘second generation’” (Gutwein 2009, p. 37). According to Gutwein (2009, p. 37), the focus of Holocaust memory is on the “individualized commemoration epitomized by the poem ‘Unto Every Person There is a Name’ by the Israeli poet Zelda, which became emblematic of ‘privatized memory’”. The privatization and individuation of memory in the decades after the Eichmann trial led to a flood of video-recorded testimonial interviews at “Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust

Zandberg (2006) contend that they have further influenced the acceptance of private individualizing Holocaust memory within Israeli culture.

¹¹ Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity* written in 1947 and republished in the 1960s also contributed to this process. Levi’s work brought to the foreground his experiences in Auschwitz and his observations on life there, remaining a lasting testament to the indestructibility of the human spirit.

¹² Elie Wiesel began writing an 800-page text in Yiddish titled *Un di Velt Hot Geshvign (And the World Remained Silent)* after a ten-year self-imposed vow of silence about the Holocaust. This literary work was first published in 1956, and later evolved into the much shorter French publication *La Nuit* (1958), and translated into English as *Night* (1960).

Remembrance Center”,¹³ as well as at various institutions in the United States and Europe. Aleida Assman (2006, p. 263) notes that history and memory have become closely linked beginning in the 1980s, and she starts questioning “the experience and aftermath of the events in the lives of those who experienced them and those who decide to remember them, together with the problem of how to represent them.” At the same time, “the broad appeal of the 1978 TV miniseries *Holocaust*, the efforts of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies to videotape the accounts of survivors since the 1980s, and the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum¹⁴ in the 1990s¹⁵” reveal “the remarkable rise (and the particular shape) of the Holocaust in American historical consciousness” (Bond et al. 2017, p. 13). One could add to this undertaking the release of the film *Schindler’s List* in 1993, followed by the establishment in 1994 of “The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation”¹⁶, which includes 52,000 audiovisual testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust¹⁷. Such foundations “played a major role in establishing [the video testimony] as a separate genre and defining its specific format and purpose” (Assmann 2006, p. 267). Additionally, video testimonies are “memorials of individual human suffering and surviving” (Assmann 2006, p. 267). In discussing engagement with video testimonies, Assmann (2006, p. 271) states that video testimony as a genre is meant to keep memory contemporary, to ensure that “the rights of memory can be restored in a future era of history and the experience of the Holocaust can maintain its status as ‘contemporary history,’ supported by living memories”.

¹³ “Today, more than 50 years since their founding, the Yad Vashem Archives house the largest collection of Holocaust documents in the world: over 210,000,000 pages of documentation. The collections include over 131,000 survivor testimonies; over 500,000 photographs and approximately 4.8 million names registered in the Hall of Names” (according to the Yad Vashem Archives).

¹⁴ It was President Jimmy Carter who established in 1978 the President’s Commission on the Holocaust in order to prepare a report “with respect to the establishment and maintenance of an appropriate memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust.” The 1978–1979 presidential commission was led by Elie Wiesel and recommended the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. He went on to serve for six years as the founding chairman of the governing council that would oversee its development.

¹⁵ The Museum opened in April 1993.

¹⁶ It became the USC Shoah Foundation in 2016. Presently, it encompasses 55,000 audiovisual testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides, conducted in 65 countries and in 43 languages.

¹⁷ The 1980s testimony collection by Steven Spielberg’s US-based Shoah Foundation is currently housed at Yad Vashem.

The 1980s, and to an even greater extent the 1990s, the period of the so-called “Americanization of the Holocaust” (Rosenfeld 1995), was an era marking new frontiers in Holocaust memorialisation because of the interest for a witness perspective¹⁸. These new ways of appropriating the past allowed the transnationalization of Holocaust memory, which gradually became an integral part of the global political and media agenda. However, it was in the post-Cold War era that the mnemonic significance of the Holocaust was reframed as a common heritage with universal significance. As for “current European memory culture and European politics”, Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke (2015, p. 22) predicates that “the issue of the Holocaust – how it is remembered and the influence that memory exerts on the present – has played (...) an important role” since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the events that took place in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. The new perception of the Holocaust formed the core of an expanded vision and new, democratic ethos in the West grounded in human rights awareness and peaceful coexistence (Wieviorka 2006), and marked “the beginning of a Europeanization of the Holocaust, both as memory and a moral guidepost” (Banke 2015, p. 23).

Whereas during the period of nation-building states inscribed their collective memory in mythological inventions of political communities, in the age of post-nationalism the frames of the nascent European identity are no longer delineated by the borders of the nation-state. Recognising at a global level the Holocaust as an “iconic trauma” (Levy and Sznajder 2006, p. 3), the foundations of collective memory seem to be the commemoration of the universal lessons of the Holocaust. The universal significance of the Holocaust was shaped in the context of globality, marked by the awareness of an ever more interconnected world. Since this “symbolic turn”, the Holocaust “was no longer merely a source of personal and cultural trauma, but assumed an iconic status, that became the source for self-conscious political action”, frequently deployed as a metaphor for mass atrocities and general considerations for human rights. Memories of the Holocaust have become “a moral touchstone, a call to action” (Levy and Sznajder 2006, p. 5).

Being mediated by “economic, cultural, discursive and political structures” (Tomsy 2011, 53), Holocaust memory circulates, migrates, and travels (Bond et al. 2009, p. 1) “between and beyond ethnic, cultural, or national groups” (Bond et al. 2009, p. 3), “through time and space, across social, linguistic and political borders” (Erl 2011, p. 11). As a consequence of memory politics, intrinsically globally oriented, the shared memories of

¹⁸ This was due to the worldwide success of Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* and the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC.

the Holocaust provide the foundation for a new form of memory, “cosmopolitan memory” (Levy and Sznajder 2002; 2005), transcending ethical and national boundaries. In Jeffrey Alexander’s view (2002), the Holocaust “has escaped its spatial and temporal particularism to emerge as a common moral touchstone and advance the cause of global justice”. In Levy and Sznajder’s assessment (2006, p. 3), the Holocaust “carried trauma from the personal to the collective level and became synonymous with political evil itself”. “Traumatic transition” is addressed in terms of justice, which Alexander called “the cultural construction of trauma” (Alexander 2004, p. 11). The emergence of a global legal culture was a continued negotiation process between “international law” and “normative ethics (based on questions of reason and morality)” (Levy and Sznajder 2006, p. 6).

In contrast to trauma seen in individual terms, the construction and representation of trauma at the collective level requires a degree of institutionalization. In order to shape national identity, governments should “give people contents, give them categories, give them forms of consciousness, by means of which they can approach self-reflection” (Adorno 1998, p. 300). In this attempt to infuse the construction of collective memory, the process of inscribing the Holocaust trauma into laws was accompanied by the foundation of memorials and Holocaust museums, historical exhibitions and art installations, commemorations, public speeches, and a variety of educational resources.

However, it was “at the turn of the millennium” (Kovács 2016) that official Holocaust remembrance was marked into a ritual and thus institutionalised in Western Europe and in the United States. Indeed, it was on the 26th-28th of January 2000 that 44 governments from around the world met in the capital of Sweden for the “Stockholm International Forum Conference on the Holocaust”, to discuss the importance of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. At the same time, the High Representatives of Governments at the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust declared the need to “strengthen the moral commitment of our peoples, and the political commitment of our governments, to ensure that future generations can understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences” (“Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust” / January 26-28, 2000). Following the Stockholm meeting, many governments embarked on establishing an annual Holocaust Memorial Day on the 27th of January, which was the date of the liberation of the Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau by the Soviet troops in 1945. More precisely, during the 42nd plenary meeting on the 1st of November 2005, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution introduced by Israel and designated the 27th of January

as Holocaust Remembrance Day (A/RES/60/7 November 1, 2005). Co-sponsored by 104 other states, the resolution rejects Holocaust denial and encourages countries to develop educational programs about the horrors of genocide. It also condemns religious intolerance, incitement, harassment, or violence based on ethnic origin or religious belief. The observance of this day on the 27th of January each year serves to reaffirm the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (“The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme” / January 26, 2007).

The Holocaust Memorial Day is concerned with “remembering the victims and those whose lives have been changed beyond recognition as a result of the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides” (The Wiener Holocaust Library no date). Having been adopted by a great number of states, the International Holocaust Memorial Day on the 27th of January has acquired a global meaning. It was set up to commemorate, memorialise, and learn about the Holocaust in order to prevent other genocides and commit to a better future. In the framework of the aforementioned “cosmopolitan memory,” the Holocaust is considered in universal terms: “it can happen to anyone, at anytime, and everyone is responsible” (Levy and Sznajder 2002, p. 101).

Moreover, “cosmopolitan memory” (Levy and Sznajder 2002; 2005) connects a dreadful past to an uncertain future, going through a present confronted with growing anti-Semitism. Hence, Holocaust memory is especially relevant in the context of educating the young generation. Preventing any forms of genocide and shaping the future are nowadays among the main tasks of Holocaust education. This future-oriented memory can be distinguished from previous forms of collective memory channelled through the national past. The cosmopolitanization of Holocaust memory is connected to post-national processes. The spread of a common consciousness of risks across the world, along with universal ideas such as human rights, transform cosmopolitanism into a necessary cultural orientation. The sense of global citizenship and global values jointly provide the social and cultural basis for global cooperation. Cosmopolitanism allows young people to contribute to the common global future.

Referring to the endorsement of the global Holocaust memorialisation by nation-states, Monika Kovács (2016, p. 232) contends that for the majority of post-communist countries “this attitude was often a symbolic, and sometimes pragmatic, gesture to emphasize their belonging to the West and not necessarily the expression of a wish to face their own past.” The researcher’s explanation is that for these countries “adhering to global Holocaust remembrance was easier than confronting the crimes committed by one’s own group or its indifference to genocide in former

times” (Kovács 2016, p. 232). On the other hand, several scholars have argued that it was “a prerequisite for a nation’s membership of international institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations and thus as the key to participation in the global political arena” (Bond et al. 2017, p. 4). Undeniably, in post-communist countries the process of working through their own past became prominent in politics, media, and intellectual circles only when the issue of joining the European Union was raised. If one wants to accurately remember the past, “the past must be worked upon (in Adorno’s terms) or one must master the present (in Voegelin’s terms)” (Fackenthal 2012, p. 123). Because the problem of coming to terms with the past and publicly acknowledging it in response to the fascist age did not sprout from an intrinsic political will, the incorporation of the Holocaust memory into national narratives and collective identity did not coincide with the development of “one’s self-consciousness” (Adorno 1986, p. 128), but allowed instead for the emergence of multiple versions of the past.

Rituals shaped by international or regional powers as shared identity projects, such as worldwide commemorations organized on specific dates, are necessary because they allow the remembrance of the traumatic past and fighting against forgetting. Concomitantly, (inter)national commemorations, as representational politics set up ‘from above’, become categories of reference for mainstream society. They impact on historical culture and contribute to internalising the Holocaust memory constructed in the national arena. They allow self-reflection upon the past and thus preclude forgetting, which in turn enable us to project the future. In addition to top-down actions of public memory building and remembrance of difficult pasts, there are bottom-up engagements, of non-governmental institutions and individual actors, aimed at the (re)enactment of the Jewish history in the present. They give meaning to their past in the present, thus contributing to the processes of shaping the memory of the Holocaust, and they are producing their future by relying on their traumatic past experiences in contexts of social responsibility.

The various modes of “relationship to the past” (Tornatore 2010, p. 5) at work in Holocaust memory processes, (1) of the (inter)national authorities that make use of their power to frame the Holocaust as “public memory”, and thus to build common historical narratives, and (2) of social agents who engage with the past and Holocaust memory-making, clearly indicate that shared memories are not consensual or uniform, uncontroversial or uncontested. On the contrary, they are “constantly rebuilt by re-makings and the incorporation of the new representations” (Laigneau 1996, p. 178), thus embodying ongoing values. Accordingly, the Holocaust

memory-making is a multi-layered mechanism ‘travelling’ through time and space (Rothberg 2009; Erll 2011).

II. Moral responsibility and social engagements in the Holocaust memory-work

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, survivors had to ‘move on’ and adjust their lives to the new context in the quest for a new life, home, and family. In trying to distance themselves from the suffering they experienced during the war, they suppressed their feelings. However, despite their efforts to overcome trauma, Holocaust survivors had experienced emotional and psychological difficulties. Their inability to mourn or to acknowledge their own suffering led them to express a variety of symptoms which psychiatrists called “survivor syndrome,” “concentration camp syndrome,” and “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD) (Braham 1988; Choy and De Bosset, 1992; LaCapra 2001).

In spite of all these difficulties, in the years following the Holocaust, the moral obligation to speak out and not tolerate any more indifference was a relevant issue. The process started with writing literature, and continued with recordings of oral testimonies, especially during the “era of memory” (Hirsch 2008), and with delivering speeches on Jewish survivors’ “unspeakable” experiences. All these memory tools built on survivors’ personal images, senses, and emotions contributed to revealing the atrocities of the Holocaust and their transmission within mainstream society, thus reinforcing the construction of the Holocaust as public memory. While stressing the importance of the antecedent genre of Holocaust testimony, Alvin Rosenfeld argues in his article ‘The Assault on Holocaust Memory’ that Jewish literature of the Holocaust is animated by the imperative to remember, accompanied by the issue of not forgetting (Rosenfeld 2001, p. 3). Analysing “the innumerable pages of the testimonial writings of those who endured the ghettos and camps of occupied Europe”, several scholars have also identified “a passionate determination to record the Nazi crimes and transmit knowledge of them to others” (Rosenfeld 2001, p. 3). By questioning the impact of first-hand accounts on remembrance, scholars point to the fact that “the Holocaust dramatically shifted our understanding of memory as well as our sensitivity to the ethics of remembrance” (Gibson and Jones 2012, p. 109).

Yet, “(l)ike all traumatic memories, the memory of the Holocaust has long evoked ambivalent and even antithetical reactions. These reactions have often been intense, compounded, as they frequently are, by complex issues of national identity, political ideology, economic interests, religious

passions, cultural loyalties, and more” (Rosenfeld 2001, p. 4). Alvin Rosenfeld (2001) argues that there are writers who question the motives of those who seek to perpetuate Holocaust memory in public consciousness. For instance, Rosenfeld quotes Norman Finkelstein, who talks about Holocaust memory as “an ideological representation of history” and accuses the persons who sustain the so-called “Holocaust industry” (Rosenfeld 2001, p. 3). Holocaust denials, first expressed in the aftermath of the Second World War, have developed and received much more attention since the 1990s. The collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the tendency to re-write a part of history that was previously suppressed or manipulated, along with the gradual disappearance of the generation of witnesses of Nazi crimes allow for modern-day Holocaust denial to become widespread and much more sophisticated. Its supporters, in the beginning Nazis themselves, are nowadays represented by historians and political activists with international recognition, whose political outlook is fuelled by deep-seated anti-Semitism. Their attempts to convince us that the Holocaust did not occur, or that the actual numbers of Jews killed in the gas chambers and killing fields of Europe were extremely low, are counterbalanced by the eye-witnesses to the tragedy, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

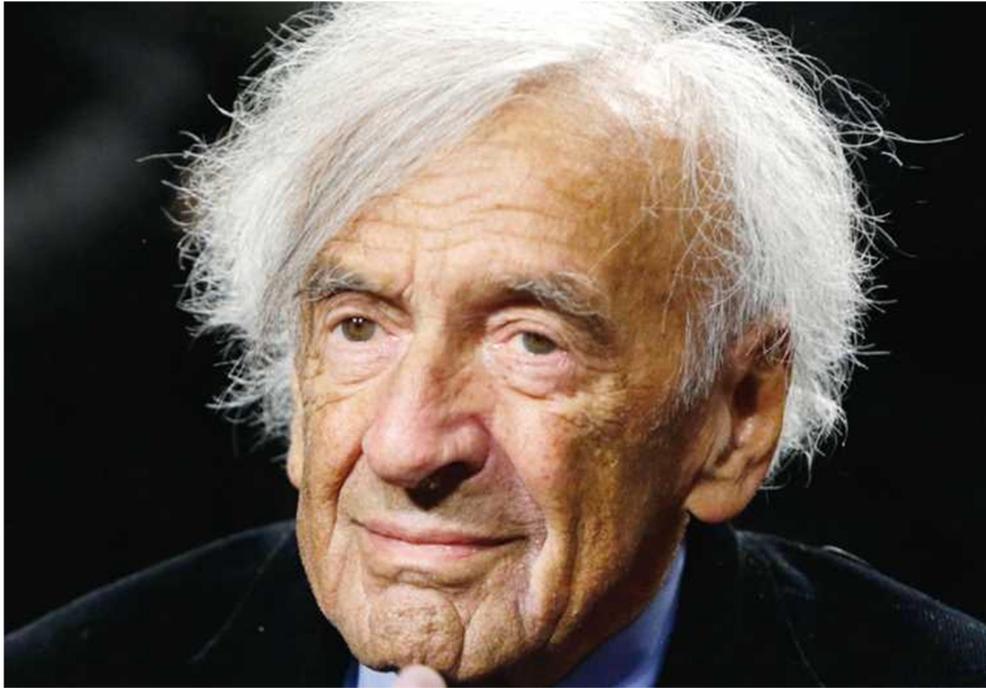
While Holocaust survivors have told their (hi)stories in writings or recorded them for posterity, others have invested themselves in memorial acts and social practices of commemoration, in an attempt to publicly frame the Holocaust, acting as mediators between the traumatic past and the audience. Sometimes, revisionist or negationist attitudes regarding the Holocaust have led survivors with different backgrounds and diverse Jewish identification not only to take action and release the awesome burden of their embodied memories, whenever they had the opportunity to do it, but they have also informed their mission for social justice. Holocaust survivors’ engagement in memory-work could be read as social responsibility, as the process of memory-building “is not merely about remembering and forgetting, it is about connecting memory to on-going events, to the self in contemporary society, to social conscience” (Ott 1996, p. 443).

Considering that “(w)ithout memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future” (Allison et al. 2016, and *Hitler’s Children* no date), **Elie Wiesel**, a Jewish Romanian Holocaust survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, was among the first ones to break the silence after the Holocaust, and write down his personal experiences, in novels, plays, essays, and memoirs. According to his statement, his ten-year “self-imposed vow of silence” is explained by the

fact that he did not know how to describe his horrific experience: “I wanted to be sure that the words I was going to use about this event were the proper words,” he said (Winfrey 2000). With the publication of his memoir *Night* (1956), Elie Wiesel finally broke his silence. He described the silence that enveloped and transcended his painful search for language in trying to recreate his own past experiences as a Holocaust survivor in his preface to the 2012 translation of *Night*:

“Convinced that this period in history would be judged one day, I knew that I must bear witness. I also knew that, while I had many things to say, I did not have the words to say them. Painfully aware of my limitations, I watched helplessly as language became an obstacle. It became clear that it would be necessary to invent a new language. But how was one to rehabilitate and transform words betrayed and perverted by the enemy? Hunger—thirst—fear—transport—selection—fire—chimney: these words all have intrinsic meaning, but in those times, they meant something else. Writing in my mother tongue—at that point close to extinction—I would pause at every sentence, and start over and over again. I would conjure up other verbs, other images, other silent cries. It still was not right. But what exactly was “it”? “It” was something elusive, darkly shrouded for fear of being usurped, profaned.”

The inadequacy of language to render the oppression, the grief and the pain in dehumanization and to convey it to an external audience is counterbalanced by his moral duty toward the ones who did not survive: “I owe something to the dead. And anyone who does not remember betrays them again” (*Hitler’s Children* no date). In spite of the oppressive and challenging silence to which he was conjured for years, starting with *Night* he decided to devote his life to telling his personal (his)story and fight against oblivion. In *Night*, he speaks in the first person, a stand adopted also in his speeches. In fact, *Night* presents the narrative through the eyes of the protagonist, Eliezer, a 15-year-old young boy sent to Auschwitz only for the sin of being a Jew. As the main character in the story relates the autobiographical events from his own perspective, that of the “prisoner A-7713”, it follows that Elie Wiesel, as a narrator, embraced a personal point of view on the events. In other words, Wiesel’s horrific experience of the Holocaust in Auschwitz and Buchenwald is not meant to be an all-encompassing discourse on the experience of the Holocaust. At the same time, the narrative perspective of the first person narrator adopted in *Night*, intensely personal and subjective, is also of all those who remained silent, who could not convey their thoughts or feelings in words, or by gestures and conduct.



“Elie Wiesel on Bearing Witness”, Address to the United Nations on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Bearing Witness, 60 Years On* / January 24, 2005, https://israelforever.org/interact/blog/elie_wiesel_bearing_witness/, accessed on October 18, 2019.

Throughout his life, Elie Wiesel adopted different forms of testimony: he described his experience in concentration camps as a writer, but also as a teacher, scholar, orator, moral philosopher, and human rights activist. His determination to share his own past into collective memory was accompanied by his strong desire to protect Holocaust memory from fading. As he stated at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in 1986, his life was driven toward perpetuating memory: “I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices” (The Norwegian Nobel Committee 1986). He considered it was his responsibility to speak out about the atrocities he had witnessed. Accordingly, his personal experiences during the Second World War became the raw material for, and driving force behind a lifetime of activism. Beyond this responsibility to carry on the burden of that legacy, he asked the public to consider other acts of cruelty around the world. He fought for justice and became a leading advocate for human rights throughout the world: “We must remember the suffering of my people, as we must remember that of the Ethiopians, the Cambodians, the boat people, Palestinians, the Mesquite Indians, the

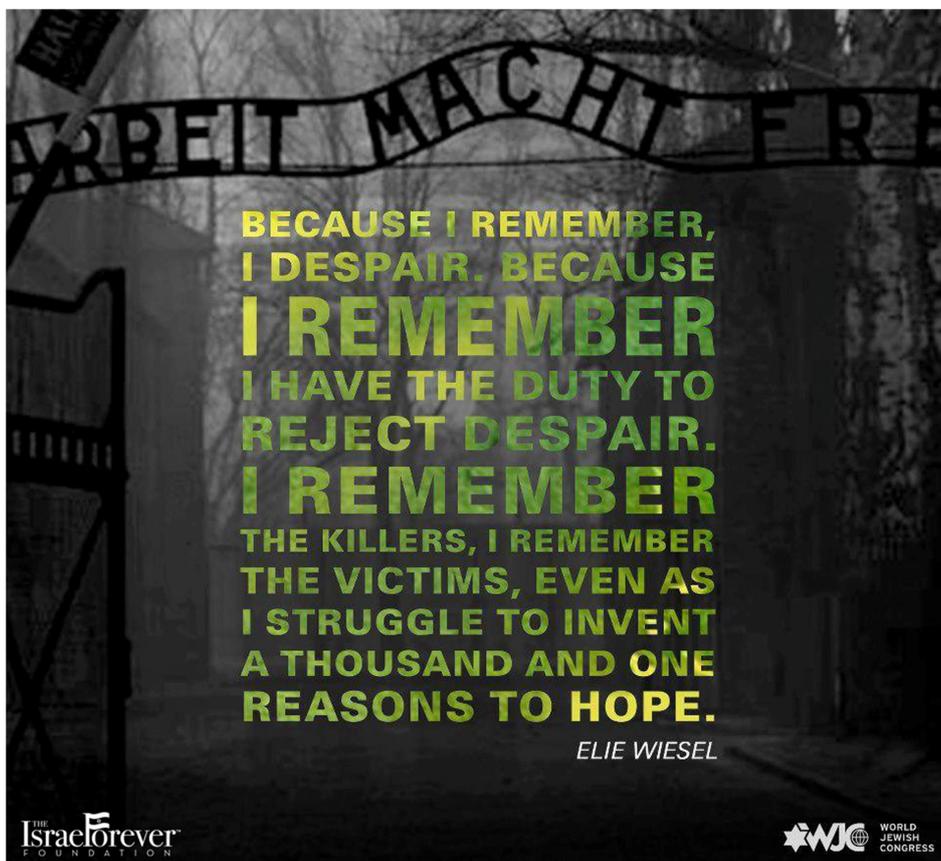
Argentinian '*desaparecidos*' – the list seems endless" (The Norwegian Nobel Committee 1986). For his commitment to disseminate knowledge about his experience in two of Hitler's death camps, which "has been widened to embrace all repressed peoples and races" (The Norwegian Nobel Committee 1986), and for his tireless work on behalf of peace and justice, atonement, and human dignity, he was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize on October 14, 1986. On the occasion, the Norwegian Nobel Committee stated (1986) that "Elie Wiesel has emerged as one of the most important spiritual leaders and guides in an age when violence, repression and racism continue to characterise the world. Wiesel is a messenger to mankind".

In his Nobel Lecture delivered on December 11, 1986, with the title 'Hope, despair and memory', Elie Wiesel declared that the first option when going through a traumatic experience is to "try to forget the past". "Why not?", he asked. "Is it not natural for a human being to repress what causes him pain, what causes him shame? Like the body, memory protects its wounds. When day breaks after a sleepless night, one's ghosts must withdraw; the dead are ordered back to their graves." He explained that "for the first time in history, we could not bury our dead. We bear their graves within ourselves." Therefore, "forgetting was never an option." He explained the "call of memory, the call *to* memory" as coming from the very dawn of history, being a commandment from the Bible. According to this standpoint adopted by Wiesel, "the rejection of memory becomes a divine curse, one that would doom us to repeat past disasters, past wars" (Wiesel December 11, 1986).

On the other hand, Wiesel tried to understand why people "refused to listen; and even those who listened refused to believe; and even those who believed could not comprehend". He agreed that "they could not. Nobody could", as "(t)he experience of the camps defies comprehension" (Wiesel December 11, 1986). In fact, Elie Wiesel knew, as did many survivors who remained silent for their entire lives, that their experiences of human degradation on such a mass scale had no justification or easy explanation; without this realisation, we cannot provide accounts for the silencing devastation of the Holocaust. In his view, the "scope and magnitude" of the Holocaust, "its sheer weight of numbers" and "the impact of so much humiliation and pain" defy both language and understanding (Wiesel January 24, 2005).

Accordingly, he confessed the inadequacy and poverty of language to describe their horrific past experiences, for which Holocaust survivors "would have to invent a new vocabulary" (Wiesel December 11, 1986). The problem of making sense of the incomprehensible is reiterated in the very few public statements and interviews he gave: "When speaking about that

era of darkness, the witness encounters difficulties. His words become obstacles rather than vehicles; he writes not with words but against words. For there are no words to describe what the victims felt when death was the norm and life a miracle. Still, whether you know it or not, his memory is part of yours” (Wiesel January 24, 2005). Compared to survivors who decided to remain silent, perhaps in an attempt to forget, through his work, Elie Wiesel “put words on the unspeakable, to awaken all minds to the horror of the Holocaust” (Bokova 2016). This aspect of his work enabled Irina Bokova (2016), the UNESCO Director-General, to affirm: “His legacy is unparalleled and his message is more relevant than ever to fight against anti-Semitism in all its forms. We all owe him an immense debt, and this is our duty to take forward.”



“Elie Wiesel on Bearing Witness”, Address to the United Nations on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, *Bearing Witness, 60 Years On* / January 24, 2005, https://israel forever.org/interact/blog/elie_wiesel_bearing_witness/, accessed on October 18, 2019.

Drawing on Job's biblical story of survival, Elie Wiesel explains that "the source of his hope was memory, as it must be ours. Because I remember, I despair. Because I remember, I have the duty to reject despair. I remember the killers, I remember the victims, even as I struggle to invent a thousand and one reasons to hope", he added in his Nobel Lecture (Wiesel December 11, 1986). He declared that the hope, but also the fear, have been supported by the powerful image of "the young Jewish boy from the Carpathian Mountains", himself, that he could not forget (Wiesel April 12, 1999). On the contrary, this teenager, deported by the Nazis to the Auschwitz extermination camp in occupied Poland, has "accompanied the old man (...) throughout these years of quest and struggle. And together [they] walk towards the new millennium, carried by profound fear and extraordinary hope" (Wiesel April 12, 1999). Because of "this fiery memory" (Wiesel 2001), which resides in the survivors' minds, "we, you and I, you and all of us, now are its very privileged custodians" (Wiesel 2001), and, for this reason, the later generations have the responsibility to remember past atrocities. However, Elie Wiesel confessed that even if some of the survivors tried to talk, "[n]o one wanted to hear", but things are different today, as the young people "listen, they want to know. They visit our Museum, listen to survivors, and they want to learn how to prevent our past from becoming their future" (Wiesel 2001).

Accordingly, we understand that for him, responsibility is a double-sided mechanism, for it refers to both the dead and the living. "For the dead and the living, we must bear witness" (Wiesel April 22, 1993). These are his words, engraved in stone at the entrance of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, a project he was entrusted with by President Carter in 1978. He explained at the Dedication Ceremonies for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opened on April 22, 1993, in Washington, DC, that "not only are we responsible for the memories of the dead, we are also responsible for what we are doing with those memories". He acknowledged that memory could be the link between "[p]eople who come from different horizons, who belong to different spheres, who speak different languages – they should feel united in memory". At the same time, the appeal to memory is a small moral obligation to reconciliation that could partly redeem the world's apathy during the period of growing anti-Semitism that led to genocide: "with some measure of grace, we should, in a way, be capable of reconciling ourselves with the dead. To bring the living and the dead together in a spirit of reconciliation is part of that vision." Given that no one can explain the indifference to "the humiliation, persecution, extermination of an entire people", the memorial "is not an answer; it is a question mark. If there is a response, it is a response in

responsibility.” The responsibility Elie Wiesel claimed was built on the unwavering belief in human beings: “We still believe and we still have faith” in the power of good over evil, he added. Beyond “the absolute necessity to communicate a tale” which remains unconceivable because of the impossibility to be grasped entirely through language (“you won’t understand that I cannot explain”, Elie Wiesel declared), but also because of the unexplainable “inhumanity” of human beings, he concluded his speech at the Dedication Ceremonies for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum with the words: “we are all responsible, and indifference is a sin and a punishment. And we have learned that when people suffer we cannot remain indifferent” (Wiesel April 22, 1993). Awareness fuels the responsibility toward any act of injustice, while indifference means collaboration. Following from these considerations, all of humanity is mandated to transmit the legacy of the Holocaust and to respond to contemporary atrocities and human rights abuses. This perspective, which challenges the conscience of humanity, would be reasserted throughout his entire life as a memory bearer and human rights activist.

Being invited to bear witness at the United Nations, on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau on January 24, 2005, he confessed his “privileged” position that allowed him to speak, that of being “a witness to a crime committed in the heart of European Christendom and civilization by a brutal dictatorial regime – a crime of unprecedented cruelty in which all segments of government participated” (Wiesel January 24, 2005).

He also reminded the audience that “the Jewish witness speaks of his people’s suffering as a warning. He sounds the alarm so as to prevent these things being done. He knows that for the dead it is too late; for them, abandoned by God and betrayed by humanity, victory came much too late (...) [when] there was no joy in our heart: only pain. We did not sing, we did not celebrate. We had just enough strength to recite the Kaddish” (Wiesel January 24, 2005). In spite of not choosing vengeance or hate for the horror of the Holocaust survivors had witnessed, the pain they had endured and the relatives they lost, Elie Wiesel and other survivors chose not be silent. For them, “Hatred is degrading and vengeance demeaning. They are diseases” (Wiesel January 24, 2005). For this reason, their messages remain ones of hope, considering that “it is not too late for today’s children, ours and yours. It is for their sake alone that we bear witness. It is for their sake that we are duty-bound to denounce anti-Semitism, racism, and religious or ethnic hatred. Those who today preach and practice the cult of death, those who use suicide terrorism, the scourge of this new century, must be tried and condemned for crimes against humanity. Suffering confers

no privileges; it is what one does with suffering that matters. Yes, the past is in the present, but the future is still in our hands.” In Elie Wiesel’s conception, not only should we learn from the past, but we should also stand up against injustice and take a position on it in order to preserve democratic values and to produce change in society. If those who survived the Holocaust “advocate hope, not despair; generosity, not rancor or bitterness; gratitude, not violence”, their messages of hope for the future are linked to the human capacity to prevent re-occurrence of past horrors by taking action: “We must be engaged, we must reject indifference as an option. Indifference always helps the aggressor, never his victims” (Wiesel January 24, 2005).

Elie Wiesel was not certain whether the world would learn from history or not, but he strongly believed that, relying on this tremendous catastrophe that the Holocaust was in history, our perception of responsibility toward other human beings must change. “Our obligation is to give meaning to life and in doing so to overcome the passive, indifferent life”, said Elie Wiesel (1999) in his speech entitled ‘The Perils of Indifference’, delivered on the 12th of April 1999 at the White House in Washington, DC. Being particularly concerned about the indifference the world had shown to the plight of the Jews, Elie Wiesel fought against it. According to the Norwegian Nobel Institute’s representatives, Elie Wiesel thought it is “equally important to fight indifference” and he “saw the struggle against indifference as a struggle for peace”. In his words, “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference”¹⁹ (The “Elie Wiesel” Foundation for Humanity no date).

In trying to etymologically explain “indifference”, Elie Wiesel (April 12, 1999) said that this word means “‘no difference’. A strange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness, dusk and dawn, crime and punishment, cruelty and compassion, good and evil.” Then he asked himself if “a philosophy of indifference [is] conceivable”. In his opinion, being “indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman”. Moreover, he considered that indifference “is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great

¹⁹ Quoted on the main page of the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity (<https://eliewieselfoundation.org/about/>) are the following words: “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it’s indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. The opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference”. The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, established by Elie Wiesel and his wife, Marion, soon after he was awarded the 1986 Nobel Prize for Peace, “rooted in the memory of the Holocaust”, had the mission “to combat indifference, intolerance and injustice through international dialogue and youth-focused programs that promote acceptance, understanding and equality”.

poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response” (Wiesel April 12, 1999). This frame of reference fuelled Elie Wiesel’s commitment to spread the legacy of the Holocaust. It served as a catalyst for action and led him to become an advocate for raising awareness of the world’s injustice and intolerance. The “shameful indifference (...) must [make us] remember” that “the tragedy might have been avoided, its scope surely diminished” (Wiesel January 24, 2005). His call to action is therefore connected to memory-work, as memory is “a noble and necessary response to and against indifference” (Wiesel January 24, 2005).

Considering that declining to speak out is not a good option, other Holocaust survivors committed themselves to remembering, testifying, and transmitting their personal Holocaust experiences. They managed to overcome their embodied traumatic past and convert their early silence into testimony, either through writings or oral speeches. Because of their quality of being powerful primary sources for learning about the Holocaust, several personal Holocaust stories have been integrated into ritualized commemorations, such as the “International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust” on 27 January, which was first held in Britain in 2001, due to the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the Holocaust Remembrance (A/RES/60/7 November 1, 2005).

Gerda Klein, Holocaust survivor, author, and historian, was invited to give a speech on the 27th January 2006, at the first international commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. From the very beginning of her speech, she declared herself “mindful that no words can ever do full justice” to those who died or suffered because of the Nazi politics. At the same time, she acknowledged “how difficult it is to speak on behalf of all the voices which were stilled so many years ago” (Klein January 27, 2006). She made a comparison with snowflakes to express the idea that all experiences and feelings are different, so that the audience would understand that she was about to talk about her experience of the Holocaust: “I am thinking of snowflakes. Millions of snowflakes falling down to the earth from darkened skies. They all seem so much alike and yet we know that each one is unique and each one deserves to be understood and appreciated. Come with me, then, to be just one unknown snowflake. Allow me to tell just a tiny bit of my own story” (Klein January 27, 2006).

She recalled “the bitter cold”, the “seemingly endless gray line and the whips of the SS men and women lifting and shouting ‘forward march!’”, the hunger (“I remember during the death march standing in seemingly endless lines holding a battered, rusty bowl in my hand and praying that when I got to the front of the line, there should be enough food left in the kettle. And if by some miracle the ladle went deep and brought forth a potato, I beheld a treasure!”), death (“many of those who perished left no children behind”), but also freedom and release from the hell by American soldiers who restored the survivors’ humanity, through humane and respectful gestures, completely disregarded by the Nazis:

“Suddenly, I saw a strange-looking vehicle coming down a gentle hill. On its hood no longer the despised Swastika, but the white star of the American army. (...) He asked if he could see the other ‘ladies’. It was a form of address that was obviously unknown to us for six years. I weighed 68 pounds. My hair was white. I was in rags. I had not had a bath in three years. I was going to be 21 years old the following day. And here was this handsome young American officer asking to see “the other ladies”. And then he did an extraordinary thing. He held the door open for me and allowed me to precede him. And in this beautiful, symbolic gesture, he restored me to humanity” (Klein January 27, 2006).

At that moment, she realised that the war was over and the prayers which she “had uttered every night – for freedom, a family, a home, and never to be hungry again – were answered”. She described the moment of liberation as “a fulfillment [she] could never have even dreamt of in [her] keenest dreams”. On the other hand, given that “so many of those who perished left no children behind”, Gerda Klein considered that “you here today are their spiritual heirs”. In other words, she wanted her audience to become messengers of those dark times, “a time I shall not see”. Having gone through such a dreadful experience, she said she prays every day “that all children born from today on and held in the loving arms of their parents will lift their eyes to the beauty of this great planet. And when night falls, and they look up to the mystery of the stars, and the celestial homes, they shall dream the dreams of freedom, and know them to be reality” (Klein January 27, 2006). For the Holocaust survivors, it is of pivotal importance not to forget the traumatic past and to carry on the message of liberty, so that such horrendous experiences never happen again.

On the 27th of January 2007, the day after the adoption of the Resolution on Holocaust denial by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/61/255 January 26, 2007), **Simone Veil**, a French leading figure, an emblematic politician and a champion of women’s rights, President of the “Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah” [Foundation for the Memory of

the Holocaust], was invited to give a speech on the occasion of the “International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust”. From the beginning of her speech, she confessed that the wartime period was still vivid in her mind and had left ineffaceable marks on her, which is why the emotion of recalling the horror of the Shoah was still powerful. She remembered not only her mother and sister, with whom she was deported to Auschwitz “after spending a week in Drancy where all the Jews of France were gathered (...) crowded, for three terrible days, in wagons of cattle, practically without food, without water and without knowing of our destination”, but also her father and brother, both “deported to Kaunas, in Lithuania, in a convoy of 850 people”, of whom she had heard anything again. She also kept still in her memory the faces of other victims, of “those women carrying their children, these crowds unaware of their fate who walked to the gas chambers. I was in a block in the first row near the ramp where the trains arrived. This is the worst I’ve seen. We who thought we had no more tears we cried. And today, when I think of deportation, I often think of Hungarians.” She explained that she referred to the 435,000 Jews who arrived from Hungary in April and May 1944 and for the extermination of which “the railroad had been extended inside the camp, as close to the gas chambers”. As “most of them were driven from their wagons as they descended”, for the other detainees “who saw them coming and knew what was waiting for them, it was a horror vision”. In Auschwitz, Simone, who “lied about her age, heeding the advice of an inmate who spoke French” (Dodman no date), was registered for the labour camp. She was also tattooed with the serial number 78651. “From then on, each of us was just a number, seared into our flesh,” she recalled years later in her memoir, *A Life*: “A number we had to learn by heart, since we had lost all identity” (Dodman no date). When Auschwitz was evacuated in January 1945, as Soviet tanks approached, Simone (and her mother and sister) took part in the ‘death marches’, eventually reaching Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where she worked in the kitchens. On the 27th of January 2007, Simone Veil also recalled the day of April 15, when they were liberated by the British Army: “I still see the horrified astonishment of the soldiers who, from their tanks, discovered corpses piled up on the roadside and skeletal skeletons. What we had become. No cry of joy on our part. Only silence and tears” (Veil January 27, 2007).

Having witnessed the destruction of their entire families and communities, like other Holocaust survivors of ghettos and concentration camps, Simone Veil (January 27, 2007) reaffirmed their role as bearers of unique and terrible memories and their solemn duty to spread their legacy: “Like all my comrades, I consider it is a duty to explain tirelessly to the

younger generations, to the public opinion of our countries and to politicians, how six million women and men have died, including one and a half million children, simply because they were born Jewish". While stressing the importance of their testimonials, she also reminded the audience that Holocaust survivors' voices had been "sidelined and silenced" (Marshman 2005, p. 1) in the years after the war, given that people²⁰ "wanted to forget the past. No one wanted to hear about deportation, what we had seen and experienced. As for the Jews themselves who had not been deported, that is, with regard to France, the three quarters of them, most could not stand hearing us. Others would rather not know" (Veil January 27, 2007). Referring to this gap between "things as they were down there and things as they are represented by the current imagination", Primo Levi (1995, p. 128) explained that "it is part of our difficulty or inability to perceive the experience of others (...)". This marginal position of Holocaust survivor testimonies in the public consciousness obliged the survivors to withdraw into themselves. The only contexts where they could recall "the horror of [their] stories" (Veil January 27, 2007) were in the presence of other survivors. According to Simone Veil (January 27, 2007), such talks about the camps "nourished their minds" and created a special link between survivors. In spite of the initial resistance to testimony that has not disappeared even today, Holocaust survivors felt compelled to speak about their indescribable experiences, and to testify on behalf of the persons slaughtered during the period of growing anti-Semitism and genocide. Moreover, speaking of the Shoah, which has "covered with blood the whole European continent", Simone Veil (January 27, 2007) stated that once "the process of dehumanization completed, [la Shoah] inspires an endless reflection on the conscience and dignity of humans". In her view, the Holocaust represents a challenge to existing values and beliefs, in a world where "the worst is always possible". Relying on recent examples of deliberate genocidal destruction, such as those from Cambodia or Rwanda, she drew attention to the fact that, although "we had made the vow, so often expressed, of 'never again', our warnings have been in vain". In light of these considerations, she made an appeal to the international community to assume its responsibilities and take the necessary measures against other genocides. However, apart from the involvement of states and institutions, there remains the responsibility of each person to act against cruelty. Moreover, welcoming the endorsement of the resolution condemning the denial of the Holocaust, Simone Veil (January 27, 2007) expressed the faith that "this day decided by the United Nations inspires to all men and women

²⁰ Simone Veil refers to the French people, but such attitude toward the war memories was similar everywhere in the world.

around the world the respect for others, the rejection of violence, of anti-Semitism, of racism and hatred, as well as of all forms of discrimination". She also reminded the audience that it is everyone's duty to engage with carrying the burden of the Holocaust, a reality that cannot be avoided when there would no longer be any tangible link between past and present. By stressing that survivors' memory is other people's inheritance, Simone Veil placed particular emphasis on everyone's responsibility to carry on the memory of the Holocaust. In other words, the cultural mediation of history in young people is possible only if the socially inherited memories about the Holocaust are passed on to the next generations and the thread of memory is not broken. The socially inherited memory binds the past and the future.

Ruth Glasberg Gold, a child survivor of Transnistria, testified on the International Day of Holocaust Commemoration organized on 27 January 2009 by the United Nations. Deeply moved by the invitation to give a speech at the commemoration, she considered her address as "a moment of ultimate redemption" (Glasberg Gold January 27, 2009). Given that on 27 January 1942, 67 years prior to the respective Commemoration, she was left an orphan alone in the world, the date reminded her of her lost childhood and family. Before starting her "journey into despair", at the age of 11, as a girl who had grown up in Czernowitz, the capital of the province of Bukovina in northern Romania, she declared having spent there the most memorable years of her "short, happy childhood": "Back then I was a carefree little girl protected and spoiled by my loving family. I had an older brother, a violin prodigy, whom I worshiped. I loved school; I had many friends and many dreams. But Hitler's Nazi regime had other plans that brought an abrupt end to my education and my childhood" (Glasberg Gold January 27, 2009).

She continued her speech by describing her Holocaust experience in Transnistria, insisting on the specificity of the Romanian genocide under the Antonescu regime, which is a special chapter in the Romanian historiography, and in the wider context of the Holocaust:

"About 2,000 of us were rounded up by Romanian gendarmes, herded towards the train station and compressed 50 to 80 people into cattle cars. During the next four days of this horrifying journey, some deportees died of suffocation, hunger and thirst. On the fourth day the train stopped and soldiers unbolted the doors. Starving, exhausted and filthy we could barely walk. We were ordered to form a column and were led on a death march through the vast, muddy fields of Transnistria. We were forced to walk about 25 KM a day, and only at night would our escorts allow us to rest, usually in abandoned barns that we shared with corpses of those who were unable to continue. The Romanian soldiers deliberately took us on detours

for 2 long weeks to exhaust and further demoralize us. The old, the infirm and children, who could not keep pace, were left along the roadside. The graven image of frozen naked corpses on both sides of the road was the first of my many horror scenes to come” (Glasberg Gold January 27, 2009).

In her speech on 27 January 2009, Ruth Glasberg Gold also drew attention to the local practices, which differed from the German systematic extermination process, by emphasising that:

“My Holocaust experience is different from others. I have no tattoo, because I am a survivor of a less organized and methodical plan of annihilation. The Romanian methods were primitive and barbaric, but not less lethal than those of Nazi Germany. They did not bother with tattooing, filming and photographing their inhuman acts. They threw themselves into action without restraint and with such ferocity that appalled even the Germans. The Romanians’ most efficient system was to abandon the people without providing shelter, food, or any of the essential necessities for survival, and to let them die an agonizing, slow death caused by illness, exposure, starvation and despair. In addition to the above, they burned Jews in warehouses, suffocated them in cattle cars, or shot thousands in front of common graves; the victims had to dig themselves.”

Her accounts on the specificity of the Romanian Holocaust give us insights into the multifaceted meaning of the Holocaust, as a ‘trope’ of suffering and persecution:

“We need to remember the thousands of victims throughout Romania, killed between 1940-1941 in brutal pogroms and massacres committed under the aegis of Antonescu’s fascist governments. 280,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews as well as 11,000 Roma (Gypsies) fell victims to the Romanian Holocaust. December 1941 was a bitter and oppressive winter. We were worn out by hunger, thirst and the forced marches. My family and I ended up in a camp called Bershad. It was one of the largest and most infamous camps in Transnistria. We found shelter in a small room of a partially demolished house with a dirt floor, without doors or windows. In Bershad there was no electricity, running water or even outhouses. We had to share this room with about 20 other deportees. There I became a helpless witness to the agonizing deaths of my roommates my family included. In three short weeks I lost my father, then my 18-year-old brother and finally my mother. I was left to fend for myself in a hostile, macabre environment; an orphan alone in the world. There was no one to love me unconditionally anymore, no one to care about me”.

In processing her Second World War experiences, as many other survivors, Ruth mentioned that she had anticipated her own death, and whenever she was asked how she survived, she stated that “it was the magical power that came prophetically from my mother when she predicted: “Everybody in this room will die. Only you will survive. You must bear

witness!' These words kept me alive and preserved my humanity. Above all they enabled me to record without pencil and paper all the details of the horror around me, which I later included in my book titled 'Ruth's Journey: A Survivor's Memoir'".

She concluded her statement by saying that, in spite of the fact that she gave her first written testimony right after liberation, when she was 14 years old, she was still testifying sixty four years later, because of those who "dare to deny the horror and reality of the Holocaust, laying a foundation for this kind of inhumanity to be repeated, whether in Cambodia, Bosnia, or Darfur". She also expressed her confidence in the establishment of a global education as an instrument to combat terrorism and prevent genocide, and the hope "that the silent majority would become the vocal majority", considering that:

"By telling our stories, by teaching about the Holocaust and writing our memoirs, we force ourselves to recall the painful past in order to assure future generations of children an innocent and happy childhood free of menacing violence. Now we want to be assured that our efforts were not in vain. We want to live out our lives secure in the knowledge that these inhumanities will never happen again – not because there are laws which say they are wrong, but because PEOPLE say so" (Glasberg Gold January 27, 2009).

Ruth's first hand testimony empowers people to take action and have a responsible and ethical response to injustice.

A similar voice could be heard from **Leah Kaufman**, a young Romanian orphan during the Shoah who lost her entire family on "The Death March to Transnistria" and later became a Holocaust educator and the author of *Live! Remember! Tell the World! The Story of a Hidden Child Survivor of Transnistria*. Leah Kaufman was unable to speak of the trauma of her childhood for decades, until 1995, when the claims made by Holocaust revisionists and deniers compelled her to come forward. "When they came out and said it never happened, I had to speak", she said. "I had no other choice."²¹ There were the deniers who unlocked the fortress of her memory and prompted her to start speaking about her Romanian World War II experiences in Transnistria.

However, before she became an international speaker and educator of Jewish youth, Leah had to tell the story to her son. She states that:

"One afternoon, as I stood at the kitchen sink preparing supper, my four-year-old son, Baruch, ran into the house, sobbing. 'Mommy,

²¹ "For 52 years I didn't talk about my experience", she declared for an interview with Daniel Eisenburg (2013).

Mommy, do you know what the Nazis did to little children in the Holocaust?’ He put his arms around me and buried his face in my apron. I felt panic rising up within me. I wanted to comfort my son, and I wanted to run away. Vulnerable and helpless, I had no voice with which to answer him. Could I tell him that among those who were slaughtered, who perished from starvation, illness, and grief, on the Death March to Transnistria, were members of his very own family? Could I tell him, ‘Yes, my precious child, I was one of those children in the Holocaust that you learned about today?’”

It is obvious that before starting to speak out, Leah had experienced long-term difficulty talking about her past. We understand that the images of death frozen in her brain and the feelings she had experienced during the Holocaust and kept inside her soul did not fade. On the contrary, they were stored in her mind, waiting for a disruption of her silence. Leah’s problem was to overcome her silence and express her trauma. Her statement, built on the difficulty of retelling the horrors and sufferings that she had endured during the war, stressed the grief-stricken journey from silence to speech. At the same time, she testified that her act of speaking out was not a response to hatred, as in her view “(t)o respond to hatred with hatred is not the answer.”

When talking about the “abnormal”²² world she lived in during the Holocaust, Leah Kaufman (Eisenburg August 14, 2013) pointed out the extent to which this had marked her entire existence. Being aware of her experience, which may not correspond to the reality portrayed by other Holocaust survivors, Leah Kaufman stressed the complexities of reentering that world in order to reveal it: “I didn’t know much about the Holocaust – I knew about my Holocaust. But there are no words to tell what terrible things human beings are capable of doing.” Indeed, Leah Kaufman considered that “[t]hose who died or were killed were the lucky ones.” “Believe me, it was the easiest thing to die. To live was difficult.” Still, Kaufman said survival became paramount to her so she could one day tell her story to a once apathetic world.

Leah Kaufman was nine years old when Romanian Jews in her community were forced on a ‘Death March’ to Transnistria – an area located between the Dniester River and the eastern Moldovan border with Ukraine – during the depths of winter. According to her lecture, held at the Jewel

²² ‘(Ab)normal’ is a word with strong connotation for Elie Wiesel. Asked by Oprah Winfrey (2000) “What does it take to be normal again, after having your humanity stripped away by the Nazis?”, Elie Wiesel had answered: “What is abnormal is that I am normal. That I survived the Holocaust and went on to love beautiful girls, to talk, to write, to have toast and tea and live my life—that is what is abnormal.”

School located in Ramat Eshkol²³, from which there are quotes in *The Jerusalem Post* issue of August 14, 2013, Leah and other Romanian Jews “were thrown out of Romania in the most inhumane possible way”. “The night we fled was the last time I was with my family as a child.” Kaufman said she had had an idyllic childhood in Romania before the war. However, she noted that she was only nine years old and in the third grade at a Jewish day school “when hell came on me.” “I saw the Nazis rape young girls in front of their parents and family and throw them away like garbage”, she recounted. During the death march to Transnistria, Kaufman recounted seeing all the students of an area yeshiva, naked, outside the school, forced to dig their own graves by Nazis during the frigid winter. “The Nazis asked one of them to say a prayer before they killed them, and the instructor said, ‘I thank God we are not killers like you’”, she reported. “They were then shot dead into the graves and [the Nazis] did not even bother to bury them.” Shortly after witnessing the massacre, Kaufman found her mother dead, lying naked on the floor of the room in which they were imprisoned in Transnistria. “During the weeks before she died, my mother commanded: ‘Leah you must live! You must remember! You must tell the world!’”²⁴ These supportive and exhorting words became the name of her autobiography, written with Sheina Medwed in 2005.

Psychiatrists have proved that recurrent memories of a distressing experience can re-traumatise the person over and over again. They have explained that to give language to a major trauma is a reliving of the experience with all the associated difficult emotions and feelings: “Traumatic memories are not stored the way other memories are stored, nor are they accessed the way normal memories are accessed. They return as body sensations and flashbacks, if at all, and they are stored in fragments of truth, pieces of reality that are disconnected to one another” (Dayton 2010). Hiding and repressing them as a coping strategy can cause problems in psychological and physical health. Activated by life circumstances, traumatic emotions are finally metabolized, contextualized and synthesized (Dayton 2010). This applied to Leah Kaufman. Her statement reaffirms the extent to which teaching the Holocaust was a tremendous experience. She declared for *Aish.com* that teaching the Holocaust to her fourth grade class, when her school introduced the Holocaust into the curriculum, was the greatest challenge for her. “I knew I couldn’t refuse to teach it. I was forced to confront the subject, to participate in the memorial assemblies, and to

²³ A Jewish learning program for women aged 19-30.

²⁴ “My mother, an ashen-faced skeleton of her former self, constantly repeated the words which became my life’s mission: ‘You must live, you must remember, you must tell the world!’” (Kaufman February 12, 2005).

answer the questions posed by my students. Teaching the Holocaust at first was overpowering. I simply broke down the first few times I tried to prepare the curriculum. Slowly, I trained myself to teach this subject by distancing myself from it as if I wasn't who I was, a survivor. It was extremely difficult to do; nonetheless, keeping my identity hidden was a good thing in retrospect. Otherwise instead of doing justice to the victims, I could have become the focus, either as a 'hero' or a 'victim', without doing justice to the many children and their agony." (Kaufman April 30, 2005). Moreover, when addressing the issue of the Holocaust in front of the Jewish youth, Leah states that "it is not easy to go back to that terrible time and to share (...) both the experiences that I had and the lessons that I learned from them. I do it for your sake, for the sake of Jewish continuity, and for mankind. I will not give you a message filled with hatred or bitterness." She decided to speak out because she knew she was a witness "in a trial of planetary and epochal dimensions" (Levy 1988, p. 149 *apud* Patterson 1998, p. 210), while the young generation is the continuation of her story and "the future builders of a better world" (Wall January 14, 2015), she said to the students of St. George's Independent School:

"I, who am a living spark from the inferno of the Shoah (Holocaust), am here to tell you today that we must never give in to the pit of despair," said Leah Kaufman and added that "Despair leads to apathy, to indifference, and to inaction, and these are worse than death" (Wall January 14, 2015). In her statement, which connects her personal experience to the Holocaust, there is an invitation to attach it to socio-political action. Encouraging young people not to surrender to indifference, Leah Kaufman does not release the listener from the moral obligation to take action when awful things happen. Her experience, communicated in front of an audience, activates memory-work and becomes a productive tool for educating the later generations about the Holocaust.

Conclusions

Holocaust survivors' testimonies clearly prove that the magnitude of suffering had a devastating impact on their personal identity. The abysmal distress caused by displacement, loss, and death of loved ones produced psychological wounds and a hole in their sense of self-continuity. Having lost the people they had loved, in addition to being dehumanised, Holocaust survivors were not able to project their lives in the continuum of the past.

"For the survivor death is not the problem. Death was an everyday occurrence. We learned to live with Death. The problem is to adjust to life,

to living. You must teach us about living.”²⁵, was the statement of Elie Wiesel, endorsed by other Holocaust survivors. Although accepted by the one who was condemned, death had no meaning. Not only were the victims silenced in the extermination camps, but they were not allowed to confront death. Referring to this aspect, Jean-François Lyotard (1988, pp. 100-101) pointed to the desecration of the deportees’ life and death, where “one’s death is legitimate because one’s life is illegitimate”. It follows that the violent rupture that had occurred on a personal level and the burden of dealing with the psychological and physical devastation overpowered the sense of continuity in Holocaust survivors’ lives.

Because of the sore wounds caused by experiencing trauma in ghettos and camps, Holocaust survivors had to distance themselves from that trauma and suffering. This explains why they have a hard time acknowledging, recalling, and bearing witness to the catastrophe. The silence to which the survivors were condemned in the aftermath of the Second World War stifled the grief which continued to exist in one’s own self. The silence became a protective wall against both the pain and the world’s reluctance to confront the Holocaust and the horrors that had unfolded in death camps. Thus, the silence created a safe space for the self, securing an ontological anchoring in a constantly shifting world.

While the silence was a method to cope with the devastating experiences of ultimate dehumanisation they had gone through, the unspoken grief played a constitutive role in the development of their identity. One’s sense of self was altered once again when past experiences of being traumatised were translated into language through narrative accounts or addresses in front of their audiences. Therefore, while the silence had helped Holocaust survivors formulate their selves in a protective milieu, speaking out was even more overwhelming.

At the same time, in addition to the survivors’ pain to talk or write about their Holocaust experiences, one can understand that their personal narratives and testimonies cannot entirely capture a traumatic experience that remains to a great extent unspeakable. This explains the inappropriateness of language, invoked by Elie Wiesel and other Holocaust survivors. Not only were their experiences indescribable, but the society could not imagine or grasp the anguish of witnessing the annihilation of their whole families and communities or to fully comprehend the disturbing details of their experiences.

²⁵ Excerpt from Elie Wiesel’s statement, quoted in ‘The Holocaust explained’, a website managed by The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, the world’s oldest archive on the Holocaust and the Nazi era, established in 1933 and now based in London.

On the other hand, even if bearing witness was not easy, because of the ambivalent situation in the midst of which the survivors were placed, where “silence is forbidden, talk, impossible” (Wiesel 2001), this did not change Holocaust survivors’ perspective on their engagement with memory. Holocaust survivors did not answer with anger and resentment to the world’s indifference and oblivion, but they “believed naturally that one must bear witness” (Wiesel 2001) as a way to reveal “a time of fear and darkness when so many, too many victims felt abandoned, forgotten, unworthy of compassion and solidarity” (Wiesel 2003).

Furthermore, as bearers of memory, Holocaust survivors consider that “Memory is not valuable only for Remembering! It is valuable also for the Future! [“La Mémoire ne vaut pas que pour le Souvenir! Elle vaut aussi pour le Devenir!”]” (Lagrande 1997, p. 9). In other words, Holocaust memory should connect the past with the future.

The responsibility to transmit it to later generations is given by the fact that it has become everyone’s inheritance. To be silenced once again by a society that deliberately chooses not to carry on the Holocaust inheritance would mean killing a second time the millions of people annihilated by the Nazis and their collaborators, as Shoah survivor and 1986 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Elie Wiesel declared in the preface to the new translation of *Night* (2012 [1956]). Holocaust survivors have the moral obligation to bear witness and to circulate the memory of the genocide within mainstream society for both the victims and ‘the living’. Not only do they have the duty to honor the memory of the people who died. They also have to pass the Holocaust memory on to the next generations, given that they have “no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory” (Wiesel 2012 [1956]).

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Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS–UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, Contract 31/2018, 02/05/2018 – 30/04/2020, within PNCDI III.

Chapter 6

Remembrance through Education The Case of Holocaust Education in Romanian Higher Education Institutions

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The aim of this chapter² is to provide an overview of the Romanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) accreditation procedure regarding recommendations of Holocaust or Holocaust-related courses within Social Sciences, Humanities, or Law Faculties. The theoretical framework is based on the Holocaust memorialisation and Holocaust education literature and the case studies are selected from Social Sciences, Law and Humanities Faculties. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the chapter also aims to offer a new perspective on the Holocaust education literature taking into account the universities, with an emphasis on the case of Romanian universities. In terms of results, I found that nine Social Sciences and/or Humanities Faculties out of 168 registered cases are proposing Holocaust courses or courses that include references to the Holocaust. On the other hand, when discussing the accreditation procedures, the chapter analyses the accreditation guidebooks issued by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The related results show no references to the Holocaust in any Program Accreditation guidebook for Social Sciences, Political Science, Law, Administrative Sciences, History, etc. The chapter concludes by considering how universities may play an important role as Holocaust memorial milestones. In other words, taking into account the fact that universities are teaching Holocaust-related information to their students, both the

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² I would like to thank my colleagues from the “Holocaust Memoryscapes” Project at the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (INSHR-EW): Sonia Catrina, Valeriu Antonovici, and Adelin Dumitru for their support and advice on my work. I am also grateful to Liviu Rotman for the discussion that we had on the subject of this chapter. The International Colloquium “Contemporary memorialisation of the Holocaust in Central and Eastern Countries” held at the INSHR-EW (11th and 12th October 2019) was an opportunity to develop the examples and the points of view related to the subject. The feedback received there has been embedded in this version of the chapter. Thus, I am grateful to all the panellists of the Colloquium. Finally, I am thankful to Adrian Miroiu and Liviu Andreescu for all the discussions referring to the Higher Education Institutions.

HEIs and students may have an important role in raising awareness and promoting the historical truth regarding the victims of the Holocaust. In this case, the HEIs' aim may be not only that of providing an introduction to the study of the Holocaust, but developing the data sources, databases, and information in the field, and also acting in an ambassadorial-like capacity.

Keywords: Holocaust memory; Holocaust education; higher education institutions.

Introduction

The Holocaust memorialisation literature is a well-discussed subject in both history and social sciences globally. Holocaust memorialisation can take many forms, from memorial busts, plaques, street names, statues, museums (Florian 2018, p. xi), films, digital testimonies, and archival documents and resources (Thorson and van Noord 2015, p. 80) to central databases of Holocaust victims' names (Getso 2007, p. 247). In addition, different historical records, biographies, or diaries kept by Holocaust victims represent necessary information sources for Holocaust memorialisation (Brabham 1997, p. 142). All these memorial forms act as light-bringers and transmitters of the knowledge related to the Holocaust to each person that visits, sees, or searches the memorial (Getso 2007, p. 251). An East – West cleavage exists in the discussion of memorialisation. For example, Alexandru Florian provided a comparison of the East – West disparities in Holocaust memorialisation. While in the West memorials recalled the crucial moments of the Second World War, street names and plaques were dedicated to persons who fought fascism or Nazism – at the same time taking the form of a place of remembrance for the victims –, in the East Holocaust-specific. As Alexandru Florian mentioned, “in Romania, where until two decades ago, the only victims commemorated on public monuments were anti-fascists who, following the ideology of class struggle, were sometimes described as representatives of the working class” (Florian 2018, p. xii). Memorials appeared later, mostly after the fall of communism (Florian 2018, pp. xii-xiii). A complementary perspective on this is that of confronting antisemitism through memory-work, as Andrea Peto and Helga Thorson (2015) titled their collective volume on the future of Holocaust memorialisation. In addition to both abovementioned perspectives, one of many Holocaust memorialisation procedures is the rethinking of pedagogical practices (Thorson and van Noord 2015, pp. 83-84). While for the generation of people for whom the Holocaust was a reality the practices and literature related to the Holocaust represent a living memory, for the next generations Holocaust memorialisation depends on the education they receive, not on personal experience or memory (Brabham 1997, p. 142).

The aim of this chapter is to provide a descriptive mapping of the Holocaust-related courses offered by Higher Education Institutions (henceforth HEIs) in Romania, along with an assessment of the importance of the research centres active in this field. The chapter also aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

How many Holocaust related courses are included in HEI programmes? (RQ-1a)

How is the HEIs' activity regulated with regard to the initiation of new courses? (RQ-1b)

Which is the role of Higher Education Institutions in developing an education that properly memorialises the Holocaust? (RQ-2)

In order to answer these questions and to test one hypothesis – that *Higher Education Institutions may play an important role in developing Holocaust education* –, the chapter employs a mixed-methods research design. Correlating the Holocaust education and the Holocaust memorialisation theoretical frameworks, it argues that the educational system should play a memorialisation role. Although in the European Union – and in other countries – many policies contribute to the development of Holocaust education (*FRA-Holocaust and Human Rights Toolkit* or *Education about the Holocaust and genocide – UNESCO*), the role of the Higher Education Institutions is important in developing future citizens. The chapter continues by addressing Holocaust education in Romania, and analysing the Quality Assurance process in Romanian higher education. The methodological core and procedures associated with it will be presented as the fourth section of this chapter. These are followed by a presentation of the results (section 5) and a final discussion and conclusions (section 6).

I. Holocaust memorialisation and Holocaust education theoretical frameworks

Starting from the surveys coordinated by the Elie Wiesel Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (henceforth INSHR-EW), Romanian citizens are not open when talking about ethnic minorities, including the Jews. In this case, as the 2017 survey coordinated by KantarTNS for INSHR-EW showed, 21% (fully agree) and 25% (agree) of respondents considered that “*it will be better if the Jews will live in their country*” (INSHR-EW 2017, p. 19). When asked if the Jews are following only their own interest, 58% of respondents agreed. Although these percentages may not seem so high, the values are higher than the answers received for similar questions in 2015. These values increased significantly (by more than 4%) for each variable and answer (INSHR-EW 2017, p. 19).

On the other hand, the INSHR-EW surveys also measured the knowledge and perceptions about the existence of the Holocaust. As primary results, 68% of the respondents knew about the existence of the Holocaust, but with a large with high school education had not heard about the Holocaust, 13% of the persons who had graduated from BA programmes did not know that the Holocaust existed. On the other hand, 61% of the persons who had only graduated secondary school had not heard about the Holocaust. Referring to the location of the Holocaust, in 2017 63% of respondents considered that it had taken place in Germany, while only 33% knew that the Holocaust had also been carried out in Romania (INSHR-EW 2017, p. 24).

Consequently, taking into account this large proportion of persons who are not aware about the existence of the Holocaust in Romania or do not have any knowledge about the Holocaust in general, the development of a Holocaust-aware society appears a priority, and one that may be achieved through different methods. Referring to the Holocaust-related literature and theoretical framework, researchers commonly agree that teaching the Holocaust within the nation-wide educational system may represent one of the best solutions in order to spread universal values such as intercultural tolerance and minorities-related issues.

1.1. Holocaust education

Holocaust education stands for the development of educational processes in order to include information referring to the Holocaust in the curricula. The aim of Holocaust education is to improve the students' knowledge regarding the Holocaust. As Primo Levi discussed in *If This Is a Man*, we must know “*about the Holocaust because what happened could happen again*” (Levi 1958, p. 396). The main assumption is that the education system plays a central role in the formation of a Holocaust culture (Pearce 2017, p. 232). An important debate related to this subject concerns the age at which students should be involved in Holocaust education. As Eckmann and collaborators argued (2017, p.47), in 1990 there was a debate between Gertrud Beck and Matthias Heyl whether Holocaust education should take place in primary schools. One of these views considers that primary students already had some knowledge about the Holocaust and Nazism and that courses may diffuse students' anxieties and prejudices. In contrast, the other view considers that primary school students may be overwhelmed or traumatized by knowledge about this topic (Szenjmann, Cowan and Griffiths 2018, p. V). Although this debate continues to some extent today, at least on a common sense level, empirical research studies

and findings suggest that the Holocaust can be taught to primary school students, or even younger children (Szenjmann, Cowan and Griffiths 2018, p. V). Taking into account the abovementioned views, mainly the *traumatizing* one, many researchers tried to formulate several pedagogical approaches to teaching about trauma. In this case, Richler-Friedman presents different methods of teaching younger students about the Holocaust, such as the use of simulations, counterfactual examples, and children-adapted literature (Richler-Friedman 2018, p. 114).

As an example, the UK Government considers that “every young person should be taught the history of the Holocaust and the lessons it teaches today” (Department of Education, 2015). In an analysis of the UK National Curriculum, Pearce concluded that the position of the Holocaust within it acted as a fulcrum for the institutionalisation of the Holocaust in English society, with the goal of creating a cultural memory (Pearce 2017, p. 252). In the United States of America, the study of the Holocaust by middle-school students started approximately half a century after the end of the World War II (Brabham 1997, p. 139). Following Edna Brabham (1997, p. 139), in the case of schools that are including Holocaust-related information into their classes, the teachers are appealing to both the literature and the history of the Holocaust to teach the “effects of institutionalised intolerance and genocide and to prepare students to examine the role of uncontrolled racism in current conflicts”. Holocaust education is present in the curricula in multiple forms. Usually, the most desirable one is that of specific courses on the Holocaust, but on the other hand there are many human rights studies or history courses that include Holocaust-related information. Briefly presenting the case of the US, Brabham’s paper presented the cases of seven states that offer Holocaust education at middle- and high-school level. For example, Californian law considers Holocaust education as part of human rights courses, while according to the legislation in New Jersey Holocaust studies are included all across the educational system, from kindergarten through twelfth grade (Brabham 1997, p. 139). In the Western European context, such as in the United Kingdom, as Foster and Mercier (2000a, 2000b) and Burtonwood (2002) show, a major curriculum the Holocaust is part of is religious education. They are referring to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA 1998) as a source for syllabuses for a religious education model that includes Jewish identity aspects in the curricula for students aged 11 to 14 (Burtonwood 2002, p. 71).

Referring to what these Holocaust-related classes may include as recommended literature, many authors argue that survivors’ diaries, poetry, and biographies are routinely used for Holocaust education. As Edna

Brabham recommends, *Anne Frank's Diary* (Frank 1952), Bachrach's *Tell them we remember* (Bachrach 1994), or Adler's *Hilde and Eli: Children of the Holocaust* (Adler 1994) may be part of a Holocaust-related course (Brabham 1997, pp. 140-141). In addition to these, documentaries and even movies may be part of a Holocaust education curriculum. For example, one of the first instances of Holocaust education in the United Kingdom was a broadcast by the BBC in 1972. The broadcast was from the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, for one of the most popular children television programmes, *Blue Peter*, and "heralded the appropriateness of teaching primary aged children about the Holocaust" (Szejnmann, Cowan and Griffiths 2018, p. V).

Being part of Holocaust education, the remembrance events that take part on Holocaust Memorial Days have the role of promoting remembrance of and, as appropriate, education about the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the importance of respect for all ethnic and religious groups (OSCE 2015, p. 2). Neil Burtonwood described the process of adopting *Holocaust Memorial Day* in the case of the United Kingdom as the result of the efforts of the Department of Education and Employment and supported by the Holocaust Education Trust (Burtonwood 2002, p. 79). In the cases of both the United Kingdom and Germany, the date of 27th of January has been chosen as the date of Holocaust Memorial Day because it is the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau (Burtonwood 2002, p. 80).

Correlated with the United Nations' designation of 27th of January as the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust (UN.GA 60/7, 2005), the 2015 OSCE report presents an overview of the educational events that were organised for Holocaust Memorial Day in each state. In addition to the International Day, in the case of Romania 9 October was adopted in 2004 as the National Holocaust Remembrance Day (HG 672/2004).

In the previous paragraphs I presented a brief general description of Holocaust education throughout the world. As mentioned above, usually the scholars involved in the development of Holocaust education were interested more in the ways in which younger students may be part of such classes, because Holocaust education can contribute to the development of citizenship values in younger students in a positive way (Cowan and Maitles 2007, p. 115). There are few studies that are actually referring to the students enrolled in Higher Education Institutions who are involved in Holocaust education. One reason is the psychological and civic development stages associated with younger students. While in the case of primary, secondary, or even high school students the teaching of Holocaust-related information can have a huge impact on their development and make

them more conscious about the existence of such tragedies, the students enrolled in Higher Education Institutions are there in order to specialize and develop themselves in a more professional way.

Holocaust education in Romania

As shown in the previous section, Holocaust education has at least two major paths: inclusive curricula and Holocaust memorial educational events. Each of these is aimed at different categories of people, with the purpose of raising awareness about the existence of the Holocaust.

The present chapter addresses the mapping of the curricula, and consequently this form of Holocaust education will be examined in more detail than the other, with an emphasis on the differences between the regulation measures and their real form. Therefore, the analysis of curricula may be undertaken at two distinct levels: the educational regulations and the ways in which those regulations really impacted the curricula. Referring to legal aspects, the study of the Holocaust is part of the Romanian curriculum for secondary school students (seventh and eighth grades) and for high school students (tenth and eleventh grades). For all these students, the courses may include different discussions of the Holocaust in Romania and of antisemitism. For example, for the seventh-grade students, the Holocaust-related information may be studied in the classes that analyse the Second World War, while for the eighth-grade information about the Holocaust may be provided as part of studies dealing with “Romania between democracy and totalitarianism” (OSCE 2015, p. 91). As mentioned above, a juncture between the legislation and its results may become apparent. Following Ana Bărbulescu and her collaborators (Bărbulescu et al. 2013; Bărbulescu 2015), for decades after the Second World War no structured information on the Romanian Holocaust was provided in secondary school and high-school history textbooks. These aspects are related to the communist era, when there authorities were not implied in the improvement of the compulsory curricula with Holocaust-related classes (Bărbulescu et al. 2013, p. 41).

Taking into account a historical perspective, the communist view (i.e. the state’s view) after 1948 was based on the formulation of a ‘new’ or re-written history meant to inculcate certain ideological characteristics with the aim of developing a new type of citizens. According to Bărbulescu et al. (2013, pp. 43-44), issues related to the Holocaust were part of a few textbooks on world contemporary history, but no textbook had a distinct chapter or lesson on the Holocaust. Although in the analysed textbooks there were some references to the Iron Guard or to the Romanian regime that collaborated with Nazi Germany, the murders and discrimination against the Jewish community were not presented (Bărbulescu et al. 2013,

pp. 45-46). Therefore, during that period, the state was not interested in teaching students about the Holocaust as a distinct phenomenon that should not be repeated, but in the development of a historical view that presented the communist regime in opposition to the previous one, in order to build trust among the citizens and, why not, build 'a new man'. As an example, Ana Bărbulescu showed how she remembered and understood her childhood under communism as a primary and secondary school student. The features presented in contemporary Romanian history textbooks and classes mainly referred to the great heroes from the past and present, but, more importantly, making no reference to what had happened between 1938 and August 1944 (Bărbulescu 2015, p. 139).

From a historical perspective, Holocaust-related courses and information started to be included in the national curricula since 1998, as part of History classes, followed in 2004 by the approval by the Ministry of Education of an elective course related to the history of the Jews and the Holocaust. After the publication of the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, the abovementioned course was updated in accordance with the Report's recommendations. As the Ministry of Education replied to an Interpellation, in the 2018-2019 academic year 1860 pupils opted for this course (Interpellation – Ministry of Education 14.06.2019).

As part of the second level of Holocaust education, the commemoration of the Holocaust Memorial Days may involve students of different ages who take part in these activities in order to develop memorial knowledge related to the subject. These events or ceremonies are attended by high-level officials and representatives of different authorities and public organisations. Most of the commemorative events are organized by the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania in Bucharest, and local Jewish communities (OSCE 2015, p. 93).

II. Quality Assurance and the Higher Education Institutions in Romania

In Romania, Higher Education Institutions are autonomous. The Ministry of Education coordinates and designs the broader rules, but the academic community of each university is responsible for implementing and managing them. There are however some minimal regulations imposed by different public entities. Some of these regulations are proposed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (henceforth ARACIS).

ARACIS has the role of authorizing and accrediting the study programmes at higher education institutions. There are several commissions responsible for this accreditation, grouped based on research domain. There are thus ten ARACIS commissions: Natural sciences and exact sciences (I); Humanities and theology (II); Juridical sciences (III); Social sciences, political science and communication (IV); Administrative sciences, psychology and education (V); Economics (VI); Arts, architecture, urbanism and sport (VII); Engineering (VIII); Medical sciences (IX); Agricultural sciences, forestry and veterinary medicine (X). These commissions have the task of authorizing or accrediting new programmes, as well as dealing with the re-accreditation of the programs that are already being offered. Each commission proposes some criteria that must be fulfilled by each higher education study programme in order to start the students' registration or to continue its activity.

One of the most relevant criteria for the present chapter is that of the courses that are proposed as core disciplines, profession/teaching track disciplines, and complementary disciplines. Each commission proposes for each specialization within a domain (framework) a list of courses that have to be included in the programme. Without respecting this criterion, as well as others, the programme may not be authorized or accredited. The core disciplines are those that are considered fundamental (i.e. basics), and, depending on the commission that regulates the respective academic domain, the percent of core disciplines in any Bachelor or Master's degree may be different. Despite this variation, in all cases the core disciplines represent the most significant part of a new programme's curriculum (usually 60% to 80% of the recommended courses are core ones). The recommendations for professional/teaching line – courses that are related to the specialization that the students are following courses represent a list of disciplines and courses that are not considered fundamental to the research domain, but important to the specialization. Usually these courses have to be included in a proportion of 15-30%. Last but not least, the complementary disciplines are neither fundamental for the domain nor important for the specialization, but they represent the degree to which each Faculty or university wants to develop their students' values and beliefs. Usually the complementary disciplines are included in a 5-15% proportion.

III. Methodology, data and limitations

The purpose of this section is to present both the theoretical framework related to the proposed methodology and the procedure itself. From a methodological standpoint, this research proposal has one major objective. This is related to the Higher Education Institutions that have

Social Sciences and/or Humanities Faculties. This analysis will consist of an analysis of the relevant curricula. In other words, the following section aims to map both the elective and compulsory courses that are offered to the students.

The case study on which the analysis is focused is that of the Higher Education Institutions in Romania that have Social Sciences and Humanities Faculties and programmes, seen as part of a broader Eastern European context. The case selection was made based on the availability of information. Thus, HEIs that have such information available on either English-language and/or Romanian websites were selected. The following research questions and hypothesis will be answered:

Research questions (RQ)

How many Holocaust-related courses are included in HEI programmes? (RQ-1a)

How is the HEIs' activity regulated with regard to the initiation of new courses? (RQ-1b)

Which is the role of Higher Education Institutions in developing an education that properly memorialises the Holocaust? (RQ-2)

Hypothesis (H)

The Higher Education Institutions may play an important role in developing Holocaust education.

In order to answer these research questions and to test the hypothesis, I am proposing a mixed-methods research design. When using this concept, I am referring to the definition proposed by John Creswell (2003; 2008; 2011; 2014). Briefly, a mixed-methods research design is based on the employment of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. From a historical perspective, the mixed-methods design first appeared in Campbell and Fiske's multitrait-multimethod matrix in 1959 (Jick 1979, p. 602; Creswell 2003, pp. 15, 210). Campbell and Fiske aimed to "advocate a validation process utilizing a matrix of inter-correlations among tests representing at least two traits, each measured by at least two methods" (Campbell and Fiske 1959, p. 104). Moreover, S.D. Sieber (1973) combined observations and interviews (qualitative research methods) with questionnaires (quantitative research method) (cited in Creswell 2003, p. 15). As Creswell (2003, p. 15) claims, the mixed-methods research design is "less well-known than either quantitative or qualitative strategies". The body of literature using this type of analyses developed over time, and today there is also a dedicated journal that aims to publish articles based on mixed-methods research design: the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*³.

³ Nowadays, this journal is the most important one – taking into account the impact factor – in the field of Social Sciences/Interdisciplinary Studies.

One of the main purposes of the mixed-methods research design is to offer a triangulation-like procedure, in order to surpass any inherent one-method limitation (Creswell 2003, p. 15). When discussing the combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies within a mixed-methods research design, John Creswell proposed three main approaches: concurrent procedures, sequential procedures, and transformative procedures (Creswell 2003, p. 16). These three approaches refer to the order of the qualitative and quantitative steps taken in the research design. On the one hand, any concurrent procedure involves the convergence of both quantitative and qualitative data, with the end of “providing a comprehensive analysis of the research problem” (Creswell 2003, p. 16). Moreover, taking into account the design, in the concurrent procedure, the data collection process takes place at the same time; in other words, the investigator is collecting both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time. Subsequently, the collected information is interpreted and integrated in the overall results. Another interesting fact regarding the concurrent approach is the way in which the qualitative parts nest with the quantitative ones, creating a larger data pool (Creswell 2003, p. 16). Alternatively, the sequential approach is based on the usage of the results obtained following one method for developing the second. For example, a sequential procedure of a mixed-methods research design may involve “beginning with a qualitative method for exploratory purposes and following up with a quantitative method with a large sample so that the researcher can generalize results to a population” (Creswell 2003, p. 16). Otherwise, the design may employ first a quantitative approach for mapping the subject, and a qualitative part to obtain in-depth information about the analysed subject(s). Finally, there are also some transformative procedures that first require a theoretical framework (or, as Creswell names it, a theoretical lens) that is accompanied by certain customary methods. The researcher has to employ the respective methods and instruments, as they are part of the larger framework (Creswell 2003, p. 16). In other words, the transformative procedure represents the adaptation of a full package of theory, model, methodology, instruments, and analysis steps to different study areas.

In the following sections I will present the qualitative research methods and data analysis, the quantitative research methods and data analysis, and the geographical information system applied to social sciences, in order to build a mixed-methods research design with a sequential procedure. First, I am interested in mapping the Higher Education Institutions – in terms of Social Sciences and Humanities curricula – and their scholars’ academic activity. This part will represent the quantitative part of the project. Following that step, I carried out in-depth interviews

and/or group interviews with scholars who are involved with such curricula. Another method that will be employed is GIS⁴ representation. I will use GIS both for representing the results and for a geographical analysis of the subject.

Qualitative research methods and data analysis:

Following Creswell (2003, p. 181), each qualitative research must take place in natural settings, because that is the only way a researcher may develop and understand “a level of detail about the individual or place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants”. The qualitative procedures stand in contrast with the quantitative approach. The differences reside in strategies of inquiry, knowledge claims, and data collection and analysis (Creswell 2003, p. 179).

The qualitative research design uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic. In this project I use in-depth interviews and document analysis. The qualitative content analysis or document analysis can be defined as “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (Mayring 2000, p. 2). Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) also defined this type of analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”.

Including Geographical Information Systems (GIS) into the mixed-methods approach

One of the most influential ways to navigate a data-rich environment is, as Sianko and Small (2017, p. 169) argued, the Geographic Information Systems (henceforth GIS). This approach is known and used by many people around the world, either using Google Earth or similar software (mobile, desktop, or handheld dedicated GPS systems). Moreover, in Pavloskaya’s (2009, p. 15) words, in the last years “the GIS stands for funding and research grants, jobs, information, student enrollments and best solutions and locations”. The GIS, according to Sianko and Small (2017, p. 169), is “typically defined as a computer data system capable of capturing, storing, analyzing, and displaying geographically referenced information”, or, following Elwood and Cope (2009, p. 2), “digital technologies for storing, managing, analyzing and representing geographic information”. Usually, the information is related to the geo-location details, such as

⁴ GIS stands for Geographical Information System and usually it is used to present data on a geographic visualization.

latitude and longitude, but it may be also found useful as a visualization tool. Moreover, as Elwood and Cope (2009, p. 1) argued, the GIS may also include sketches, mental maps, audio, video, or photographs, as well as other non-cartographic forms of spatial knowledge.

In their editorial entitled ‘The future of GIS in social sciences’, Sianko and Small are offering arguments for further integration of GIS information in the social sciences methodology. For example, the authors consider that through integration, maps displaying the environmental quality of a setting can be overlaid with maps of human health to examine correlations that might suggest risk and protective factors. GIS also provides a means to answer questions related to the temporal context of a phenomenon (Sianko and Small 2017, p. 169). The spectrum of potential applications ranges from the mapping of vulnerable groups, inequalities, health access, education access, to migration issues.

There are many examples of research projects in the field of social sciences that employ GIS. Many analyses that involve GIS are purely quantitative, similar to the examples presented above; or, as Pavloskaya (2009, 13) argued, despite its relatively weak quantitative functionality, GIS is primarily associated with statistical and quantitative spatial analysis. After being historically associated with quantitative approaches in geography, the use of GIS was criticized by feminists⁵ and Marxists starting in the 1970s (Pavloskaya 2009, pp. 15-16). However, from the 1990s (when GIS was considered mainly a quantitative approach), qualitative research also started to use GIS (Elwood and Cope 2009, p. 1). The development of a qualitative GIS was possible due to some critical human geographers who considered that the GIS methodology should also be qualitative (Lawson 1995; McLafferty 1995; Sheppard 2001; cited in Pavloskaya 2009, p. 14). Some of the first attempts at a qualitative use of GIS took their cue from research data or evidence that were purely qualitative, such as interviews or ethnographic research activities. Regarding the examples presented by Elwood and Cope, if there is a case of a research that tries to answer how a local community development initiative had an impact on their neighbourhood and the research methods are qualitative, all the results that involve GIS may be considered as a Qualitative GIS approach. Moreover, not only do the descriptive details represent qualitative data, but also the interpretations of different field data or results (Elwood and Cope 2009, p. 3). Last but not least, all these examples show that these data are qualitative

⁵ For example, in order to create analytical representations of people’s experiences or movements and to overcome the bias of GIS databases towards numerical information, feminists have begun to use unconventional spatial data such as narratives, hand-drawn maps, photographs (Dorling 1998; Kwan 2002a; Pavloskaya 2009, pp. 25-26).

because they might be used to understand contextual information or knowledge. Thus, the two authors consider that qualitative GIS can be used to integrate qualitative data or information into the GIS system, and to develop explanations built on qualitative approaches using GIS (Elwood and Cope 2009, p. 4). Another example is that of the research on urban transformation under post-socialism proposed by Pavloskaya (2002; 2004), where she created maps of Moscow's households' multiple economies using ethnographic information from in-depth interviews.

In the present project, the aforementioned techniques are applied in the use of data, both qualitative and quantitative, in order to offer a comprehensive picture of the Holocaust memorialisation through education, by including Holocaust or Holocaust-related courses within the Higher Education Institutions in Romania as the main data set. Thus, the GIS techniques are used mainly for a better visualization scheme, but also for describing the differences between the higher education programmes in Romania. On the other hand, the quantitative part of the study will be based on the analysis of curricula and it will take into account the accreditation rules, schedules, learning plans, etc.

One of the major limitations of this chapter resides in the lack of any open organized databases. Neither ARACIS nor the Ministry of Education (or any other relevant entity) have any data sources on the courses that are taught in HEIs. Taking into account the abovementioned limitation, an alternative way of mapping the HEIs courses is manual search on each university's website. Another limitation then arises: not all the universities have websites (or if they have, not all of them have updated curricula or even updated schedules) for all the faculties and/or programmes. Finally, from a broader methodological perspective, not only the lack of structured data, but also their availability on different platforms may represent another important limitation.

IV. Results

In this section I intend to map the results found in order to formulate a discussion starting point. The results will be categorized as answers to the research questions mentioned above. After the mapping, discussions of the data and conclusions are provided in the following section.

Taking into account the first research question (RQ-1a) - "*How many Holocaust-related courses are part of HEI programmes' curricula?*" – I followed different paths in order to find and map as many programmes as possible. On the one hand, I searched the HEIs websites to find if there are any mentions related to any updated schedule or curricula. Thus,

between 15 and 30 September 2019, I searched the available websites of all the Universities and their relevant Faculties, and found information related only to the following programmes: Faculty of Political Science – SNSPA, under the coordination of the Centre for Israeli Studies (SNSPA); the Holocaust’s History course; Faculty of History and Philosophy – Babeş-Bolyai University – Hebrew Studies program, the Memory and History and Post-Holocaust Hebrew identity courses. Finally, I have also found a Holocaust-related elective course at the University of Bucharest – Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

There was also an additional important source of information: an answer formulated by the Ministry of Education on 14 June 2019 to a member of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies. The Ministry of Education document states that from the data sent by the Romanian Universities, many of them have study programs, courses or lectures dedicated to the Holocaust (Interpellation – Ministry of Education 14.06.2019). Thus, the Ministry’s reply included the following examples in its exposition:

The Transylvania University of Braşov – Faculty of Letters includes courses of Romanian Literature, Comparative Literature, and Culture Theory that include modules related to antisemitism, the Holocaust, and modern Hebrew culture, as part of both BA and MA programmes. The Faculty of Theology, Letters, History and Arts at the University of Piteşti offered Holocaust-related information in courses that were part of the BA in History and the MA programme in ‘Romanian history in the European context’. The students of the Ştefan cel Mare University of Suceava are learning about the Holocaust within the study programmes offered by the Faculty of History and Geography. For example, the students of this HEI are discussing the Holocaust in the following courses: ‘The history of Bukovina’, ‘Contemporary history’, or ‘Fundamental problems of the contemporary world’. At the National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest, the Holocaust is studied occasionally when discussing certain plays and performances that include topics related to it. In 2019, for example, there was a performance of the play *Clasa Noastră* (Our class) by Tadeusz Slobodzianek. In the case of all security-related universities (such as those for the armed forces, police forces, or intelligence study programmes), the subject of the Holocaust was discussed as part of International Humanitarian Law. The case of the Ovidius University of Constanţa is interesting, because there are not only courses that include information related to the Holocaust, but an entire course on ‘Genocide and Holocaust’ is taught as part of the BA programme in History. The Dunărea de Jos University of Galaţi also offers some programmes and courses that are related to the study of the Holocaust: ‘Contemporary history of

Romania’, ‘The history of political ideas’, or ‘Introduction to European Studies’.

There is also a case of a private university that includes courses related to the Holocaust in its curriculum. In this case, the Sapiența University of Cluj Napoca is the only private HEI that includes in its curricula information regarding the Holocaust, in courses such as ‘Romanian politics in the 20th century’ or ‘International relations in the 20th century’ (Interpellation – Ministry of Education 14.06.2019).

In addition, I tried to find more courses related to the subject in the interviews and discussions that I had with researchers interested in the study of the Holocaust. As a result of this, I found that there are some courses at the Vasile Goldiș University of Arad that include references to the Holocaust.

Finally, although this goes beyond the narrow aim of the present chapter, many Higher Education Institutions are organising different workshops, roundtables, or lectures on Holocaust-related topics. In this regard, SNSPA, the University of Bucharest, Babeș-Bolyai University, and the National University of Defense are organising annual events that are related to the Holocaust or the history of Romanian Jews. The mapping of these activities was not part of the aims of this chapter, but I consider it important to mention at least their existence. These activities cannot be considered as *important*⁶ for developing a Holocaust-aware culture and discourse for the population at large as courses that are taught for one or more semesters. The main difference may reside in the respective length of each of these activities, but not only that. The idea of having and promoting Holocaust-related courses embeds many related activities that may help the students to develop their beliefs and values.

The next research question refers to the regulation of the activity of HEIs (RQ-1b). As previously mentioned, universities in Romania are autonomous organisations. That means that each university has its own management plan and its own decision-making procedures that are aimed at the university’s development. At the same time, there are some overarching institutions that aim to develop a framework within which the universities may function. One of these cases is that of ARACIS and its Commissions set up with a view to specific research domains. Taking into account the aim of this chapter – mapping the Holocaust-related courses that are taught within the Romanian HEIs, I am analysing the authorization and accreditation norms and regulations of some of the relevant research domains. Referring to the programmes that have the intention of preparing

⁶ By *important* I am referring to the impact that each activity has in building and promoting any citizenship values that may be developed from knowledge about the Holocaust.

citizens for the future, I analysed the accreditation criteria for the following academic domains: Humanities and Theology; Juridical Sciences; Social sciences, political science and communication; Administrative sciences, psychology and education.

This analysis took into account the latest enforced accreditation criteria⁷ (version valid as of 2019). First, I searched for recommendations pertaining to core, teaching line, or complementary courses that included any references to the study of the Holocaust. In the case of the first analysed Commission – Humanities and Theology –, it includes the following specializations: Language and literature; Modern languages; Philosophy; History; Cultural Studies; Theology and Heritage studies. Although the study of the Holocaust (or related information) may be important when pursuing any BA or MA programme in one of the abovementioned specializations, the only specialization that actually includes some Holocaust-related aspects is Cultural Studies. Under the broader umbrella of Cultural Studies, ARACIS considers it important to recommend as core and/or teaching line courses for the Hebrew Studies Bachelor programmes the following courses: ‘Romanian Jewish History’, ‘Jewish Philosophy of History’, and ‘General History of the Jews’. These three courses are all the courses that may be⁸ related to the Holocaust for all the above-mentioned specializations within the research domain of Humanities and Theology. In addition to these, there are many other ‘Modern Romanian History’ or ‘Twentieth Century History’ courses that are compulsory, but there is no reference to the inclusion of certain aspects, such as the Holocaust, within their remit. This Commission (which is known as the ARACIS Commission II) deals also with the programmes related to the fundamental discipline of History. Referring to the BA studies programmes in History, there are two sub-disciplines that are included among the core courses: ‘The History of Romania in the 20th Century’ and ‘Introduction to the Global History of the 20th Century (Aracis-C2 Standards).

Referring to the Administrative sciences, psychology and educational sciences research domain and the respective ARACIS commission (known as ARACIS Commission 5), there is no reference to any course (core, teaching line or complementary) that would definitely include information related to the Holocaust. Furthermore, even when searching for history courses, there are no references to any history courses, whether Romanian,

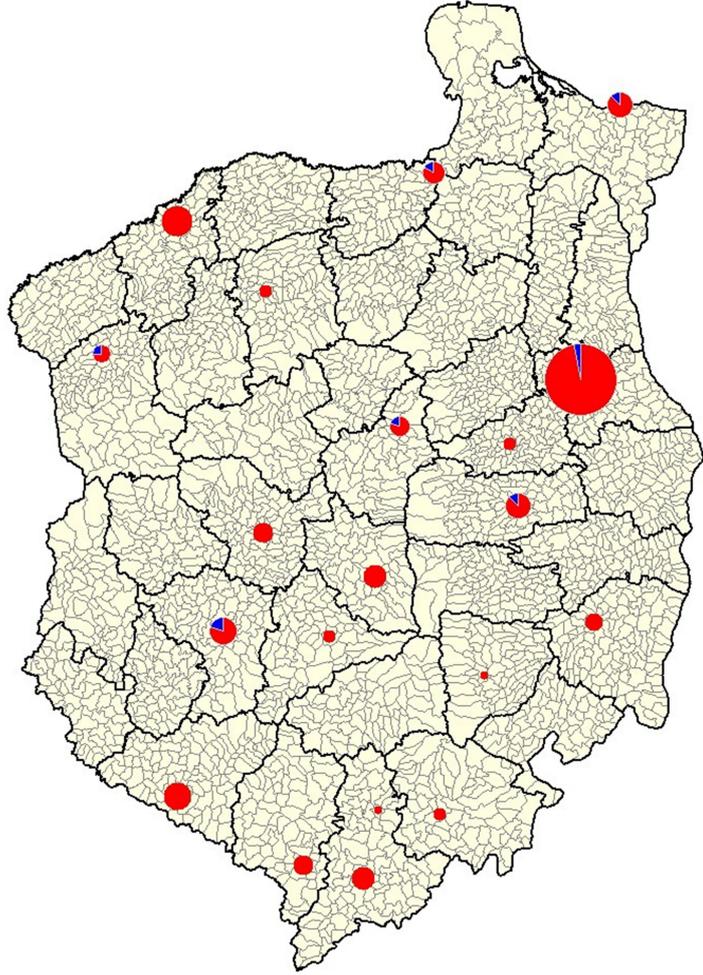
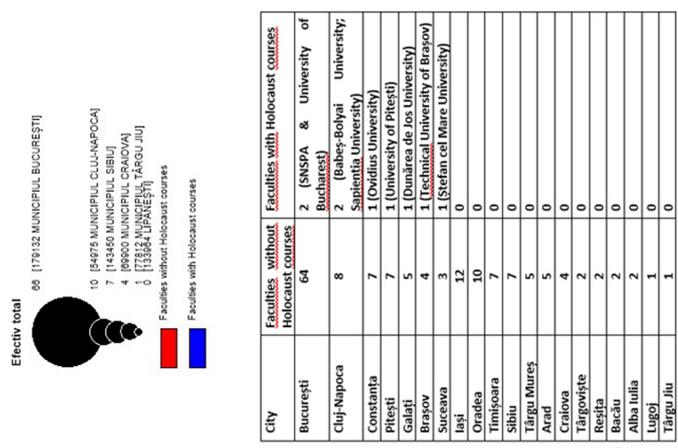
⁷ The accreditation criteria guide was accessed on the ARACIS official website: www.aracis.ro between 15 and 30 September 2019.

⁸ At this point I use ‘may’ because not all of them are core or compulsory, so the introduction of some of them remains at each HEI’s discretion.

European, or global history courses (ARACIS-C5 Standards). We encounter a similar situation in the case of the authorization and accreditation guidebooks for two other research domains that I am taking into consideration in this chapter, Social, Political and Communication sciences (Commission 4) and Law (Commission 3). On the one hand, the Law accreditation guidebook does not refer to any Holocaust or even minority rights courses, but only to a course in 'The State and Legal History (a core discipline) (ARACIS-C3 Standards 2016). On the other hand, the Social Political and Communication sciences (Commission 4) accreditation guidebook does not mention any dedicated Holocaust course or even a genocide-related course. However, there are several other courses that may embed references to the Jewish minority of Romania or its history. For example, in the case of the 'International relations and European studies' BA programme, ARACIS recommends 'European security and the problem of ethnic and national minorities' as a specialization course. The same course is also recommended for the Security studies BA programme. In the case of Sociology, there is a recommendation for specialization courses to include 'Interethnic relations' and 'Identity, multiculturalism and interethnic relations'.

V. Discussions and conclusions

As a brief primary analysis of the first two research questions, an inquiry may arise: Is there any relation between the courses that are recommended by ARACIS and the embeddedness of any Holocaust-related information? The first answer that comes to mind is *yes*. Actually, these aspects should be discussed in a more in-depth manner. As the results presented in the previous section show, there are some Holocaust courses or courses that (may) include Holocaust-related information in the programmes proposed by the Higher Education Institutions in Romania, although there are no regulations to this effect in the ARACIS guidebooks. Thus, it is not only the regulations but also other factors that are responsible for proposing and offering different subjects of study. ARACIS may introduce certain courses in their guidebooks, but I consider that the courses that are referring to specific sensitive aspects should be adopted by the academic community, not only as a result of regulations. Thus, as the nine examples presented in this chapter argued, Holocaust and Holocaust-related courses may be offered at different universities, if the academic community is supporting this curriculum design.



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Fig. 1: The mapping of the HEIs with and without Holocaust or Holocaust-related courses.

First of all, Holocaust and Holocaust-related courses represent a very small part of the courses taught at BA or MA level, even in the relevant analysed cases: Social Sciences, Law and Humanities. There is no data referring to the total number of courses taught at BA or MA level, but only data for the number of Faculties⁸³. In total, in 2018, there were 94 Higher Education Institutions registered in Romania. They had 524 Faculties, of which 108 were Social Sciences Faculties, 38 Humanities Faculties, and 22 Social Sciences and Humanities Faculties. The courses that I have found exist at eight out of these 168 Social Sciences and Humanities Faculties (HG 140/2017). For a visualization of the difference, the map below shows the distribution of the Holocaust-related courses. Thus, on the mapping of the HEIs with and without Holocaust courses, the red parts of the dots represent the proportion of the Faculties without Holocaust Courses, while the blue parts represent the proportion of the Faculties with Holocaust courses.

Secondly, regulations may result in an increase in the number of Holocaust or Holocaust-related courses. On the other hand, by proposing new regulations, the quality of the courses may not be at the highest level in the absence of further regulations related to the competence of the teachers and other technical details. Although there is no data to support the idea that certain HEI courses increase the knowledge about the Holocaust, following the 2017 INSHR-EW survey, only 13% out of the people who responded to it had not heard about the Holocaust. Thus, the major impact may seem to be made at the level of primary and secondary schools. This does not mean that the Higher Education Institutions do not have any role in developing a Holocaust memorialisation through educational processes, as the hypothesis stated. Regarding the hypothesis, taking into account the abovementioned theoretical framework, the results, and their limitations, I conclude the chapter by emphasising that universities may play an important role as Holocaust memorial milestones when the academic community designs the curricula in order to include Holocaust or Holocaust-related courses. In this case, the HEIs' aim may be not only to provide an introduction to the study of the Holocaust, but to develop the data sources, databases, and information in the field.

Regarding the limitations of this chapter and as potential directions for further research, I consider it important to continue the mapping of the courses offered at Higher Education Institutions and at the same time to take into the consideration also other academic activities, such as roundtables,

⁸³ I would like to thank Andreea Gheba for the discussion related to the number of Universities and Faculties.

workshops, and lectures. Another potential perspective entails the mapping of the courses that are either avoiding mentions of the Holocaust or the mapping of the courses that are either avoiding mentions of the Holocaust or even the courses (if any) that are denying it. Last but not least, future research must take into account and propose to offer some solutions to the limitations encountered in the present chapter. Ultimately, most of the limitations are linked to the lack of data and of a structured and robust methodological design.

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Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS–UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, within PNCDI III.

Chapter 7

Artistic Approaches at Memorial Sites – A Workshop Example

Kamila PAŁUBICKA¹

European historical remembrance, in particular nowadays, has its challenges, as current anti-EU sentiments are increasing. The cultural role of commemoration practices is to create an informed historical consciousness based on the human values of Europe's past, present, and future. This article describes presents some effective methods of practicing commemoration by proposing artistic approaches to memorialisation at authentic places. We offer examples of workshops organized by KULTURERBEN e.V., showing and evaluating how artistic approaches in educational work can be a useful and effective method in memorial culture. We developed rituals targeting European youth and meant to accommodate and mediate expressions of mourning and loss – in short, to give the historical memory of the places the opportunity to be remembered by future generations and thus keep them actual present.

Keywords: Culture of memory; commemoration; remembrance; art; memorial site.

Introduction

“It is good to share memories and experience what others think of our stories (...). The whole of European history is becoming increasingly commonplace, open to anyone without any obligation of national or other prejudices.” (György Konrad, cited in Assmann 2018, p. 144). National prejudices have left their mark on Europe in the first half of the 20th century. Then, history was taught differently from country to country and served primarily political interests. Objective European storytelling was hardly possible due to deep-rooted national stereotypes. It was only long after World War II, with the end of the Eastern bloc, that a more objective European historical consciousness gradually emerged (Levy 2006, p. 112).

However, despite having a more objective picture of European history, the cultural scientist Aleida Assmann (2013, p. 189) concludes that the ability of European countries to interact with each other stands and falls with the knowledge of one's share of the historical traumas of others.

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During the process of EU integration, the desire of Eastern European countries to contribute towards a common EU identity with their socialist history caused internal struggles (Wæhrens 2011, p. 6). While Western Europe, as Anne Wæhrens (2011, p. 6) mentions, already had a common historical awareness that was based on World War II and the Holocaust, the enlargement of the EU in 2004 added to this the history and trauma of the socialist era. A potential explanation thereof is that it remains a challenge to understand and respect transnational memory and remembrance.

Memory and remembrance are defined in a variety of ways. For example, Garrett Sullivan (2005, p. 6) distinguishes between *memoria* as the site of storage in the brain, recollection as the biological process of memory retrieval, and remembering, as not cognitive but social performances. The term memorialisation denotes the ritual remembrance enacted as a process meant to honour the dead, which, in its various forms, belongs to the category of cults performed by human societies (Barsalou and Baxter, p. 1). These rituals take a wide range of forms: public statements at memorial sites or museums, words of condolence, or the gifting of flowers and pictures of victims at sites where the victims died.

The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs concluded that memorialisation leads to collective memory. In 1925 he published his work *La mémoire collective* (Collective memory) and laid one of the foundations for the recent discussions on memorial culture (Assmann 2008). According to him, memories are always collective at a social level, because “they are recalled to us by other people” (Frieß 2010, p. 19). Jan Assmann refers to Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory when he defines two concepts associated with memory: ‘cultural memory’ and ‘communicative memory’ (Frieß 2010, p. 2). Cultural memory refers to institutionalised memories and is part of an objective culture that can be stored or transferred from generation to generation. Moreover, it contains a symbolic value that includes documents, rites, monuments, celebrations, and other media. It determines which events of the past were important enough to be commemorated by society and thus contributes to its identity formation. Communicative memory is related to the transference of memories in personal interaction, such as it occurs in social life – involving a person as a carrier of social roles and taking place simply through communication or language (Assmann 1988).

In summary, the culture of memory is both a psychological and a social process (de Gruyter 2008). On the one hand, memories are part of each individual, and, on the other hand, a society selects which memories to preserve as in the form of culture. Therefore, memory constitutes an important tool in shaping common values. It is thus pivotal to find efficient

ways of expressing memorial culture. Jan Assmann proposes that following the “death of contemporary witnesses, vital remembrance can only be perpetuated if it is transferred into institutionalised forms” (Assmann 2008, p. 177).

In the EU, memory-work is conducted largely by state institutions, as, for example, the *Topographie des Terrors* in Berlin, which is sponsored since 1994 by the State of Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany. Its main focus is to transmit historical knowledge about National Socialism and its crimes, including also its consequences after 1945. Recently, private initiatives have become more numerous. Private and institutionalised initiatives can be seen as top-down or bottom-up processes, respectively (Lefranc 2009, p. 2). Private initiatives, such as those undertaken by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), entail local actions and emphasise relations with the broader public. They aim at formulating an essential view on a given topic without political interests and can therefore have a more sustainable effect on the target group. The independence of NGOs from political agendas is a form of flexibility that allows them to experiment more with memorialisation and makes it easier for them to collaborate with other groups as compared to institutionalised initiatives.

For example, the private-sector Tarbut Sighet Foundation organises every year workshops with young students where novel, art-based approaches are used for memorialisation. Furthermore, young people and students involved in this programme are invited and encouraged to raise awareness in their local communities and schools to remembering the Holocaust. To build an empathic transnational collective memory, our NGO, KULTURERBEN e.V., also suggests new practices that preserve commemoration by using art-based performances at memorial sites.

In the following sections of this article, we discuss the general usefulness of innovative artistic practices in memorial culture, and especially its application in educational work. Then, we provide a detailed description of an exemplary workshop that implements these concepts and discuss their influence on the participants.

Artistic approaches at memorial sites

“Art can recover the memory of the forgotten, in spite of dead tradition and of the history of the victorious...., as Walter Benjamin had imagined. They should not forget that nothing must be lost about our past” (Saldini 2011, p. 331).

Artistic approaches at memorial sites aim to voice the neglected power of the deceased; to demonstrate the role of remembrance in the arts;

and to suggest that these practices were remembrances made manifest for society (Gordon 2014). These two opinions highlight two paradoxical aspects of art in memorial culture: on the one hand, art can be an objective tool, and on the other it can be used to invoke emotions.

Artistic practices generally take place in public space and therefore create a visual effect. The communicative character of artistic practices turns bystanders into participants. Exchange and dialogue about art and the respective memorial site are made possible. This leaves place for new interpretations and reflections that can go beyond what the artistic approach was originally designed to convey. In the moment of the artistic action, a simultaneous connection is established between place, history, memory, and identity, resulting in a condensed multi-dimensional character. Moreover, artistic approaches spark the imagination and provide knowledge of a historical content not only cognitively, but also emotionally. Sullivan proposes that the art of remembrance does not look inward to the mind, but outward to the culture. Thus, the use of art at memorial sites can impact cultural development (Sullivan 2005).

The new genre of commemorative art addresses transnational audiences, because it makes use of a repertoire of symbols, forms, and materials to represent meanings instead of writing, and is thus able to transcend language. Art has always investigated meaningful topics and found new ways and innovative directions. It is used as a medium which offers more possibilities to act on a certain subject as compared to plain text. This type of approach involves turning away from fact learning to understanding structures and interconnections, to create an awareness of a memorial site and increase empathy for it.

Between the 1960s and the 1970s, art movements like Fluxus, Happening, and Performance have explored the wide field of cultural memory. These artists emphasised the practice of performing art that connected the audience in a participatory way (Lascault 1998). Struggling to find proper expressions, artists like Esther Shalev Gerz, Christian Boltanski, and Gunter Demnig confronted society with commemorative art projects and raised self-critical awareness through making visible certain aspects of the Holocaust (Schult and Popescu 2019).

Exploring this history, for example, the artist Christian Boltanski has referred in an indirect way to the tragedy of the Holocaust by using photos in his installations. When looking at them, Christian Boltanski's photographs reveal an arrangement in which similar objects are placed side by side. The range of the readability of objects in his photographs and installation works are often referring to the Holocaust in a multi-dimensional perspective (Gumbert 1992). As another example, Lycée

Chases showed the school photograph of the graduating class of 1931 from a high school for Jewish students (Saldini 2011, p. 334). The arrangement of space was designed to create attention and to connect with the unnamed individuals, who did not survive World War II. They, therefore, provoke an emotional impact. It is indiscernible to the observer which elements create a real connection to his life and which are fictitious.

The general characteristics of art practices, such as, for example, to provoke thought, evoke emotional reactions, and create associations have been utilized consciously in installations or monuments in public space. These so-called “performative monuments”, as Mechtild Widrich defines them, are binding the audiences in self-aware acts of commemoration (Schult and Popescu 2019). One such example is given by Mechtild Widrich, an art historian, who intensively examined art practices using the concept of “performative monument” (Schult and Popescu 2019, p. 5). Such public commemoration practices have nowadays established themselves internationally in the form of events, speeches, celebrations, and visits to memorial sites. Still, the conceptual work and specific artistic practices operating at these sites are not yet systematically researched (Schult and Popescu 2019, p. 5).

Due to the pleasurable experiences of participants in such artistic performances and their pedagogical value, artistic approaches are useful in the educational sector. For example, Schult and Popescu show that artistic practices as a multi-method are very effective for participants to be drawn into the learning process (Schult and Popescu 2019). Through artistic practices at memorial sites, mourning and grieving become possible and can transform the unspeakable into something meaningful – emotional moments can be shared.

Intrinsically, artistic practices are self-explanatory, which makes the process of commemoration accessible for everyone. Moreover, artistic performance forces participants to be actively part of a symbolic act that creates an identifying moment and overcomes cultural borders or social barriers. We conceptualize as well as implement methods and highlight the dynamics of political awareness through artistic practices. The focus of these is to concentrate on memorial sites as places of learning and thinking. The aim is to increase the knowledge of the participants in educational events about the importance of democratic values and critical skills.

Workshop example

Since 2013, young people from Germany and Poland meet every year in our 3 days workshops to study the history of National Socialism and

the post-war period and to visit memorial sites. Our target group commonly consists of middle and high school students between the ages of 13 and 20. The size of the group amounts to 40 participants, including staff, teachers, historians, translators, cooperation partners, and witnesses. Two witnesses from Germany and Poland are recruited for the oral history part of the workshop, and specialists and historians are invited to provide the historical content. Three staff members of KULTURERBEN e.V. coordinate the entire programme. In addition, two translators assist with the communication between the German and Polish participants. In total, 30 young people from Germany and Poland spend time together under one roof for three days. The environment and learning venues are complemented by home-made food and integrational games. The following section highlights the methods we are using at memorial sites.

1. Historical context

In our workshop, entitled ‘Słońsk / Sonnenburg – Paths of Remembrance. Memory through art, knowledge and active participation’, we explore the many layers of German and Polish history. Since 2013, every year we invite young people from Germany and Poland to participate in a workshop in Słońsk, a small Polish town near the German border with a history going back to the Middle Ages.

In the twentieth century, the site became the scene of particularly cruel crimes against humanity. Resistance fighters arbitrarily arrested under the pretext of protective custody, left-wing party officials, cultural workers, Jews, and intellectuals were arrested from Berlin at the beginning of April 1933 and imprisoned in the concentration camp ‘Sonnenburg’. Among them were celebrities such as Carl von Ossietzky, Erich Mühsam, and Hans Litten (Nürnberg 2002). Soon, more than a thousand prisoners were held, tortured, and murdered in the concentration camp (Nürnberg 2002). Shortly before the arrival of the Red Army, a particularly nefarious crime against humanity was carried out by the SS unit stationed at Frankfurt Oder. On the night of January 30, 1945, the SS unit moved to Sonnenburg and massacred over 819 inmates outside the prison walls (Hohengarten 1979, p. 77).

At the beginning of the workshop, our main focus is to allow the workshop participants to get to know the place and its history, as well as confronting them with the Nazi crimes. We allow young people to process historical content and experience elements of history through artistic practices.

We have developed five strategies for the workshop. First of all, the participants prepare the scientific work and historical context in the

Memorial Museum in Słońsk. They are working intensively on the five following topics to gain an insight into the historical context:

1. Penitentiary 1832 to 1932
2. The transfer of power to Hitler 1933 - KZ Sonnenburg
3. Prison Sonnenburg (1934-1942)
4. “*Nacht und Nebel*” (N / N) Prisoners - The Massacre 1945
5. Border shifts in Europe - legal review

Here, the workgroup aims to provide participants with the important historical context, from the beginning to the end of National Socialism. The mixed Polish and German workgroups present their research results in concise presentations and are also invited to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Dialogue between participants is facilitated and they have the opportunity to share their experiences. The acquisition of information and skills, combined with the willingness and ability to formulate an opinion and to make value judgments in their moral consciousness are encouraged. The participants can thus find their own way to access this difficult legacy of the time of National Socialism.



Fig. 1: The participants working on the topics. Source: KULTURERBEN e.V., 2016.

The participants deliberately dealt with difficult social issues such as loss, grief, exclusion, and the consequences of war and destruction. At the end of our workshops, the participants fill out an anonymous survey. In the last section of this survey, we ask the participants to describe their impressions and what they got out of this workshop. Some exemplary quotes in response to the workshops are provided below.

“I was surprised how little you know about the neighbours. There are many clichés about Poland, but they are like us.”

“I have gained experience by working in Polish-German teams on historical content while spending intensive time together and learned something new about the region I am living in.”

“The memory has to last so that history does not repeat itself.”

“We were able to experience new things and meet new people. We share a common history.”

“I see my home country with different eyes and can perceive things differently, which I find very important for a common European history.”

“To keep the memory alive is of great importance for me. Especially because of the large number of victims who fought and gave their lives for freedom, so that we can live in peace.”

“We must not forget the story of World War II in the name of peace, the war changed humanity forever, we will remember the past to build a common future to avoid the mistakes of other generations.”

“The nation that loses its memory loses its conscience.”

2. Artistic practice at the shooting wall of the former prison ground

The workshop includes a visit to the authentic wall where the victims were shot, a crime that took place in the final stages of World War II. On January 30, 1945, a heavily armed SS command of 20 men reached the prison late in the afternoon. Under the direction of SS-Obersturmbannführer Heinz Richter, Gestapo chief in Frankfurt (Oder) and SS-Hauptsturmführer Wilhelm Nickel, the execution of over 819 inmates was carried out late in the evening with the support of the penitentiary staff (Hohengarten 1979, p. 77). The only remaining fragment of the prison complex is the former shooting wall, which today resides on private grounds.

The shooting wall serves as a place of remembrance and commemoration, as a place of confrontation with these horrific acts. On 2 February 1945, 48 hours after the massacre, the Russian military unit No. 54761 entered the Sonnenburg prison. A Red Army soldier photographed and documented the terrible events with a camera (Mnichowski 1982).

How is it possible to transfer this knowledge and historical context of National Socialism to young students in a respectful and honourable way? How can these workshops be designed in order to retain the relevance of this history and compel the attention of new generations? We decided to memorialise this authentic site by an artistic approach – naming the dead to create a moment of grief. The identified names of the victims of the massacre find their way into public space and collective memory on black

An example of a young participant was deeply touching. He had found a name in the list of victims that was also his own name, too. He struggled to comprehend that an innocent young man was shot dead at this place. Immediately, a moment of identification was created. Emotions came up and could be shared in the community. It is intense moments such as these that make experiences at the workshop lasting for the participants.

3. Conversation with eyewitnesses

Eyewitness testimonies from two perspectives, the German and the Polish, provide a very personal insight into the history of Sonnenburg until 1945. They trace biographies, impressively visualize memories, and give young people a direct link to history.

One student described the witness talk as follows: “I liked the conversation with the witnesses, but in my opinion, it was not enough time. I thought it was nice that he took the time for us. We learned about his bad experiences in his past.” The eyewitness took students through his traumatic childhood experiences and deep insights into the history and consequences of World War II. The students were deeply impressed and affected by his stories. For a moment, one student said, “it seemed that history came to life”. Here, a connection was established to the previously edited history and the experiential world of the witness.



Fig. 3: Participants talking with the witness. Source: KULTURERBEN e.V., 2019.



Fig. 4: Participants talking with the witness. Source: KULTURERBEN e.V., 2019.

Although we prepare students by introducing them to oral history, different personalities are coming together and there is not always a harmonious coexistence. Differences have to be perceived, endured, and implemented productively into the educational process, as well as critically reflected upon. And while historical material for middle and high school students can sometimes seem too theoretical and inaccessible, the transgenerational interaction provides an opportunity for students to have an immediate grasp of the material: what they see matters. The close visual analysis leads to questions about history and representation, and these questions can be answered through further historical reading.

4. Practical work on the cemetery facility

The workshop continues its educational work at memorial sites in the cemetery on the outskirts of Słomsk. 600 victims of the 1945 massacre whose identity has yet to be clarified are now buried in the cemetery. In mixed German-Polish teams, the cemetery is brought to a dignified state. For our participants, this means cultivating beets, trimming plants, beautifying paths, and ridding them of dirt and leaves. This communal

process not only cultivates the culture of remembrance. The young people also enter a dialogue with each other; they acquire social skills, and an understanding of each other's culture.



Fig. 5: Polish and German participants working in the cemetery I. Source: KULTURERBEN e.V., 2019.

5. Artistic intervention on the cemetery grounds

As another commemorative activity, 50 black balloons are used in a second photographic artistic practice. In various formations, the students stand up in the cemetery grounds and hold the balloons in front of their faces. Impressive photographs emerge that once again reflect the anonymity of the victims and intensify knowledge and memory. The balloons are hung as a sign of remembrance outside the gates of the cemetery in order to increase their effect in public space and to encourage passers-by to reflect on this memorial site.



Fig. 6: Art intervention on the cemetery grounds I. Source: KULTURERBEN e.V., 2018.



Fig. 7: Art intervention on the cemetery grounds II. Source: KULTURERBEN e.V., 2017.

Conclusions and European perspective

The non-profit organisation KULTUREBEN e.V. has made it its mission to investigate historical and political contexts and raise awareness about social processes that create injustice and crime, violence, and exclusion. Our workshops focus on strengthening young people's ability to express their opinions, as well as to promote respect for other cultures. Increasing knowledge about other countries and thus cultivating international relations is another aim of our encounters. The culture of remembrance is the result of a complex interplay of many factors. Politicians, debates, and traditions are infused by local needs and global expectations (Wolfrum 2010). Including the demands of our time, the current impact of the rising right-wing populism in Europe shows how dangerous such movements have become. For individuals as well as for groups, remembrance is the basis of self-assurance and future-oriented action.

The project work underlines the importance of artistic approaches and resources aiming to promote such practices in teaching and learning about the past. In doing so, we value the possibility of conducting the entire workshop through informal and personal discussions and experiences. Through this, it is possible to build an intimate, friendly atmosphere in which we overcome boundaries and create intense moments that encourage young Europeans to become active critical thinkers and participants in today's society and culture.

Our experience is that the young generation is enthusiastic and open-minded to the culture of remembrance and history when a concrete platform is created that stimulates not only the conveyance of content, but also creativity. In particular, the extracurricular context and the contact with other cultures in active cooperation enable a comprehensive learning experience. It encourages participants to openly, confidently, and critically deal with complex issues and to develop their attitude and position. Even dealing with difficult social issues such as loss, grief, exclusion, and the consequences of war and destruction are possible in such a framework. The implementation of such strategies is a fundamental step towards new perspectives and forms of commemoration. At a time of political turbulence and a return to nationalism in European countries, we see this as a constant working field aimed at fostering democratic values and a common, peaceful, and tolerant Europe.

Our future work includes a planned Erasmus+ project with the title "Decipher Totalitarianism and Empower Democracy" (2019-2021), which is a multilateral partnership involving four countries: Greece, Romania, Spain,

and Germany. This is a common project, which will be undertaken in each of these four countries, albeit with a specific focus on local historical contents. The project focuses on totalitarian regimes and their politics in different countries. Here, the students will try to identify totalitarian groups and how one may show resistance to such politics. The ability to connect internationally in developing a common remembrance culture remains a long-term process. Working in this field, it is a subject of great importance to us that we introduce the young generation of today to the era of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Thus, we challenge them to reflect on their obligations to engage against prejudice, racism, and anti-Semitism. Furthermore, we motivate young people to think about as well as debate these matters, and ultimately to decide how to work towards a future of Europe that is based on democratic principles and human rights.

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Chapter 8

Geographies of Remembrance: Observing the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust in Romania's Educational System

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Six decades after the end of the Second World War, the Romanian state finally accepted its responsibility for the Romanian Holocaust by commissioning an international group of experts led by the Romanian-born Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Auschwitz survivor Elie Wiesel and accepting the conclusions delivered by this International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania in November 2004. Synchronising its legislative agenda with the working of the Commission, in the same year, the government declared the day of 9 October as The National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust in Romania. In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly decreed 27 January as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The present study sets out to investigate the memorial practices related to the observance of the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust in the Romanian education system. In examining the regional patterns of commemorating the Holocaust in the Romanian schooling network, the study attempts to map out a national topography of remembrance. Based on our statistical findings, the study explores the hypothesis of a 'double externalisation' of state responsibility, consisting of a double deflection performed by the Romanian educational authorities: a) first, by commemorating predominantly the Hungarian Holocaust in Northern Transylvania; b) second, by focusing on the Nazi Holocaust instead of the Holocaust in Romania in the rest of the country.

Keywords: politics of memory; education; Holocaust Memorial Day; commemoration; Romania.

Introduction

Historical education and memorialisation are increasingly employed as pedagogical means of raising awareness about the horrors of the past (VanSledright 2010). Besides the alethic function pursued through such a pedagogy of the past consisting of educational truth-telling practices, commemorative activities enacted within educational contexts could also be conceived of as prophylactic devices designed to prevent historical horrors

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from ever happening again. This is nowhere more true than in relation to the Holocaust, whose tragic legacy continues to haunt historical consciousness and to loom dreadfully over the present. Although Holocaust education has become the subject-matter of scholarship (Davis and Rubinstein-Avila 2013) and the commemoration of the Holocaust is at the centre of the current politics of memory (Clifford 2013), there are only scant scholarly efforts of bringing these two strands of scholarship together.

In this paper, we aim to contribute to filling this gap by examining the commemoration of the Holocaust in the Romanian educational system. By bringing together the educational and the memorial, we thus set out to chart the national topography of commemorating the Holocaust in Romania's schoolscape. We start by outlining the historical background of anti-Semitism which reached its peak during the interwar period in Greater Romania, and the Holocaust carried out by Romanian and Hungarian authorities during the Second World War. Next, we move to the present and detail the current politics of state apologies and official regret as a new principle of political legitimation. It is in this context that we discuss post-socialist Romania's attempt of coming to terms with its troubled past, an effort pursued, among others, through the means of establishing truth commissions that examined the Romanian Holocaust and the communist rule in Romania.

After detailing the methodological approach informing our study, we present statistical findings on the regional distribution of events held on the occasion of the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust in schools across Romania. These empirical findings provide the ground for engaging in a sociological endeavour of making sense of the regional variation of commemorative practices observed within the country's educational schoolscape. We show that underpinning the regional variation lies, *inter alia*, a deflective tactics we call 'othering' the Holocaust, which consists in commemorating predominantly the Holocaust perpetrated by the other state authorities that had operated on the present-day territory of Romania, that is the Hungarian state that is responsible for the Holocaust in the Northern Transylvania. These findings, together with other state practices and sociological surveys that have documented the level of anti-Semitic attitudes, lead us to cast serious doubt upon the authenticity of the politics of regret performed by the Romanian state.

Historical Background: The Holocaust in Romania

In Romania, as in other parts of the continent, what Eric J. Hobsbawm (1994) has labelled as "the short twentieth century" was indeed an age of concentrated extremes. Preceding the half-century of communist

rule that followed in the aftermath of the Second World War, the anti-Semitic far-right movements culminating in the short-lived National Legionary State and the wartime regime of military dictatorship had torn apart interwar Romanian politics and society.

The anti-Semitic far-right and fascist movements that had emerged within Greater Romania in the wake of the First World War were matched and surpassed in their ideological violence only by the brutal warfare that followed Hitler's invasion of Poland and the National Legionary State that was established in Romania. In a swirl of events, Romania had lost Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union (June 1940) and Northern Transylvania to Hungary, after the Second Vienna Award (30 August 1940). Following these developments, Romania entered the Second World War as a Nazi ally in 1941 and fought alongside the Axis powers until 1944 (Deletant 2006).

The end of the conflict found the Romanian soldiers fighting against the Wehrmacht, alongside the Red Army, after a coup d'état brought down Marshal Ion Antonescu (23 August 1944) and opened the way for the post-war Sovietisation of Romania. In between these temporal extremes, Romania had lost 500,000 soldiers on battlefields scattered across Central and Eastern Europe, from Budapest to Stalingrad. Entangled with the warfare, starting with 1941, Romanian political and military authorities under the rule of Marshal Ion Antonescu engaged in a systematic purging of Jewish people within the Romanian kingdom and the territories administered by the Romanian Army (Solonari 2009).

The mass killing of the Jews by the Romanian army after the re-gaining of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were preceded by the pogroms of Iași and Dorohoi, antedating the start of the war. In September 1941, Romanian authorities started the mass deportations of Jews from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to Transnistria, an extra-Romanian territory that came under Romanian administration. Overall, between 280,000 and 380,000 Jewish victims and 11,000 Romani people fell victim to the Romanian Holocaust (International Commission 2004, pp. 179, 236).

In parallel, the Hungarian authorities administering the region of Northern Transylvania ceded by Romania in the Second Vienna Award organised the deportation of 130,000 Jews to the Nazi death camps. A demographic longitudinal analysis provides the full extent of the human loss inflicted by the two parallel Holocausts taking place simultaneously on Romanian and extra-Romanian lands. According to the 1930 General Population Census, the Jewish population numbered 756,930, representing little over four percent of the total population of Greater Romania (Manuilă 1938). After the Second World War, only about 375,000 survived the anti-Semitic wrath (International Commission 2004, pp. 175–179).

Political Context: The Politics of Regret

In the last decades, analysts of international politics, including political scientists, historical sociologists, and scholars of jurisprudence, were puzzled by the emergence, institutionalisation, and ritualisation of a new vocabulary of state actions with regard to the historical past and national memory. Throughout the long nineteenth century and continuing during the first half of the twentieth century, nation-states had legitimated their political formations by constructing official memories – most of which consisting of “invented traditions” – that celebrated the nations’ glorious pasts and heroic achievements (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

However, socio-cultural and intellectual developments in the aftermath of the Second World War, especially the post-modernist demise of grand narratives, such as the triumphant historical progress of science and the similarly triumphant political becoming of the nation-state (Lyotard 1984), have undermined this celebrative stance toward one’s historical past. A new historical consciousness emerged in the wake of this paradigm shift in relation to the national past, one that was much less tempted to indulge in self-aggrandisement and much more morally set to grapple critically with the ghosts haunting the nation’s historical past.

The politics of official apologies and state regrets gained traction starting with the late 1980s when an increasingly impressive number of governments and heads of states engaged in public acts of contrition and expressed their regrets in a bid to address and redress various aspects of their societies’ toxic pasts. Examples of these gestures of remorse and repentance couched in expressions of official regret include Pope John Paul II, who in 1992 offered a formal statement in which the Vatican rectified the Roman Catholic Church’s 1633 condemnation of Galileo Galilei (Cowell 1992); British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who apologised for the British authorities’ responsibility in the Irish potato famine of 1845 to 1849, which claimed over one million lives (Marks 1997); United States President Bill Clinton’s “near apology” for slavery (Trouillot 2000, p. 183), a question that still stirs the American political agenda (Medish and Lucich 2019). Even Japan, otherwise notorious for its reluctance to work-through its wartime atrocities, had recognised its misdemeanours, albeit in a limited fashion (Olick and Coughlin 2003, p. 37). However, Japan’s “elusive apology” continues to poison the country’s international relations with its Asian neighbours (Bong-Kwan 2019).

Although it did not trigger this trend directly, the Nuremberg trials and the universal human rights paradigm institutionalised in international law in their aftermath certainly played a major part (Ehrenfreund 2007; Olick and Coughlin 2003, pp. 38-42). The new political culture of

contrition, together with the apologetic vocabulary of regret, remorse, and atonement was modelled upon West Germany's acceptance of guilt over the war and the Holocaust, which also entailed reparations paid to Israel under the 1952 Luxembourg Agreement. However, it should nevertheless be stressed that, although Bonn had acknowledged Germany's war guilt, for more than a decade after the "zero hour" (Stunde Null, see Buruma 2013), its post-war memory politics were focused upon mourning the German suffering. It was not until the 1960s that the Federal Republic of Germany engaged in "the most profound self-reflection the world has ever seen" (Lind 2008, p. 5).

Truth Commissions as Transitional Justice Rituals of Reconciliation

Romania joined the international club of "sorry states" – to use Jennifer Lind's (2008) parsimonious but equally suggestive term – rather late, after the high tide had already passed in the waters of world politics. The demise of state socialism in December 1989 laid out the difficult path of articulating a post-socialist democratic regime (Light and Phinnemore 2001). The regime change had also brought up the thorny question of confronting Romania's dark past as a premise for constructing a new democratic order (Rusu 2017). Although the emerging civil society and the general public urged post-socialist rulers to break with the communist past, it was the Romanian Holocaust that was the first to enter on the authorities' public agenda.

On 22 October 2003, the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was established at the initiative of president Ion Iliescu, headed by Elie Wiesel. A year later, on 11 November 2004, the 'Wiesel Commission' delivered the Final Report which thoroughly documented the historical roots of Romanian anti-Semitism as intertwined with the political formation of the modern nation-state during the second part of the nineteenth century, the interwar policies of discrimination enacted by Romanian governments, the Holocaust in Romania and Northern Transylvania, the Romani's deportation and treatment, as well as the post-war Holocaust negationism in Romania (International Commission 2004). The Report, which pointed out with clinical precision how the Romanian state had orchestrated logistically and carried out methodically the pogroms, the deportations to Transnistria, and the physical destruction of the Jews, was accepted by the president of Romania, Ion Iliescu, who assumed responsibility for the Holocaust in the name of the Romanian state.

In addition to accepting the Report's conclusion, the president also pledged to implement the recommendations formulated by the International Commission. On 5 May 2014, following the proposal of the Commission,

the Government declared 9 October “the Holocaust Day” (Government Decision no. 672 2014). The date marks the beginning of the deportation of Jews from Bukovina to Transnistria in 1941. A year later, after the United Nations General Assembly’s resolution to institute the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, commemorated on 27 January (UN 2005), the memorial day of 9 October became the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust. The Commission insisted in its recommendations on educational programs and commemorative activities. Consequently, a pedagogy of the Holocaust has been developed, centred on a textbook, *History of the Jews: The Holocaust*, for use in Romanian high schools within an optional course (Petrescu 2005).

Holocaust education and memory practices were meant to intertwine in “educational programs regarding the Commemoration Day” established for 9 October, when the Commission recommended that “the Ministry of Education and schools throughout Romania should organise special programs and assemblies to mark the commemoration date” (International Commission 2004, p. 388). It is precisely this injunction to commemoration and the Holocaust observances enacted in the Romanian schooling network on 9 October 2015 that will be investigated in the empirical part of this chapter.

In December 2004, Traian Băsescu, a Democratic Party politician (who, in an ironic turn of events, was recently declared by the Bucharest Court of Appeal as a collaborator of the Securitate, the communist regime’s secret political police – Hotnews 2019) was elected President and succeeded in power the ex-communist Ion Iliescu. In an intra-coalition competition with the liberal Prime Minister Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu over who had the highest anti-communist credentials, Traian Băsescu gained an edge by establishing in April 2006 the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania, headed by Vladimir Tismăneanu (Abraham 2008). Six months later, the Tismăneanu Commission delivered its own Final Report, based on which the president condemned the communist regime in Romania as “illegitimate and criminal” during a scandalous common session of the Romanian Parliament (Rusu 2017).

The Final Report, which was ironically revised and amended by the time of its publication (Tismăneanu 2006), was applauded by the post-communist anti-communist intelligentsia while being met with vitriolic opposition by communist-nationalists such as Corneliu Vadim Tudor and his Greater Romania Party (Tanasoiu 2007). Critical left-wing intellectuals and academic scholars have also dismantled the Final Report and revealed its structural flaws, consisting of deficient statistical and factual accuracy, as well as stark ideological biases draped in a bombastic language and driven

by a passionate quest for historical revenge (Ernu et al 2008; Rusu 2013; Rusu 2015).

The establishment of truth commissions such as the ones described earlier, aimed at documenting and respectively condemning the Holocaust and the communist regime in Romania, was theorised by scholars as belonging to the realm of “transitional justice” (Teitel 2000). Combining criminal justice actions such as show trials and prosecutions with restorative measures such as reparations and compensation, but also consisting of other purging policies such as lustration, and politics of memory, transitional justice measures seek to redress the historical injuries inflicted by former regimes and thus to come to terms with the haunting past. However, as the case of the Final Report condemning the communist regime forcefully shows, truth commissions do not always succeed in acting as rituals of reconciliation.

Holocaust Education and Memorial Day as Rituals of Reconciliation

In Romania as elsewhere across the nineteenth-century Western world and beyond, state-sponsored, public mass education had been a powerful instrument of political socialisation (Ramirez and Boli 1987; Rusu 2014; Szakács-Behling and Rusu 2019). Commemorative rituals celebrating the historical past of the glorious nation were entangled with school curricula and embedded within the broader educational system (Rusu 2016). From a Durkheimian-inspired sociological perspective, such commemoration practices enacted within an educational setting constitute powerful mechanisms of social integration (Durkheim 1995 [1912]). Extending this strand of theoretical thought, scholars articulating a political sociology of the past have compellingly argued that historical education shapes within pupils’ selves a “socio-biographical” identity. This is the outcome of learning to situate their lives into the historical tradition of the nation to which they belong (Zerubavel 1996).

Similar to national days of mourning, memorial days and other days of historical remembrance could be theorised as piacular rites consisting of “sad ceremonies [...] whose purpose is to meet a calamity or to remember and mourn one” (Durkheim 1995 [1912], p. 392). But whereas national days of mourning are generally established as a reaction to a contemporary event, such as a natural tragedy, collective accident, or the death of a public personality (Rusu 2019a; Rusu 2020a; Rusu 2020b), memorial days commemorate historical events that have left an indelible mark upon society. Irrespective of the differences, both types of piacular rites consist of commemorative rituals of solidarity, togetherness, and reconciliation enacted as a common stand against death and suffering.

Against the background of these considerations, the Holocaust Memorial Day is thus conceived of as a mourning ritual that commemorates the genocide of the Jewish (and other) victims as a human tragedy, acknowledges the loss as socially and politically meaningful for contemporary society, and pledges not only to never forget but also to render its repetition impossible. However, the establishment and observance of a Memorial Day dedicated to the Holocaust was slow to come. This holds true also for the newly founded state of Israel (1948), where the Holocaust did not feature on the public commemorative agenda during the first post-war decade. It was only after the passing of the Holocaust Day Law (1959) and the Eichmann trial in 1961 (Arendt 1963) that a new Israelian sensibility started to emerge regarding the Holocaust.

The law incorporated the Holocaust Day into the commemorative calendar observed across the Israeli school system. However, throughout the 1960s, the observance of the Holocaust in schools and elsewhere was marked by a sharp division “between the passive Diaspora Jewry (‘sheep to the slaughter’) and active Zionism in Eretz Israel, which had fought successfully for statehood” (Ben-Amos et al 1999, p. 270). This mnemonic contrast implied a selective remembering of the Holocaust, as Israeli authorities chose to commemorate “only those elements in the Holocaust they could identify with: resistance fighters, and especially the rebels of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising” (Ben-Amos et al. 1999, p. 270).

A change of heart occurred during the 1970s, in the aftermath of the Six-Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973), when the trope of heroic resistance was replaced with an emphasis on the suffering and victimhood experienced by ordinary people during the Holocaust. In the late 1980s, the Holocaust Day ceremonies observed in Israeli schools started to include organised mass trips – indeed, pilgrimages – to Poland’s concentration and extermination camps.

The Holocaust is also formally commemorated outside Israel, in various European countries. In Britain’s school network, for instance, a Holocaust Memorial Day started to be observed annually beginning with 27 January 2001 (Burtonwood 2002). The government’s initiative of instituting a Holocaust Memorial Day and of observing it in the educational system, while generally praised by the civil society, was nevertheless considered by others as “too little, too late” (Kushner 2004).

In Romania, during the period of state socialism, ‘discussion of the Holocaust was more or less taboo’ within the educational system (Bărbulescu et al 2013, p. 41). Aspects regarding the Holocaust entered the school curricula in 1998, when the Ministry of Education embarked on a major educational reform which included the introduction of alternative textbooks (Szakács 2011). Pupils were being introduced to the subject of the

Holocaust starting with the fourth grade, while the history school curriculum for the eighth grade included a mandatory case study dedicated to “The Holocaust in Romania”. In the eleventh grade, students could opt to study ‘History of the Jews: The Holocaust’, based on the textbook bearing the same title (Petrescu 2005). In the first year since its introduction (2004-2005), this optional discipline was studied in 330 classes across Romania, while recently, in the school year 2018-2019, the number of classes decreased to 62, comprising a total number of 1,860 students (MEC 2019).

The National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust was established by the government at the recommendation of the International Commission and was first observed on 9 October 2004. Starting with that year, the Holocaust Memorial Day in Romania was observed annually within a multi-scalar commemorative pattern that encompassed the state apparatus and public officials, from the highest levels of state administration (the presidency and the government), through the local structures of public administration (municipalities), to schools. For instance, on 9 October 2015, the activities carried out at the central level were organised by The Elie Wiesel National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania (henceforth INSHR-EW) and consisted of a national ceremony of commemorating the Holocaust Day in Romania. The participation to the ceremony involved laying wreaths and delivering speeches by the Romanian President, the President of Knesset (Israel’s Parliament), the President of the Romanian Parliament’s Chamber of Deputies, the President of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania, as well as other government officials and representatives of the diplomatic corps (INSHR-EW 2015). At an intermediate level, across the country, various cultural activities ranging from theatrical performances and museum exhibitions to symposia and debates were organised in numerous cities. In the remainder of this study, we will set the analytical focus on the commemorative activities carried out at the lowest level within this multi-scalar pattern of observing the Holocaust in Romania by surveying the educational system.

Methodological Outline: A National Topography of Remembrance

Against these theoretical considerations based on the historical background and the current political context, we set out in this paper to examine how the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust set on 9 October was observed within the Romanian schooling network in 2015. For this purpose, empirical data were collected that examined in detail the schools from across the country that had organised commemorative activities regarding the Holocaust on the day of 9 October 2015. These were

identified from the reports obtained from official sources: the Ministry of Education and the School Inspectorates functioning in all of Romania's 41 counties. After gathering the data, we constructed an integrated dataset that allowed us to perform a quantitative topographic analysis of Holocaust-related memory practices enacted in Romania's schoolscape, allowing us to chart the outlines of a national topography of remembrance.

Some limitations regarding the data-collection process and the method employed in analysing these data should also be specified at this point. Reliable data regarding the commemorative activities performed during the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust in Romania's schools were obtained from School Inspectorates from only 39 counties. In Ilfov, the School Inspectorate's report mentioned that "commemorative actions were held in every school throughout the county" (emphasis added), which triggered our methodological scepticism regarding its accuracy. Another case of missing data came from Sălaj, where the School Inspectorate did not have a centralised situation of the activities organised for commemorating the Holocaust on 9 October 2015. To compensate for these cases, data for these two counties were projected based on the values calculated in the neighbouring counties.

The research is also bounded within a limited temporal scope, as it is restricted to the commemorative activities observed in Romanian schools on 9 October in a single year (2015). This particular year was selected based on considerations regarding the accessibility of empirical data, since we identified in media sources reports of the Ministry of Education's measure of centralising the data from the local levels. This limitation renders impossible longitudinal comparisons that would have allowed us to capture the temporal dynamics of these Holocaust-related school-held memory practices. Despite these methodological shortcomings, the data thus collected nevertheless point out important statistical facts about the regional variations in memory practices enacted in Romanian schools.

Findings: Regional Patterns of Commemoration

Overall, on 9 October 2015, the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust in Romania was observed through various commemorative activities in 934 schools across the country. According to the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (INS), at the time of these commemorative activities, the Romanian educational network comprised a total of 7,108 schools, including kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, high schools and post-secondary schools, and universities (INS 2019). After removing from the analysis the kindergartens and the universities, we were

left with a total number of 5,775 schools, which constitute the statistical population of this study. What follows from these data is that the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust was observed in 16.7 percent of Romania's schools (this percentage was reached by subtracting from the total number of schools those from Ilfov and Sălaj, 81 and 95 respectively, for which we did not have statistics regarding the Holocaust-related commemorative activities). Therefore, at the broadest, national level, about one in six schools commemorated the Holocaust Memorial Day in Romania in 2015.

However, when we factor in the spatial structure in this national topography of remembrance, a starkly heterogeneous picture becomes evident. Table 1 below indicates the top and bottom rankings of Romanian counties based on the commemorative activities regarding the observance of the Holocaust Memorial Day in schools. The left column indicates, in absolute figures, the number of schools (N) that observed the Holocaust Memorial Day, while the right column presents the percentage (%) of schools in the counties' educational network that engaged in such commemorative activities. Although there is no complete match between the two rankings, we do find some regularities. For instance, the Transylvanian regions of Cluj and Bihor feature among the top counties in both columns. Similarly, counties such as Călărași and Buzău (Wallachia) but also Covasna (the Szeklerland) appear among the regions characterised by the lowest memorial activity.

Table 1. Distribution of Holocaust-related commemorative activities in schools across Romania's counties (selection)

Rank	County	N of schools	County	% of schools
1	Cluj	72	Harghita	50.4
2	Bucharest	70	Galati	42.0
3	Galați	66	Cluj	39.1
4	Harghita	57	Teleorman	38.5
5	Bihor	53	Bihor	31.0
.....				
38	Gorj	9	Prahova	6.0
39	Buzău	7	Covasna	5.4
40	Ialomița	7	Bacău	5.3
41	Covasna	4	Buzău	5.2
42	Călărași	3	Călărași	3.5
Total		934		16.7

Source: Author's calculation based on official data

A better picture emerges when we visualise the territorial distribution of commemorative activities on Romania’s administrative map. Figure 1 below, which was generated using a Geographic Information System (GIS) software (QGIS 3.8), reveals some stark discrepancies across the Romanian territory. Higher percentages of schools that observed the Holocaust Memorial Day on 9 October 2015 seem to be concentrated in Transylvania, while, with some notable exceptions, counties from the other two historical regions – Moldavia and Wallachia – are characterised by lower levels of commemorative activity.

Fig. 1: The national map of Holocaust commemoration in Romania’s schools

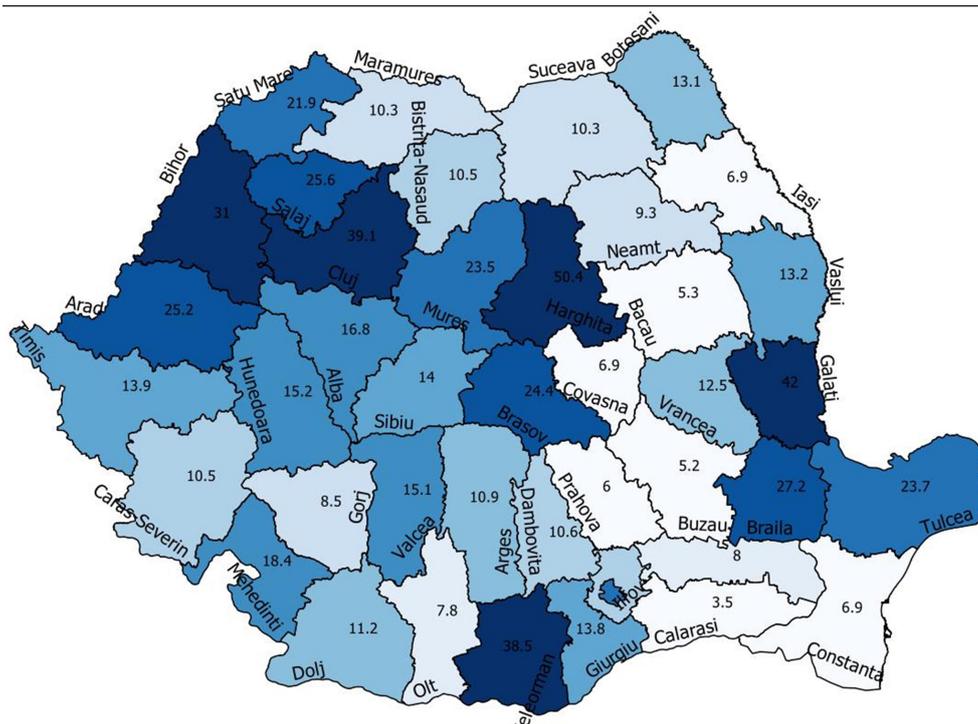


Table 2. Mean percentages of schools that observed the Holocaust according to historical regions

Region	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Banat	12.18	2	2.41
Crişana-Maramureş	22.09	4	8.74
Dobruja	15.29	2	11.87
Moldavia	14.08	8	11.66
Muntenia (Greater Wallachia)	14.25	11	10.79
Oltenia (Lesser Wallachia)	12.20	5	4.48
Transylvania	22.49	10	13.61
Total	16.63	42	10.99

Source: Author's calculation based on official data

Interpretation: Making Sociological Sense of the Regional Variation

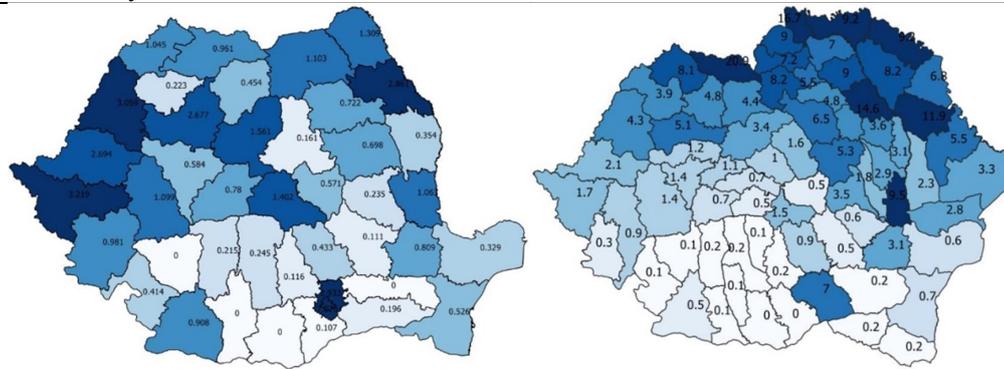
The genuine challenge with the type of analysis performed in this study is to go above and beyond the sheer empirical descriptivism entailed by the statistical findings. How can we make sociological sense of these spatialised patterns of school commemoration? What lies behind these statistical regularities? It is these questions that we set out to address in the remainder of this study by developing an interpretive framework comprising five interrelated factors that can account for our statistical findings. The argument set forth in this study states that these regional variations in Holocaust-related commemorative activities in Romanian schools are the outcome of a) *the organisational factor* (the current spatial distribution of the Jewish community in Romania), b) *the historical factor* (the historical presence of Jewish communities), c) *the trauma factor* (the locations of ghettos, deportation centres, and pogroms), d) *the institutional factor* (the presence of memory institutions), and e) *the multi-cultural factor* (the index of ethnic diversity).

The Organisational and Historical Factors

A first factor that may account for the regional pattern of Holocaust commemoration in the Romanian schooling network consists of the current presence of the Jewish communities. We link these demographics with the organisational factor since we contend that the contemporary presence of Jewish people in certain localities may have influenced the organisation of Holocaust-related commemorations in Romanian schools. It was already mentioned in a previous section of this study that during the interwar period,

the Jewish community constituted 4.2 percent of Greater Romania's population (756,930 according to the National Census conducted in 1930). By the end of the Second World War, only about 375,000 Jews had survived the Holocaust carried out by the Romanian authorities and the deportations from Northern Transylvania organised by the Hungarian government. The Population Census of 2011 registered a total of 3,627 Jewish Romanian citizens, representing an infinitesimal proportion of 0.016 percent. Figure 2 below indicates the territorial distribution of this dwindling Jewish community, in comparison to the demographic situation of 1930.

Fig. 2: The current (left) and inter-war (right) demographics of the Jewish community



Sources: The Population Censuses of 2011 and 1930

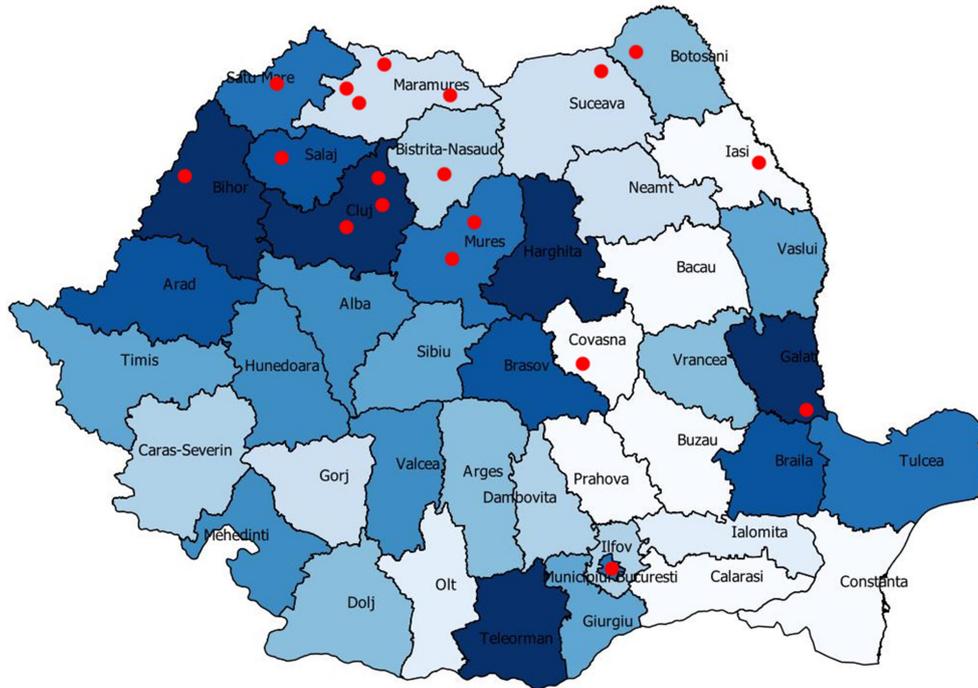
The partial overlap between the historical and contemporary presence of Jewish people (concentrated in north-east, in Moldavia, and in the centre-west, in Transylvania) on the one hand and the higher proportions of schools observing the Holocaust Memorial Day (concentrated in Transylvania) suggest a possible influence of the organisational and historical factors in shaping the commemorative behaviour within Romania's educational network.

The Trauma Factor

While the current presence of the Jewish population is important because many commemorative activities organised in schools included meetings with Holocaust survivors, the historical presence of the Jewish communities in interwar Romania is also connected with the traumatic factor. Figure 3 depicts the traumatic sites of memory, consisting of the locations of pogroms carried out in the Romanian Kingdom, as well as the

ghettos and deportation centres in Northern Transylvania under the Hungarian administration.

Fig. 3: The traumatic sites of Jewish memory (pogroms, ghettos, and deportation centres)



Source: *Final Report* (International Commission 2004)

Note: The map does not include the sites of pogroms located in Northern Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria, which are currently outside Romania's borders, but had come under the administration of the Romanian state during the Second World War (see Table 3 below).

The Holocaust in Romania was adumbrated by a series of anti-Semitic pogroms that had occurred before the country's engagement in the Second World War. During the summer of 1940, massacres took place throughout the rural regions in Northern Bukovina and Moldavia (Ioanid 2006, pp. 63-67). During the legionnaires' failed rebellion against Ion Antonescu (21-23 January 1941), 125 Jews were brutally murdered in Bucharest (Cazan 2017). Romania's entrance into the war came with the most infamous anti-Semitic massacre, the pogrom of Iași (27–29 June 1941), where the Romanian army and an instigated civilian population murdered thousands of Jews. Thousands of others died in the so-called "death trains" after they were severely beaten and exposed to starvation (Ioanid 1993). As the Romanian army broke into Bessarabia, the geography

of pogromic violence expanded as well. Thousands of Jews were systematically killed throughout Bessarabia and Bukovina (see Table 3). In Transnistria, the Romanian army is responsible for the death of 150,000 local Jews. The death toll has led Raul Hilberg to conclude that “with the exception of Germany, no other country was so massively involved in the extermination of Jews” (Ioanid 2006, p. 263).

Table 3. Location of Jewish ghettos, deportation centres, and anti-Semitic pogroms

Ghettos and deportation centres in Northern Transylvania		Major pogroms in Romania and the territories under Romanian administration	
Location	N of deported	Location	Death toll
Cluj	18,000	Galați (30 June 1940)	400
Gherla	1,600	Dorohoi (1 July 1940)	200
Dej	7,800	Bucharest (21–23 Jan. 1941)	125
Șimleu Silvaniei	8,500	Iași (27–29 June 1941)	14,850
Satu Mare	18,000	Ciudei (3 July 1941)	450
Baia Mare	3,500	Edineț (6 July 1941)	500
Valea Borcutului	2,000	Noua Suliță (7 July 1941)	930
Bistrița	6,000	Chișinău (9 July 1941)	10,000
Oradea	27,000	Odessa (22 October 1941)	25,000
Târgu Mureș	7,380		
Regin	4,000		
Sfântu Gheorghe	850		
Sighetul	12,000		
Marmației			
Vișeu de Jos	12,079		

Source: *Final Report* (International Commission 2004)

In Northern Transylvania, Hungarian authorities were pressed by the Nazi regime to implement the Final Solution. To this effect, on 3 May 1944, the ghettoization of the 160,000 Jews living on the territory commenced. The largest ghettos in Northern Transylvania, those from Oradea and Cluj, concentrated 27,000 and 18,000 Jews respectively. The deportation began on 16 May 1944, with a schedule of four trains per day, each of them carrying around 3,000 Jews to the Nazi extermination camps. In less than a

month, 131,639 Transylvania Jews were deported in 45 trains, which highlights the deadly efficiency of this railway logistics of genocide (International Commission 2004, pp. 279–280).

As sites of traumatic memory, these places are also loci of intense remembrance practices. It is thus not accidental that we found a correspondence between the geographical location of these *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989) and increased commemorative activity regarding the Holocaust Memorial Day in schools located near these places.

The Institutional Factor

Another factor that may have contributed to shaping the particular geographical pattern of Holocaust remembrance in Romanian schools is the presence of an institutional infrastructure consisting of academic institutions of memory. The most important of these is certainly the Elie Wiesel National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania (INSHR-EW), located in Bucharest. The INSHR-EW was established in 2005 as a public research institute working under the coordination of the Prime Minister (Government Decision no. 902 2005). Also in Bucharest, there is the Wilhelm Filderman Centre for the Study of Jewish History in Romania (CSIER), founded in 1977 as a research department within The Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania. The Northern Transylvania Holocaust Memorial Museum (MMHTN) was opened in 2005, in Șimleu Silvaniei (Sălaj County). Housed in the old synagogue, the MMHTN is operated by the Jewish Architectural Heritage Foundation of New York in partnership with the Hebraica Memorial Association Nușfalău.

In addition to these basic pillars underpinning the Romanian institutional mnemonic infrastructure regarding the Holocaust, there are also a number of centres and institutes for Jewish studies functioning within universities. Within the Faculty of History and Philosophy at the Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, the Dr. Moshe Carmilly Institute for Hebrew and Jewish History was established in 1991 (Pop 2008). At the University of Bucharest, The Goldstein Goren Centre for Israel Studies was founded in 2012, while the Alexander Șafran Centre for Jewish History and Hebrew Studies within the University of Iași is functioning since 1999. From 2004, a similar structure also exists within the Vasile Goldiș University of Arad, under the heading of The Nicolae Cajal Centre for Judaic Studies.

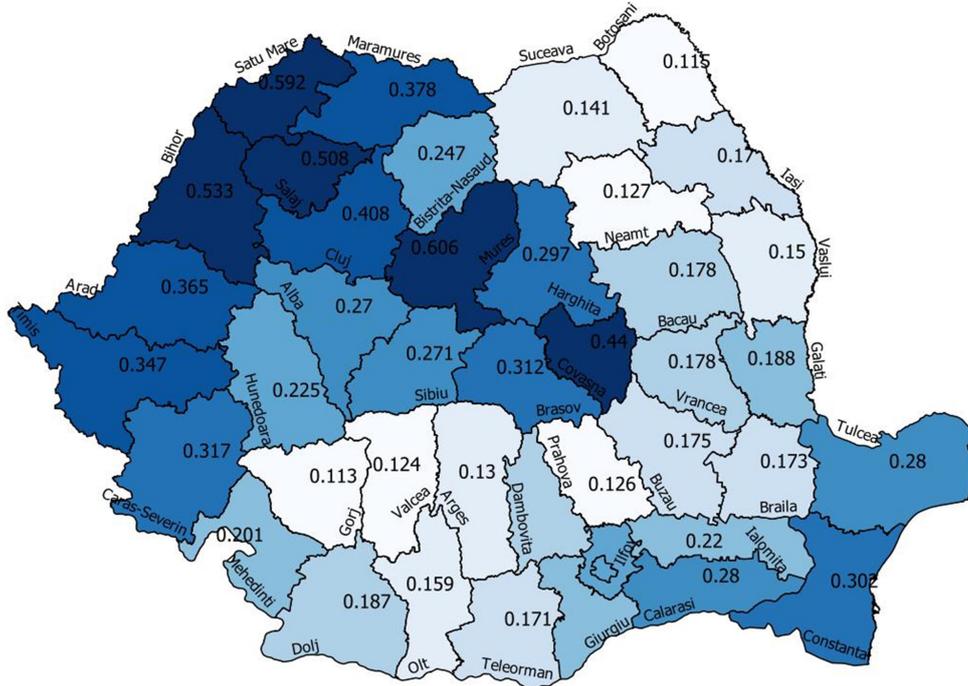
The Multi-cultural Factor

Finally, we argue that ethnic diversity is also a factor that underpins the regional patterns of Holocaust commemoration observed within Romania’s schooling system. This may be the case because a local community characterised by centuries of multi-culturalism, ethnic and religious pluralism, and linguistic diversity may be more empathic toward the suffering of the ‘other’ (the Jews) in comparison to monochromatic and ethnically homogeneous communities. To assess this hypothesis, we employed Alberto Alesina et al.’s (2003) index of ethnic fractionalisation as a measure of how diverse a local community is in ethnic terms. Using the data from the Population Census of 2011, we have calculated the ethnic fractionalisation scores for each of Romania’s 41 counties, plus the capital city, Bucharest, based on the formula

$$FRAC_{jt} = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^N s_{ij}^2,$$

where s_{ij} is the share of group i ($i = 1 \dots N$) in the county j (Alesina et al. 2003, p. 4). The results are presented in Figure 4 below.

Fig. 4: Romanian counties in terms of the ethnic fractionalisation index



Source: Author’s calculations based on the 2011 Population Census

Figure 4 indicates a clear-cut geographical pattern that is consistent with the state-building process of Romania's modern political formation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Counties located in the old Romanian kingdom (1866), which emerged from the unification of the Romanian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859, are characterised by the lowest ethnic fractionalisation index scores. In these regions, Romanians constitute an overwhelming ethnic majority in the population structure. A different story is told by historical regions such as Dobruja, Banat, and Transylvania, which were incorporated later into the Romanian nation-state. Dobruja, located in the south-eastern part of the country near the Black Sea, became a Romanian region in 1878, following the War of Independence won against the Ottoman Empire (1877–1878) (Rusu 2019b, p. 93). At that time, the region was described as “an Orient in miniature” consisting of “an extraordinary mosaic of races” (Iordachi 2002, p. 1).

The history of Transylvania is intimately linked with Hungary and the Habsburg Empire (Judson 2016). Transylvania became part of Greater Romania in the aftermath of the First World War, when the Treaty of Trianon (1920) established the borders between Hungary and its neighbouring states. When it was incorporated into the Romanian state, Transylvania brought not only a massive territorial gain but also a substantial proportion of ethnic minorities, mostly Hungarians and Jews (Livezeanu 1995). These post-war territorial and ethnic reconfigurations transformed the relatively homogenous Old Kingdom into a rather heterogeneous Greater Romania fraught with ethnic strain, which led to the radicalisation of a fascist political movement fuelled by anti-Semitic resentments (Rusu 2016).

The Pearson Correlation coefficient ($r = 0.332$, $p < 0.05$) between the index of ethnic fractionalisation calculated for each county and the percentage of the county's schools that have observed the Holocaust Memorial Day on 9 October 2015 indicates a positive, statistically significant association. This result brings empirical support for the general hypothesis that local communities characterised by ethnic diversity are more sensitive toward the suffering of their neighbours and, specifically, that schools located in these ethnically diverse communities are more inclined to observe the Holocaust Memorial Day by engaging in commemorative activities.

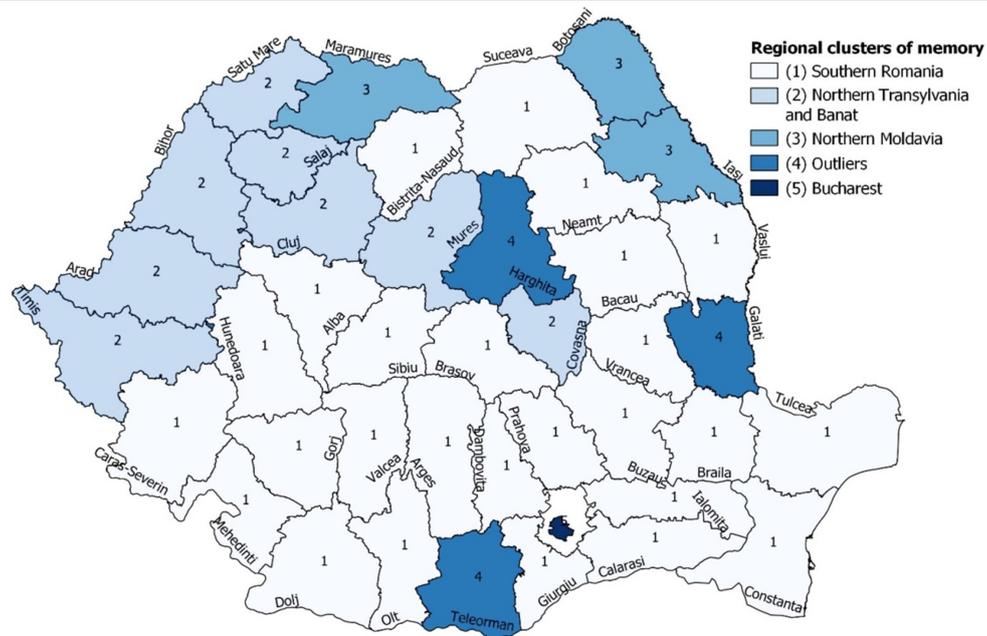
Regional Clusters of Memory

However, it should be clearly stated that none of these factors, taken alone, can explain the regional variations observed in the commemorative

activities organised in schools across Romania's educational network. It is only when they are brought together and articulated into a comprehensive interpretive model that these factors can account for the spatial patterning of Holocaust-related commemorative practices in Romanian schools.

To better grasp the regional variation of Holocaust commemoration in schools, we performed a cluster analysis based on all these five factors examined in the earlier section of this paper. Cluster analysis consists of a statistical method of classification that identifies underlying structures in the data and groups, together with observations based on a set of resemblances. Using the SPSS Statistics software package, we ran a cluster analysis (centroid method) which returned the grouping structure detailed in Figure 5 below.

Fig. 5: Regional clusters of memory



Source: Author's calculation based on the cluster analysis

The cluster analysis indicated a five grouping solution, with a) a first regional cluster of memory stretching across Southern Romania (Dobruja and Wallachia, but including some counties from southern Transylvania, such as Braşov, Sibiu, Alba, and Hunedoara) and several counties from Moldavia characterised by the lowest proportion of schools engaged in Holocaust commemoration; b) a second regional cluster consisting of counties from northern Transylvania and Banat, where we recorded the highest percentages of Holocaust-related commemorative activities in

schools; c) a third regional cluster visible in Northern Moldavia (Iași and Botoșani counties). In addition to these organic clusters of memory, the analysis also revealed another heterogeneous group, consisting of d) outlier counties such as Teleorman in Wallachia and Harghita in the Transylvanian Szeklerland, which defy regional boundaries and do not fit easily within the interpretive framework worked out for making sense of the territorial variation of commemorative activities. Lastly, e) as the capital city, Bucharest constitutes a group in its own right, a *sui generis* case that is dissimilar to all the other counties.

'Othering' the Holocaust

The territorial distribution of memorial practices in Romanian schools observable in the figures presented thus far reveals another facet of Holocaust commemoration. Based on these statistical findings, coupled with the content of the commemorative activities, the hypothesis of a 'double externalisation' of state responsibility could be put forth. This dual externalisation consists of a double deflection that underpins the memory practices enacted in schools. First, we observed a tendency of commemorating predominantly the Hungarian Holocaust carried out in Northern Transylvania (especially in this particular region), which overshadows the Holocaust committed by the Romanian authorities. Secondly, although 9 October was instituted as the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust and was specifically designed to focus the attention on the Holocaust in Romania, while 27 January is the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, many of the commemorative activities were nevertheless concentrated on the Nazi Holocaust.

Table 4. Regional patterns of Holocaust commemoration

Region (1940)	Total N of schools	Schools which have observed the Holocaust		
		N	Mean	%
Northern Transylvania	906	278	35.56	21.5
Rest of Romania	4,869	656	20.18	11.2
Total	5,775	934	23.48	16.7

Source: Author's calculation based on official data

Table 4 shows that the schools from the nine counties that roughly correspond to the region of Northern Transylvania that was ceded to

Hungary in 1940 were significantly more engaged in commemorating the Holocaust in comparison to the rest of the country (21.5% vs. 11.2%). Moreover, a *t*-test for independent samples showed that the mean number of schools that have observed the Holocaust Memorial Day on 9 October 2015 differ in a statistically significant way between the area of Northern Transylvania and the rest of Romania ($M = 35.56$ for the nine counties from Northern Transylvania in comparison to $M = 20.10$ for the other 33 counties; $t(40) = 2.381, p < 0.05$). We argue that this regional discrepancy is not accidental. Instead, we contend that the main reason explaining this commemorative differential has to do with the fact that it is morally, emotionally, and politically easier to commemorate the Holocaust perpetrated by another state (i.e., Hungarian authorities under the rule of Miklós Horthy) than to engage in the difficult labour of working-through one's own state's organisation of such a human tragedy.

This statistical insight is endorsed by a qualitative foray into the contents of the Holocaust-related commemorative activities undertaken in Romanian schools. As a methodological caveat, it should be emphasised that the reports we obtained from the School Inspectorates were far from standardised. They varied wildly in terms of structure and detail, with some including very rich information regarding what kind of commemorative activities were organised and who exactly participated in them, and others providing only a list of school units that had commemorated the Holocaust on 9 October 2015. However, after examining even this limited material, it became abundantly clear that many of the school commemorations were centred on topics such as the Nazi extermination camps, with a particular accent on Auschwitz, the Holocaust literature and art where Anne Frank's diary occupies a special place, and historical movies such as *Schindler's List* (1993), *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2008), and *La vita è bella* (1997). Commemorative activities regarding the Romanian Holocaust per se are made in between references to the Nazi Holocaust, which was often the main focus of these school commemorations.

Reflective Conclusions

Fifteen years after the demise of state socialism – and six decades after the end of the Second World War – the Romanian state embarked on a politics of regret by acknowledging its responsibility for the Holocaust in Romania (International Commission 2004) and condemning the communist regime (Tismăneanu et al 2004). However, whereas the condemnation of communism as “illegitimate and criminal” has sparked criticism from a wide spectrum of social actors and academics, the official acknowledgment

of the Holocaust in Romania is partially undermined by the Romanian state's inconsistent behaviour.

Our empirical analysis of commemorative practices performed in the educational network on the Holocaust Memorial Day observed on 9 October 2015 has revealed important regional variation, which is explained, among other historical and demographic factors, by what we have pointed out as consisting of a propensity toward 'othering' the Holocaust. This is characterised by a predilection to commemorate the Holocaust perpetrated by others, as opposed to one's own state authorities (that is, the Holocaust organised in Northern Transylvania by the Hungarian state, as opposed to the genocide committed by the Romanian authorities).

In addition, the Romanian institutional nomenclature – including the educational namescape – is far from purged of names celebrating anti-Semitic intellectuals and statesmen. In 2002, the Romanian Government adopted an Emergency Ordinance which banned fascist organisations and symbols, together with the cult of personalities found guilty of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity (Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002). After its adoption, the street names honouring Marshall Ion Antonescu were removed from the urban nomenclature (although not all municipalities complied with the ruling; see INSHR-EW's request of renaming a street in Râmnicu Sărat – *Adevărul* 2019). However, many other exponents of anti-Semitism which were not condemned for the crimes stipulated by the law remain inscribed in the urban streetscape and the educational namescape. Such is the case with schools named after Octavian Goga (nationalist poet and Prime Minister during 1937-1938, who initiated the deprivation of citizenship from Jewish Romanians) in Sibiu and Miercurea Ciuc, and Vasile Conta (a nineteenth-century philosopher and politician considered to be the founding father of Romania's anti-Semitic tradition) (Rusu 2019b). It is a bitter twist of irony that the National Day of Commemorating the Holocaust could have been observed in these schools honouring through their names notoriously anti-Semitic public personalities.

Scholars who have grappled critically with the politics of regret have argued that official state apologies (including establishing truth-commissions, such as the ones headed by Elie Wiesel and Vladimir Tismăneanu in Romania) are enacted for both *demonstrative purposes* and their *transformative consequences*. In the case of Romania's politics of regret regarding the Holocaust, the demonstrative purposes consisted in showcasing the Romanian state's philo-Semitic credentials against the scrutinising gaze of the international community in the country's bid of joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (2004) and the European Union (2007). Similarly, the Holocaust-related commemorative

activities that were organised on 9 October 2015 across Romania's schooling system were driven by the perspective of Romania's presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2016-2017. These geopolitical contexts highlight the pragmatic and instrumental nature of the Romanian state's politics of regret regarding the Holocaust, which was motivated by a state-level impression management in international diplomacy (the concept of 'impression management' is taken from the sociological perspective of social dramaturgy; see Goffman 1959).

In addition to their demonstrative purposes, what should really matter in this state-enacted politics of regret are the transformative consequences it sets in motion. How did the International Commission's *Final Report* influence anti-Semitic attitudes in Romania and what did the Romanian state do to further promote this end? In December 2004, Elie Wiesel returned the Order of the Star of Romania he had received two years earlier, after the same president who conferred it to him and commissioned the *Final Report* – Ion Iliescu – decorated with the same order a politician and a historian – Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Gheorghe Buzatu – notorious for their anti-Semitism and for negating the Holocaust (Hotnews 2004).

Moreover, a recent survey conducted on a representative sample of the Romanian population has shown that only 68 percent of the respondents have heard about the Holocaust (INSHR-EW 2017). Of these, most of them associate the Holocaust with the extermination of the Jews in the Nazi camps and gas chambers. Only 33 percent of Romanians know that the Holocaust took place in Romania, while Marshal Ion Antonescu continues to be perceived as a great patriot. Combined with the school-enacted commemorative patterns we have charted in this study, what these survey and state actions show is the deep structural ambivalence of the Romanian state's engagement with regretting the horrors of history and of its commitment to coming to terms with its burdensome past.

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Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS–UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-PD-2016-0466, within PNCDI III.

Third part
**THE BURDEN OF THE PAST: ETHICAL ISSUES,
SYMBOLIC REPARATION AND SHARED
MEMORIES**

Chapter 9

Holocaust Remembrance as Reparation for the Past: A Relational Egalitarian Approach

Adelin-Costin DUMITRU¹

In the present chapter I try to determine to what extent the public policies adopted by Romanian governments following the fall of the communist regime contributed to alleviating the most egregious past injustice, the Holocaust. The measures taken for memorialising the Holocaust will be analysed through the lens of a mixed reparatory justice – relational egalitarian account. Employing such a framework entails a focus on symbolic reparations, meant to promote civic trust, social solidarity, and encourage the restoration of social and cultural capital in societies affected by historical injustices. Such symbolic reparations can include public atonement, changing street names, establishing memorials, funding museums, including Holocaust study in the national curriculum, setting national days for the commemoration of the Holocaust, etc. The need for symbolic reparation has become increasingly clearer in the literature on Holocaust memorialisation, and the present paper intends to go a step further, by providing researchers with a theoretical approach that can be used to make better sense of the effects of measures taken as part of the process of Holocaust remembrance. In the chapter I also address the issue of determining who the duty-bearers should be. I argue that there could be several indicators for reparatory justice, including in this case compensation programs and the establishment of institutions that would allow dialogue between descendants of the victims and descendants of the perpetrators, a “sine qua non” condition for restoring social trust in communities marked by violations of human rights, especially of such a scale as the Holocaust.

Keywords: Duty-bearers; memorialisation; relational egalitarianism; reparatory justice; symbolic reparations.

Introduction

The history of the world is marked by instances of egregious injustices. Living in democratic societies, we often forget the horrors of the past, and we often ignore their consequences in present day’s inequalities

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between individuals. How can we prevent the recurrence of past atrocities? How can we ensure that victims will not be forgotten, that their suffering will not be neglected, that their descendants will be able to lead flourishing lives (no matter what interpretation of the concept of a flourishing life we embrace)? What reparations should accrue to victims or their descendants, and who should bear the burden of those reparations? These represent just some of the questions addressed by what has become known as reparatory justice, a branch of distributive justice concerned with alleviating past wrongs. Different conceptions of reparatory justice have been applied to study the investigation of the crimes committed during the Jeju Uprising in Korea (Yamamoto, Lee and Lee 2012), the privatization of the nationalized houses in Romania following the collapse of the communist regime (Socaciu 2014), the reintegration of Czech political prisoners in the post-communist society (David and Choi 2006), the redress process for the Japanese Americans interned following the Pearl Harbor attack (Yamamoto 2012), the measures that ought to be taken in regard to the African-American population in view of the centuries of slavery to which their ancestors have been subjected (Walker 2006), and so on.

In the present paper I endorse an account of reparatory justice inspired by relational egalitarianism, which I then employ to frame Holocaust Remembrance as a series of actions meant to provide reparations for perhaps the most horrendous historical injustice. A secondary objective is to determine to what extent the public policies adopted by the Romanian authorities following the fall of the communist regime contributed to repairing the past. Although the conclusions will be that much more is needed in order for this to occur, I will also emphasise the developments that have been made in comparison to the meagre memorialisation efforts made during the communist regime. Lastly, I explore the matter of who should the duty-bearers be in such cases. My argument will be that, although all of society is responsible for bringing about the aims of reparatory justice, it is through institutional channels that this duty should be discharged. There are both prudential and justice-related reasons for emphasising the role that should be played by institutions in the process of symbolically repairing the past, both of which will be explored towards the end of the chapter.

The main research question (**RQ1**) thus concerns the extent to which the public policies adopted by Romanian authorities contributed to alleviating the Holocaust, seen as an instance of historical injustice. The chapter is structured following a series of secondary research questions. Responding to these will allow me to provide a proper answer to **RQ1**. In the first section, I present what reparatory justice is and I emphasise the

reasons for focusing on symbolic reparations, as opposed to other kinds of reparations (although I will also delve into these other types of reparations throughout the paper). In the second section I present relational egalitarianism, choosing Elizabeth Anderson's (1999) democratic equality as the prominent representative among other relational egalitarian theories, and I argue for an account of reparatory justice inspired by this approach. The third section presents the measures taken in Romania for memorialising the Holocaust before and after the fall of the communist regime, and analyses these from the standpoint of the theoretical framework mentioned above. Although I will focus mostly on the Jewish Holocaust, the Roma Holocaust will be featured more prominently in Section 4, in which I present the concept of enduring injustice (Spinner-Halev 2007). The main reason why I discuss the two categories of victims of the Holocaust separately is because they present distinct challenges for the process of reparatory justice. Section 5 is dedicated to the question of who should be the duty-bearers in the process of rectifying the past. The 6th and final section is dedicated to providing an answer to **RQ1**. The present chapter offers a normative approach to Holocaust Remembrance, as I am concerned with evaluating from the standpoint of justice the public policies adopted in regard to Holocaust memorialisation. Thus, it could be argued that the chapter represents an exercise in the normative analysis of public policies, in which one tests the desirability of certain public policies and puts forth recommendations concerning how future policies could be issued so that they can better fulfil the aims of a normative proposal. The normative proposal, in this case, is the dual reparatory justice – relational egalitarian account, first defended in Dumitru (2019) and further refined in the present chapter.

What is reparatory justice?

Reparatory justice is the name given to that branch of distributive justice that studies the specific ways in which societies try to make amends for past wrongs. The assumption that lies behind reparatory justice is that these reparations should act as a liaison between the harmful historical acts and a future that should at least partially make up for those acts. The specific reasons for which we need these reparations differ, however. In backward-looking versions of historical injustice (Morris 1984, pp. 178-9), the focus is on benefits accruing to persons by virtue of the fact that they were victims of past injustices (Brooks 2008). We could say that this constitutes a retrospective justification for the measures taken (Farber 2006). In forward-looking versions, one is concerned with the contribution that

reparations bring to the quality of life of their beneficiaries (De Greiff 2006, p. 467). Under this conceptualization, the aim of reparations becomes not “getting even” but something more akin to “getting equal” (David and Choi 2009). The second approach seems to be more widely accepted in the literature on reparatory justice, and thus I also opt for it.

There are many forms that reparatory measures can take. Following Socaciu’s taxonomy (2014), we can have symbolic or rectificatory reparations. The latter can further be divided into non-restitutive measures (such as lustration or positive discrimination) and restitutive measures (either compensatory, which are based on monetary transfers, or in kind). Symbolic reparations refer to public acts of atonement, changing of street names, organising national commemorative days, establishing publicly funded museums, organising commissions that analyse past injustices, setting up meetings between former victims and former perpetrators, etc. According to De Greiff (2006, p. 452), such symbolic gestures are meant to promote civic trust, social solidarity, and even encourage the restoration of social and cultural capital in societies marked by past injustices. In my previous account of reparatory justice (Dumitru 2019), symbolic reparations stand as the crux of reparatory justice programs. Such actions are seen as “required for recreating social capital, reinforcing the bonds between people, and re-instilling a sense of belonging to the same political community” (Dumitru 2019, p. 74). As it will become clearer in the subsequent sections, this focus on symbolic reparations is a consequence of embracing a relational egalitarian approach to justice. For the time being, it suffices to say that symbolic reparations represent an important component of any reparations scheme. The justification for this is that symbolic actions are perceived as “mechanisms restoring the dignity of victims and survivors” and as instruments for “facilitating the process of remembering and commemorating the pain of the past” (Minty 2006, p. 423).

Nonetheless, compensatory programs can also be interpreted in a symbolic reparations key. According to Woolford and Wolejszo (2006, p. 873), “material compensation is often intertwined with symbolic reparations. Material compensation may be distributed to acknowledge their collective suffering and hardship”. Thus, to the extent that I will talk about other forms of compensation, I will consider them as extensions of symbolic measures. Another reason for focusing on symbolic reparations is that other forms of compensation have been poorly implemented in Romania. As it will be shown in later sections, there is only one normative act (Law no. 189/2000 last amended in 2017) that obliges the Romanian state to pay compensations to Holocaust survivors.

A distinction that is probably important to mention, especially considering the fact that I will focus on the Romanian context, is the one between reparatory justice and transitional justice. According to the definition advanced by the International Center for Transitional Justice², transitional justice “refers to the ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large-scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so serious that the normal justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response”. Similarly to reparatory justice, it “is rooted in accountability and redress for victims, the recognition of the dignity of individuals, the acknowledgment of rights violations and the aim to prevent them from happening again”. The set of measures mentioned are criminal prosecutions, truth-seeking processes, reparations for human rights violations, and the reform of laws and institutions. Transitional justice encompasses all the processes that “take place after the transition from one political regime to another” (Elster 2004). Although transitions from one regime to another had existed throughout most of history (Elster traces back such processes to Ancient Greece), it is in the second half of the twentieth century that transitional justice became a common endeavour. It was accompanied by efforts of “democratic activists and their allies to find new ways to address the past”, pursuant to the realization that “the process of assuming the dictatorial past represents the key to building a stable, legitimate democracy” (Stan 2009, p. 2). We can thus see transitional justice as a more general approach, of which reparatory justice is a necessary part. It is for this reason that Teitel (2000), in one of the flagship books in the field, mentions in his efforts to build a theory of transitional justice that reparatory justice coexists alongside constitutional, administrative, and criminal justice. Furthermore, reparatory justice, at least in the literature to which I refer in this chapter, is more concerned with analytical political philosophy and justice than with democratization and state-building.

It is in this key that I intend to read the efforts of Holocaust Remembrance. The need for symbolic reparations, for instance, has become increasingly clearer in the literature on Holocaust memorialisation. Colwell-Chanthaphonh (2007, p. 25) mentions how remembering the past is “fundamental to reconciliation”, and that “before communities and individuals can resolve conflict, they must first confront what has come to pass”. As such, bringing to light the horrors of the past becomes instrumental in “achieving atonement and moving society forward”. Yael Danieli (2006) mentions in her account of some essential elements for the healing of survivors of massive traumas several factors that should sound

² <https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice>, accessed on November 15th, 2019.

familiar by now. Among these, Danieli (2006, p. 343) emphasises “the reestablishment of the victim’s equality of value, power, esteem” or “repairing the nation’s ability to provide and maintain equal value under law”; such objectives can be achieved by “compensation, commemoration, apology, creating national mechanisms for monitoring, education, securing public records”. Collective memory plays a vital part in “leaving a legacy so that the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and other gross human rights violations will not be forgotten” (Danieli 2006, p. 352). Cunneen (2006, p. 363) also mentions acknowledgement and public apology as representing the backbone of a process of reparations for the past.

Why should we offer reparations? Walker mentions that “what is given to or done for the victim of wrong, however appropriate in light of the harm caused by the wrong, is not in itself what constitutes reparations, for it must be given or done by those responsible for wrong or its repair, and given in a certain spirit and with a certain intent” (2013, p.206). What relational egalitarianism does is to give us reasons for undertaking the efforts of reparatory justice. It provides us with the forward-looking justification for reparation schemes. In the next section I explore what relational egalitarianism entails and why its connection with reparatory justice seems to be a legitimate one.

A relational egalitarian account of reparatory justice

According to the relational ideal of justice, “a situation is just only if social relations have certain specific, desirable features” (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, p. 5). This ideal of justice has become widespread in political philosophy after Elizabeth Anderson introduced it in a 1999 article, which criticized purely distributive views on the ground of missing the point of what we should care about when it comes to the well-being of persons. According to Anderson (2004), equality should be conceived as a status relation among people, marked by the absence of oppressive relations, and ensuring that individuals can interact as equals in society. Injustice is traceable to instances of injury to somebody’s interests, freedom, dignity, equal standing, and security against harm (Anderson 2010, pp. 16-8). The idea behind Anderson’s proposal is that all people are moral agents, endowed with the power to develop and exercise moral responsibility, to cooperate with others according to some principles of justice, to shape and fulfil a conception of their good (Anderson 1999, p. 312). Distributions are still needed in Anderson’s ideal society, but they ought not to be fetishized, but done for the purpose of guaranteeing access to levels of functioning sufficient to stand as an equal in society (Anderson 1999, pp. 317-8).

Anderson's particular version of relational egalitarianism has become known as democratic equality, given that it focuses on how social relations should be in order for everyone to function as an equal in a democratic society.

It is not enough that citizens treat each other as equal – the state must also take measures showing that it treats each citizen equally: “Anderson assumes that in a community in which people stand in relations of equality to others, the state acts from principles that express equal respect and concern for all citizens, and to the extent that it does not, the ideal of democratic equality is unsatisfied” (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, p. 36). Any form of social relationship “in which some people dominate, exploit, marginalize, demean and inflict violence upon others” (Anderson 1999, p. 313) should be excluded were a government committed to bringing about relational egalitarianism. To this is added what Lippert-Rasmussen interprets as a time-relative sufficiency requirement, that “no one should be excluded from or segregated within the institutions of civil society, or subjected to discrimination on the basis of ascribed social identities by institutions of civil society” (Anderson 1999, p. 317, apud Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, p. 38). Other relational egalitarians, such as Scheffler (2015), insist on deliberation as a means through which individuals show that they treat each other's interests as “equally constraining in relation to resolving practical matters” (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, p. 64). Lippert-Rasmussen (2018, p. 118) also draws the conclusion that one important political implication of the relational ideal is that “in relating as equals it is important that a truly egalitarian society is an integrated one”, in which “its citizens are often confronted with the perspectives of others”. This will be especially important in societies marked by past injustices, in which there is a need for dialogue between perpetrators and victims, or between the descendants of both categories. In such societies another feature of relational egalitarianism that should not be underplayed is its expressive function, the fact that we can treat others with equal concern and respect only if we take measures and act on the basis of principles that themselves express equal concern and respect (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, p. 79).

Why do we need relational egalitarianism if we are concerned with repairing past wrongs? Lofstrom (2011) presents the case of a monument erected in Helsinki to honour the memory of eight Jewish refugees deported to the Nazi-controlled Tallinn in 1942 by the Finnish authorities. Lofstrom (2011, p. 94) draws attention to the fact that a former Prime Minister of Finland, Paavo Lipponen, mentioned in his intervention that “...on behalf of the Finnish Government and all the Finnish people I apologize for it to the Jewish community... the new generation must be told about the Holocaust

always when also the glorious history of the Fatherland is spoken of'. Lofstrom (2011, p. 98) considers that Lipponen's discourse represents an instance of an exclusionary practice of cultural citizenship, as it amounts to saying that "if you wish to be part of the community of the Finnish people, you should feel morally obliged to partake in the apology, and if you cannot share this sentiment, you cannot be regarded as a member of this moral and cultural community". The conclusion that I draw is somewhat more optimistic, and focuses on what Lofstrom (2011, p. 95) calls "the potential of historical apologies to generate symbolic inclusion and reconciliation within communities". Historical apologies, as part of the wider set of symbolic reparations, ought to be provided *for a certain reason*. They must serve a purpose, and, taking into consideration the argument from the previous section, also have a forward-looking aim. Relational egalitarianism offers such a forward-looking justification for symbolic measures. In Dumitru's (2019) account, measures such as public atonement, establishing memorials, publicly funding museums, etc., are meant to improve the status of the victims' descendants, to the end that each citizen attains equal standing in a certain society. Given that the aim of the present chapter is to assess whether the actions undertaken by Romanian authorities have indeed been appropriate and desirable from a normative point of view, the relational egalitarian framework seems to be suitable to deal with such a subject, given the importance it attributes to the equality of citizens. The empowerment of victims amounts to a *sine qua non* condition of repairing the past (David and Choice 2006), and relational egalitarianism provides us with the toolkit we need in order to assess the public policies adopted by Romanian officials. It is no wonder that relational egalitarians such as Schemmel (2012) insist on the purpose of establishing institutions that can carry out the aims of relational egalitarianism – discharging our duties towards others is fundamentally dependent on the existence of an appropriate institutional scheme in his account of relational egalitarianism. By insisting on expressive measures, an account of reparatory justice gaining normative traction from relational egalitarianism can account for the forward-looking function that should be reached by reparations, whether we consider that this is "increasing utility, deterring future wrongdoing or promoting distributive justice" (Posner and Vermeule 2003, p. 692).

An added benefit of embracing relational egalitarianism is perhaps more obvious when we refer to the literature on Holocaust Remembrance. Stone (2004, p. 509) discusses the struggle between those who "sought to incorporate the Holocaust into traditional forms of commemoration and those who have sought to find ways of commemoration that in themselves embody a fundamental uneasiness or mistrust of the possibility of Holocaust

commemoration”. The main advantage of my approach will be that whether an act is a traditional or a non-traditional form of commemoration does not matter in itself. What matters is the extent to which such acts contribute to attaining the goals of the normative proposal I endorse throughout the paper. Furthermore, this allows me to treat material forms of reparations (monetary compensation for instance) on par with symbolic reparations, as all would be equally important within the Andersonian framework. With the normative framework outlined above, in the following section I will turn my attention to the series of measures that have been adopted by communist and democratic authorities in Romania with regard to Holocaust memorialisation and analyse whether or not they fulfil the aims of reparatory justice as conceived in this paper.

Holocaust Remembrance in Romania before and after the 1989 Revolution

One distinction that should be made from the outset is the one between Holocaust Remembrance prior to and after 1989. While the (limited) actions of memorialising the Holocaust taken in Romania before 1989 had been made under a communist regime, the ones after 1989 have to be judged in a distinct way. Given the fact that Romania became a democratic country in the 1990s, there are other standards to which we should hold the authorities for their action or inaction in this regard. That is, although the lack of reparatory measures prior to 1989 should be considered problematic from a moral standpoint, the failure of the authorities to implement an appropriate reparations scheme after 1989 should weigh more heavily, given the existence of democratic institutions. Moreover, after 1989, a further variable was introduced in the already complex equation of Holocaust Remembrance: the fact that, during those transitional years, the victims of the communist regime also had to be remembered. This led to a peculiar and problematic stance of the Romanian authorities, in which many perpetrators of crimes against humanity came to be seen as victims of the communist regime. This dual identification of figures associated with the legionnaires (*i.e.* members of Romania’s interwar fascist movement) and Ion Antonescu led in some cases to *regress* concerning Holocaust memorialisation. Florian (2018) explains this by resorting to Todorov’s concept of competing traumas during the previous century: the Holocaust and the Gulag. Similarly, in post-communist Romania two competing agendas can be said to operate: one meant to promote the memory of the victims and another one focused on rehabilitating the perpetrators:

“This second agenda is supported by public expressions nurtured by the view that in Romania there were 2 totalitarian regimes, and the communist one was longer and had terrible consequences for the Romanians. The Holocaust is more or less acknowledged, but many position it in second place in the hierarchy of twentieth-century human tragedies. Meanwhile, Romanian fascists who were morally or juridically convicted after 1945 are publicly acclaimed by some social actors.” (Florian 2018, p. xxix)

Operating with such hierarchies of victims could be problematic, especially if one embraces a relational egalitarian account. This is one of the main reasons why the Romanian institutions will be found lacking when it comes to bringing sufficient reparations for the past.

Holocaust Remembrance during the communist regime

Florian (2018) mentions how until the fall of the communist regime “the only victims commemorated on public monuments were antifascists who, following the ideology of class struggle, were sometimes described as representatives of the working class” (p. xii). The communist authorities tried to conceal the Holocaust, to the extent that only one book concerning the suffering of the Romanian Jews was published in Romania until 1989, Matatias Carp’s *Black Book* (1946-1948). As early as during the trial of Marshal Ion Antonescu and his collaborators, it became obvious that the communist regime would perpetuate “a tendency to distort the nature of the crimes being prosecuted...Jews [being] eliminated from the role of main victims” (Final Report 2004, p. 337). The most influential history textbook of the time, Roller’s *History of Romania*, went even further, by “replacing Jews and Roma with communists and Romanians”, no reference being made to anti-Semitism as “a defining trait of Antonescu’s dictatorship” (Final Report 2004, p. 338). As time went by, Roller’s approach started being more criticized, but the subsequent approaches to historiography that followed shared Roller’s neglect of anti-Semitism.

The trials of the war criminals showcased the unwillingness of the communist regime to acknowledge the systematic efforts made by the Antonescu regime to exterminate Jews and Roma (the following presentation is largely based on the Final Report 2004, pp. 313-331). First of all, it should be mentioned that the laws condemning war criminals adopted until the communists came to power in March 1945 were very loosely formulated, so that “many war criminals evaded incarceration or escaped with negligible punishment” (p. 316). With the inauguration of the Groza Government in March 1945, the regulations had been hardened: “under the

[new] sanctioning, politicians in responsible offices, officers or soldiers of the armed forces, the gendarmerie, and public officials, as well as those who had spread the fascist and legionary ideas were included” (p. 318). During the most notorious trial, of Marshal Ion Antonescu, the Holocaust was scarcely referenced: only 23% of the indictment and the corpus of evidence referenced the Holocaust, to the effect that “the trials did not present a clear picture of what the public could find out about Transnistria after 1989” (p. 321). It is during that trial that one of the false myths concerning the Antonescu regime that was propagated after 1989 emerged. As the Final Report mentions, Ion Antonescu claimed that the deportations of the supposedly 170,000 Jews to Transnistria (although the real number was much higher) were carried out in order to “save the allegedly pro-communist Jews from the population’s wrath” (p. 321). To make matters worse, he claimed that this had been done in order to ensure their safety. In later trials, there was an obvious tendency to redirect the responsibility to the army, and to morally safeguard the gendarmerie. This was in line with the efforts of the communist authorities to downplay the anti-Semitic aspects of the Antonescu regime:

“The low priority of the fate of Jews is evident, and while most of the crimes were committed against Jews, they are addressed last, after the Soviets and communists, as if the Antonescu regime had the same policy toward the communists as they did toward the Jews. The trial against those accused of crimes against the population of Iași – in fact, the trial of the accused of the Iași pogrom of June 1941 – had the same characteristics. This situation was characteristic of the postwar trials, where the details left no doubt as to the identity and fate of the victims, but the political jargon of the era prevented open discussion about the victims, Jews, killed because they were Jews.” (Final Report 2004, p. 328)

This is not to say that the crimes committed against the Jews and the Roma had not been mentioned during the trials – only that the propaganda of the day precluded the crimes of the Antonescu regime from being framed as primarily oriented against ethnic groups:

“The communist analysis of the nature of fascism, the elements of class struggle and the constant references to the Soviet Union should not obscure the fact that at the time of the trials, when the whole picture was not clear and data was still missing, the various atrocities against the Jews – the killings and the deportations – were there to see.” (Final Report 2004, p. 330)

As the Final Report makes clear, later on, the rare occasions in which the Ceaușescu regime made any kind of reference to the Holocaust was when this served the interests of the regime. The following case is

illustrative of this aspect. Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen was allowed to commemorate the Iași pogrom starting with 1986. The only publication which was permitted to report about the commemorations was “Revista cultului mozaic” [The Journal of the Mosaic Cult], widely circulated abroad. Accordingly, “this managed to create outside Romania a cosmeticized image of how the Holocaust was being treated under Ceaușescu’s regime” (Final Report 2004, p. 346). Thus, even the little gestures made by the communist regime were conditioned by the effects they would have on those in power, and not on their effects as reparations for a past wrong. Not only was the communist regime marked by an absence of symbolic reparations (let alone other forms of reparations), but it set the stage for preparing a generation willing to negate the Holocaust or the role played by the Romanian authorities and citizens in the persecution of Jews. The Final Report mentions that the systematic efforts to hide the atrocities committed against the Jews, and the transformation of the crimes against humanity committed by the Antonescu regime into a form of class warfare had a pernicious effect exactly for this reason: “most post-communist Romanian negationism has roots in communist-era historiography of the Holocaust. The victimization and lionization of Romanians, their substitution of Jews in the posture of main victims of Nazism, the deflection of responsibility, the minimization of the real scope of atrocities, self-flattering exceptionalism, the rehabilitation of Antonescu as well as many other manifestations were to reproduce themselves in various forms in post-communist negationism” (Final Report 2004, p. 348).

In their analysis of history textbooks published during the communist regime, Bărbulescu et al. (2013, p. 46) find that “even when the authors mentioned the victims’ ethnic identity, Jews were in the background, the specific nature of their tragedy being minimized or completely distorted”. It is no wonder then that after the 1989 revolution, it took more than 25 years for Romanian citizens to accept that crimes against humanity had been committed against the Jews. During that time, “the Romanians have recovered the Jews as their fellow citizens and also acknowledged their status as victims of discriminatory legislation and deportation policies”, without accepting that the blame was not an external one, but an internal one (Bărbulescu 2015, p. 151). This is perhaps one of the greatest offenses of the communist regime concerning Holocaust memorialisation: that it stifled the very possibility of remembering the past. With a diminishing number of Jews, and an impoverished Roma population, the absence of memory spaces had become under the communist regime “the new normal”, and the absence of symbolic measures can be explained by the absence, in turn, of any reference to the Holocaust in the public

sphere (Geissbuhler 2016). Borrowing an argument made by Mitroiu (2016) regarding the remembrance of the victims of the communist regime in Romania, the institutionalisation of memory failed to commence until 1989. From the standpoint of relational egalitarianism, no steps in the right direction had been made under the communist regime. Furthermore, the reluctance of the authorities to condemn the legionnaires and Antonescu for their deeds against the Jews and the Roma set the ground for a resurgence of a nationalist, pro-Antonescu movement in the early 1990s. Seeking the truth regarding the traumatic experiences of the victims of the fascists in Romania has not been a priority for the communist regime, and neither would it be for many years for the newly established democratic authorities. As Cioflâncă (2004) mentions, also the post-communist negationism can partially be traced to the communist historiography of the Holocaust.

Holocaust Remembrance after 1989

In the 1990s, plain negationism had been mixed with what the Final Report (2004, p. 334) identifies as “deflective negationism”, whose proponents “admit the existence of the Holocaust, but channel the guilt for its perpetration in several possible directions”. Until 2004, the “key institutional memory characterised the Holocaust as something that was done to the Romanian people, rather than something in which many Romanians were actively or passively complicit” (Kelso and Eglitis 2014). The authors also highlight that Roma survivors and their descendants have been largely absent in the field of memory politics – a feature which is still valid today (although some steps have been taken in the right direction).

Shafir (1994) mentions how in 1991 the Romanian Parliament held a minute of silence in the memory of Marshal Antonescu. Together with numerous political declarations highlighting the merits of Antonescu, newspapers such as *România Liberă* [*Free Romania*] or *Ziua* [*The Day*] conducted editorial policies meant to rehabilitate the war criminals who had led Romania during World War II. In the early 2000s, under Western pressures, the Romanian Government issued Government Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002³, which officially condemned Holocaust denial, fascist propaganda, and the public cult of persons convicted for crimes against humanity (Climescu 2018, p. 73). In 2004, the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania concluded that the Romanian authorities had indeed been responsible for the persecution and execution of Jews and Roma. It became the first time in modern Romanian history when

³ <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/34759>, accessed on November 16th, 2019.

the blame was finally put on the real perpetrators of the Holocaust in Romania, and not externalized:

“The Commission concludes, together with the large majority of bona fide researchers in this field, that the Romanian authorities were the main perpetrators of this Holocaust, in both its planning and implementation. This encompasses the systematic deportation and extermination of nearly all the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina as well some Jews from other parts of Romania to Transnistria, the mass killings of Romanian and local Jews in Transnistria, the massive execution of Jews during the Iași Pogrom, the systematic degradation applied to Romanian Jews during the Antonescu administration. A portion of the Roma population was also subjected to deportation and death in Transnistria.” (Final Report 2004, p. 381).

The Commission also made a series of recommendations concerning Holocaust Education, the way in which the Holocaust should be commemorated, or reversing the rehabilitation of war criminals. Unfortunately, most of these recommendations have either been disregarded, half-heartedly implemented, or have not resulted in significant improvements for the victims or their descendants. In 2004, the Romanian government decided that October 9th would become the National Holocaust Commemoration Day. In 2005, the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was founded. In 2009, a memorial dedicated to victims of the Romanian Holocaust was built with the support of the Romanian state. However, the City Hall and several environmentalist groups in Bucharest (more precisely, legionnaire sympathizers posing as environmentalist groups) opposed the construction of the monument. To make matters worse, no Roma representatives were on the memorial selection committee and Roma were not initially included among the people represented in the winning design (Kelso and Eglitis 2014). Although an optional subject on the study of the Holocaust was introduced in the educational curriculum, many of the teachers remained poorly informed about the topic, or held legionnaire sympathies themselves. In 2018, responding to an interpellation⁴, former Minister of National Education Ecaterina Andronescu mentioned that only 1860 pupils had chosen the optional class regarding the Holocaust. In 2019, the President of Romania Klaus Iohannis promulgated the draft bill⁵ concerning the establishment of the National Museum of History of Jews and the Holocaust in Romania. In

⁴ <http://www.cdep.ro/interpel/2019/r7924A.pdf>, accessed on November 16th, 2019.

⁵ http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=18010, accessed on November 10th, 2019.

his official statement⁶ regarding the establishment of the Museum, President Iohannis mentioned that the mission of the museum was to “preserve and protect the memory of the victims”. He also referred to the forward-looking mission of the museum, in that “the museum should be an institution of the future, an ally in the fight against ignorance, a force of solidarity and civic patriotism against intolerance, discrimination and antisemitism”. He highlighted the fact that “the sacred mission of this institution will be to reaffirm the right of all humans to live in dignity”. The statement above portrays a function that is closely related to the relational egalitarian account of reparatory justice defended in this paper. Furthermore, a draft bill regarding the establishment of a Memorial Day of the Roma Holocaust – Samudaripen – is at the time of writing being debated in the Romanian Parliament⁷.

The Romanian state seems to lag behind others however when it comes to measures involving material compensation. For instance, in July 2019 the German authorities announced that they would provide monetary compensation amounting to subsidies worth \$225 per month to Israeli survivors of the Holocaust originating from Romania. The descendants of those Holocaust survivors born after 1910 and deceased prior to June 1st 2002 will also be eligible for these reparations⁸. Meanwhile, the former Prime Minister of Romania Viorica Dăncilă announced in March 2019 that the Romanian state would promote three important laws for the Jewish community, including granting Romanian citizenship to Jews who had left the country under the communist regime, pensions for survivors of the Holocaust, and facilitating access to state archives to the experts of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania⁹. Of these three announced draft bills, at the time of writing only one has entered the legislative process, the draft bill concerning easing the access of researchers to state archives¹⁰.

⁶ <https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/discursuri/alocutiunea-presedintelui-romaniei-domnul-klaus-iohannis-sustinuta-in-cadrul-ceremoniei-publice-de-promulgare-a-legii-privind-infiintarea-muzeului-national-de-istorie-a-evreilor-si-al-holocaustului-din-romania>, accessed on November 2nd, 2019.

⁷ http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=17703, accessed on November 2nd, 2019.

⁸ <http://www.ziare.com/international/israel/mii-de-evrei-romani-supravietuitori-ai-holocaustului-vor-primi-compensatii-din-partea-germaniei-1570447>, accessed on December 7th, 2019.

⁹ <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/dancila-cetatenie-romana-pentru-evreii-ce-au-parasit-tara-sub-comunism-si-pensii-pentru-supravietuitorii-holocaustului-1102958>, accessed on December 5th, 2019.

¹⁰ http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=17668, accessed on December 7th, 2019.

Although here is not the place to discuss in detail the evolution of the educational system in Romania with regard to Holocaust teaching, it is important to understand why Holocaust education is important for both relational egalitarianism and reparatory justice (and thus, implicitly, for an account that employs both approaches). Carrington and Short (1997) emphasise the fact that, if properly taught, Holocaust study can make an invaluable contribution to the development of skills and attitudes associated with maximalist notions of citizenship – such an instance of a maximalist notion can be even the relational egalitarian conception of what it means to be a citizen: to relate to others as an equal, without “paternalistic coercion, contemptuous pity, condescension, envy, demeaning and intrusive judgments of people’s capacities to exercise responsibility” (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, p. 36). Cowan and Maitles (2007) mention how Holocaust education helps pupils understand concepts such as justice, stereotyping and discrimination. What happens when the official stance is that the Holocaust in Romania should be seen in a “third-person style” (Waldman 2004), when it seems to be something that was done to Romanians, and not by Romanians? What happens when the historical truth is obscured, responsibility is avoided and blame is externalized? Can such a form of Holocaust education really achieve its goals? Denial and dismissal are the words that can best express how most of the Romanian historiography has treated the matter of the Holocaust (Clark 2012), and why Holocaust education failed to represent a genuine reparatory act is easily comprehended in this context. Learning about the Holocaust is about much more than simply learning about history: it has much to do with the development of those skills that can help bridge the gaps between descendants of perpetrators and descendants of victims. With the passage of time, it becomes increasingly more difficult to ascertain who are those descendants, and it is for this reason that more stringent measures are required as soon as possible.

Although the crimes against humanity committed against Jews and Roma by the Romanian authorities had been on par with those committed by Nazi authorities, Romania has implemented only one normative act concerning compensations for Holocaust survivors. To make matters worse, the adopted normative act was a Government Ordinance amending a previous act that only referred to compensations for the victims of the communist regime. Law no. 189/2000¹¹ amended Law-decree no. 118/1990 and included subsidies for those Romanian citizens who had been deported,

¹¹ <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gi3dknjx/legea-nr-189-2000-privind-aprobarea-ordonantei-guvernului-nr-105-1999-pentru-modificarea-si-completarea-decretului-nr-118-1990-privind-acordarea-unor-drepturi-persoanelor-persecutate-din-motive-politi>, accessed on December 7th, 2019.

imprisoned in concentration camps, survived the death trains, or were the spouses of persons assassinated or executed because of ethnically-motivated reasons (with the caveat that this did not apply to those who had remarried). Unfortunately, even this restrictive legislative piece has not been properly applied. Not only was the sum provided to Holocaust survivors meagre, but many Roma survivors have not been able to benefit from the law for various discriminatory reasons¹². For instance, state authorities requested from some survivors archive documents confirming the fact that those persons had indeed been deported, or invoked the reasons that some survivors could not *prove that they had returned from Transnistria!* Furthermore, the value of the subsidies has been consistently low in comparison to average prices in Romania. Relational egalitarians can only criticize such an approach to the matter of compensations. Not only would the Romanian public policies be considered a failure from the point of view of the compensations themselves, but from a symbolic reparations standpoint, they mistreat the victims and add further insult to injury. Reparations should not be conceived as an optional feature and they should not depend on the whim of bureaucrats for being offered. In 2017 the Law was amended through Law no. 126/2017¹³, which slightly increased the amount of money received by survivors. According to the Memorandum of Reasons, written by one of the initiators of the legislative proposal, Member of the Parliament Silviu Vexler, “the formal condemnation of the Holocaust in Romania must be transcended, and providing material reparations for the moral and physical prejudice committed against the victims represents a step in that directions”¹⁴.

There are three other main problems that can be identified from the standpoint of the mixed reparatory justice – relational egalitarian account put forth here: the fact that in Romania “forgetting [triumphed] over remembering in the construction of a national narrative” (Kelso and Eglitis 2014); the fact that Roma continue to play a marginal role in the discourse on the victims of the Holocaust in Romania; and the fact that not enough has been done to inoculate young people against false narratives of history, which largely ignore the responsibility for the Holocaust of the legionnaires and the Antonescu regime. The following sub-section treats this latter problem, by focusing on the case study of street names.

¹² <https://faraura.ro/index.php/portfolio-item/romii-vorbesc-despre-holocaust-doar-pentru-a-primi-despagubiri/>, accessed on December 7th, 2019.

¹³ http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck2015.proiect?idp=16264, accessed on December 8th, 2019.

¹⁴ <http://www.cdep.ro/proiecte/2017/100/70/5/em126.pdf>, accessed on December 8th, 2019.

From simple gestures to achieving equal standing: the case of street names

Street names can be true “vehicles of commemoration” (Azaryahu 1996), as they convey powerful messages to the citizens. They represent easily accessible means through which one can cherish the memory of victims, reaffirm it indefinitely, and make them known to the general population. Nonetheless, it is for this reason that street names can also become what we could call *vehicles of discrimination*, when, instead of honouring the memory of victims, they cherish the memory of war criminals; when instead of bringing solace to the descendants of the victims, they contribute to making them feel inadequate and unwelcome in a society. The crux of the problem is that Romanians are still reluctant to accept the blame for the Holocaust, in spite of the conclusions drawn by the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in 2004 and the activity of organisations such as the Elie Wiesel Institute.

In the literature on reparatory justice, changing street names is considered a form of symbolic reparation, which “assists in restoring dignity and public recognition to the victims” (Swart 2008, p. 106). Swart (2008, p.120) mentions how acts of persecution can become more easily entrenched in people’s memories if they are marked in the cityscape, commemorative street names “representing concrete manifestations of change and remembering”. Furthermore, they represent acts through which “they announce a nation’s new heroes and in so doing they reflect new power structures and officially sanction a particular version of history” (Swart 2008, pp. 120-1). In Romania, the cult of Antonescu and the more or less undisclosed sympathy for legionnaires or their supporters among the politicians sent the signal that Romania’s heroes were the very people who had engaged in acts of mass murder. When between 280,000 and 380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews were murdered by Romanian authorities and when 11,000 of the 25,000 Roma deported to Transnistria lost their lives (Final Report 2004, pp. 381-2), choosing to name streets after Marshal Ion Antonescu is a painful harbinger of the indifference of the Romanian post-communist authorities to the plight of an important category of citizens. Ion Antonescu is still an honorary citizen of the Târgoviște municipality¹⁵. Numerous street names have been named “Ion Antonescu”. They have been subsequently renamed only after the Elie Wiesel Institute made interpellations to county and local councils regarding this matter, such as in

¹⁵ https://www.stiripesurse.ro/institutul-elie-wiesel-retragerea-titlului-de-cetatean-de-onoare-maresalului-ion-antonescu_951013.html, accessed on October 10th, 2019.

Beiuș¹⁶. In other cases, such as those of the “Ion Antonescu” streets in Mărășești (Vrancea county), December 1st 1918 (Ilfov county), Predeal (Prahova county), or Constanța, the process of changing the street names is still not complete. More recently, the Urbanism Direction of the Buzău City Hall mentioned that changing a street name could happen only after consultation with the citizens living there¹⁷. This aspect is problematic considering the aforementioned lack of familiarity of the Romanian citizens with the crimes of the Antonescu regime. Furthermore, such symbolic gestures should not necessarily leave room for inaction.

Choosing a name street might not seem as powerful an act of symbolic reparation as establishing a museum or erecting a memorial. Nonetheless, the failure of the Romanian authorities to accomplish even this less costly form of reparations tells us a lot about how the public policies in Romania score according to a reparatory justice account. Matters are further complicated when historical injustice becomes enduring injustice. The case of the Roma represents an additional example of why equal standing – the *telos* of the relational egalitarian project – has not yet been achieved in Romania.

From historical to enduring injustice – Memorialisation of the Roma Holocaust

Sher (2005, p. 192) argues that an additional reason for reparations is the empirical observation that “unrectified wrongs of previous generations are systematically correlated with certain wrongs done within the current generation”. That is, the wrong ceases to be only the injustice committed in the past, but “the subsequent failure to rectify it”. Injustice becomes, in Spinner-Halev’s (2007) words, “enduring”. The concept of enduring injustice was put forward explicitly to show that the effects of past wrongs are sometimes noticeable in the present, and that we might not trace the poor social-material conditions in which some individuals live only back to their exercise of responsibility, but to past wrongs that had a negative effect on their life chances. Dumitru (2019) draws the conclusion that both Sher and Spinner-Halev prove that there are in fact two distinct types of blameworthy acts here: the wrongs of the past and the subsequent failures to rectify those

¹⁶ <https://www.gandul.info/stiri/strada-maresal-ion-antonescu-dispare-de-pe-harta-beiusului-si-se-transforma-in-strada-spitalului-17390110> , accessed on October 10th, 2019.

¹⁷ <https://www.news.ro/social/institutul-elie-wiesel-solicita-modificarea-denumirii-strazilor-intitulate-ion-antonescu-in-romania-legea-se-aplica-prin-referendum-1922400627452019091419126198>, accessed on October 10th, 2019.

wrongs. While the first kind of wrongs can only be redressed through symbolic reparations, the second require reparations that are more concrete.

In Romania, the situation of the Roma people represents an enduring injustice. Injustices against the Roma people had already been committed by the 1940s, but the deportations to Transnistria launched by the Antonescu regime added another layer of injustice. The numerous wrongs against the Roma also interfered with their capacity to publicly commemorate the Holocaust. As Kelso and Eglitis (2014) mention, “for communities characterized by economic deprivation, public commemoration may be an economic luxury that they forgo to focus on immediate needs” (p.506). Although the number of Roma victims in Romania had been smaller than the number of Jewish victims, it is also true that the Roma were the only other ethnic group singled out for extermination by the Nazi regime and their associates (Lutz 1995). The failure of the Romanian authorities to address this problem is closely intertwined with the failure of the Romanian authorities to implement policies that would help the Roma improve their socio-economic status and thus be able to take on their own measures that would transform the Roma Holocaust from an “invisible genocide” (Stewart 2011) to a visible one. In the previous section, I presented the problems associated with Holocaust education in Romania. It is small wonder that, when it comes to teaching the pupils about the Roma Holocaust, even less is known among history and civic education teachers in Romania. Kelso (2013, p. 67) writes that “Romanian historiography silences the Romani genocide, a silence that is perpetuated even by the majority of Romanian scholars of the Holocaust [...] the lack of references to Roma is part and parcel of institutionalized racism”.

The situation could improve in the future, at least when it comes to policies endorsed by the state. In the Romanian Parliament there is currently a draft bill concerning the establishment of a Memorial Day for the Roma Holocaust, which would be on August 2nd. The memorandum of reasons mentions that such a draft bill could “contribute to a better knowledge of the history of the Roma by the Romanian citizens and to the fight against anti-Roma attitudes”¹⁸. The quoted part is of utmost importance, as the neglect of the Roma Holocaust memorialisation, the discriminatory attitudes against the Roma, and the poor socio-economic conditions which still characterize the lives of many Roma are all interconnected and show a failure of the Romanian authorities to enact sufficient reparations for the Roma people. For a relational egalitarian preoccupied with matters of reparatory justice, the Romanian state fails when it comes to the three requirements associated

¹⁸ <http://www.cdep.ro/proiecte/2019/100/00/5/em124.pdf>, accessed on November 16th, 2019.

with attaining the objectives of democratic equality: the no disrespect requirement, the no-ranking requirement, and the time-relative sufficiency requirement (Lippert-Rasmussen 2018, pp. 36-9). The first requirement refers to the absence of demeaning and intrusive judgments concerning people's capacities to exercise responsibility. Many of the Roma are badly off not because of their decisions, but because we can talk about enduring injustice and about the failure of the Romanian institutions to properly integrate them in educational systems and in the job market. The second requirement mentioned by Lippert-Rasmussen posits that no social hierarchies should exist. The last one looks at the distributive part of a relational egalitarian project. As this does not represent the focus of the paper, I should only mention that it entails that all citizens achieve levels of functioning sufficient to stand as equals in society (Anderson 1999, pp. 317-8). Anderson considers that democratic equality ought to guarantee effective access to a package of capabilities, and that people ought to function as equals over the course of their entire lives. The purpose is that all have enough resources to avoid being oppressed by others (Anderson 1999, pp. 319-20). The Romanian authorities, however, poorly satisfy all three requirements. From this perspective, the measures that successive Romanian governments have taken failed to deal with the real problems affecting the Roma population, which in turn had a detrimental effect on the memorialisation of the Roma Holocaust.

Roma memorialisation poses distinct challenges especially because "the erection of memorials will not be helpful to the Roma unless the mechanisms of the Roma's exclusion and marginalization are addressed simultaneously" (van Baar 2011, p.12). As Kelso (2013) mentions, the negative perception of the Roma contributes to a great extent to excluding "the Roma as a victim category of the Holocaust". As mentioned in the previous section, Roma survivors of the Holocaust are further discriminated by the Romanian authorities when it comes to accessing their rights to monetary compensation from the Romanian state. Mixing the historical discrimination against the Roma, the refusal of the communist regime to acknowledge their status as a national minority, and the failure of the post-1989 public policies to respond adequately to the challenges faced by the Roma led to an unfortunate situation in which the efforts for memorialisation of the Roma victims of the Holocaust have been scarce in Romania to date.

Who should be the duty-bearers?

So far, I held accountable the Romanian authorities for their lack of achievements in the field of Holocaust Remembrance. Nonetheless, are they

the ones that should actually belong to the portfolio of reparatory justice? This section seeks to provide an answer to the question of who should be the duty-bearers: is it individuals, governments, civil society? This becomes an important question in the context of Holocaust Remembrance, as it is often unclear how the moral imperative of “never forget and never again, standard in the repertoire of Holocaust commemoration” (Popescu and Schult 2019) can actually be realized. Whose moral responsibility is it to realize this moral imperative? My argument is that it is through institutional means that we should instantiate the principles of reparatory justice and ensure that something like the Holocaust will never be possible again. Furthermore, this deserves a more proper explanation.

We have both prudential and principled reasons for favouring an institutional conception of reparatory justice, which asks that reparatory duties be discharged through institutional channels; at the opposite pole are interactional conceptions, which regulate the conduct of individuals (Pogge 1992, pp. 48-50). The prudential argument sounds as follows: people might be reluctant to stand out as descendants of aggressors. This is especially a plausible concern in the Romanian setting, given that survey results show a tendency to ignore the fact that the Romanian authorities were the ones who committed the Holocaust and that the Romanian citizens were complicit in their silence. Furthermore, phenomena such as collective action problems or shirking from one’s responsibility make an institutional route seem more accessible (Nussbaum 2005, p. 213, *apud* Dumitru 2019). Institutional measures are bound to be quicker to implement, easier to encourage compliance, and would have associated negative sanctions that would dissuade potential violations or punish the instances in which people would not comply with the stipulated measures. For instance, the changes brought in 2015 to the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002¹⁹ criminalize activities which promote the cult of organisations or persons guilty of crimes against humanity and genocide. The Law no. 217/2015 mentions that the Holocaust refers to the systematic persecution and annihilation of Roma and Jews and singles out the legionnaires as the political movement with a fascist character that is guilty of war crimes. It must be mentioned, however, that the text of the law is quite lenient when it comes to attributing responsibility for said war crimes. For instance, it mentions that the Romanian institutions “endorsed” the Holocaust, and not that they were the ones responsible for committing it (Article 4, paragraph E). Laying aside this shortcoming for the moment, it is worth mentioning that Articles 12 and 13 of the aforementioned legislation forbid commemorative gestures toward

¹⁹ <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/170057>, accessed on November 16th, 2019.

war criminals, including “*giving their names to streets, boulevards, parks, markets and other public places*”. There is a noticeable gap, however, between the text of the law and actual practice, as the previous paragraphs showed. Nonetheless, the inclusion of concrete sanctions for such actions (prison term from 6 months up to to 3 years or a fine) is bound to provide further reasons for would-be violators to comply with the legislation.

The principled reason is that the ends of relational egalitarianism are better fulfilled if we consider that the duty-bearers are the institutions. Only this way can we bring together descendants of victims and descendants of aggressors, and place them on positions of equal setting. This does not mean that individuals are not the ultimate bearers of moral duties, only that the most efficient and fair way of discharging those duties is through institutions.

This is why we need to set up channels for dialogue between descendants of victims and descendants of perpetrators. Such a measure has been blatantly missing from the set of measures adopted in Romania. An open dialogue would serve multiple purposes: it would allow descendants of perpetrators to come forward and acknowledge the role played by their ancestors in the crimes committed against Jews and Roma; it would show to the descendants of victims that they are not forgotten; it would encourage cooperation at a level that is not possible if the truth is obscured; it would help restore social capital in communities; ultimately, it would help instantiate reparatory justice. The National Museum of the History of Jews and the Holocaust can be an important institution in this regard. Accorded to the adopted form of the relevant bill²⁰, its purpose is to protect the memory of victims of the Holocaust and to promote the fight against antisemitism. The collection of documents and statements regarding the history of the Jews and of the Holocaust in Romania is listed among its attributions. There is no reason why this objective could not be accomplished by organising such dialogues between descendants of perpetrators and descendants of victims. Moreover, I believe the essence of such an institution should be to soothe the wounds created by historical injustice and to help bring about a society in which everyone stands on equal positions, in which citizens are aware of the crimes committed and willing to actively participate in the efforts to repair the past wrongs. One of the prerequisite conditions for such dialogues are, however, other institutional measures, such as securing public records indicating who had been the perpetrators of the Holocaust, and more rigorous enforcement of the legislation condemning the endorsement of legionnaires and their collaborators.

²⁰ <http://www.cdep.ro/proiecte/2019/300/50/6/se522.pdf> , accessed on November 16th, 2019.

Lastly, even if it were more difficult to acknowledge who belongs in the category of descendants of victims and who in the category of descendants of perpetrators, what we can do is acknowledge the fact that the collective guilt for the Holocaust requires publicly funded compensatory programs. Whether these take the form of symbolic reparations as in the case of museums or memorials, or affirmative action programs like encouraging Roma participation in higher education through reserved places, all such measures serve the purpose of redressing the past. Furthermore, following such an account it would appear advisable that the Romanian state should distribute even more money to Roma education, in order to show that it acknowledges its moral debt towards the descendants of the Roma victims of the Holocaust.

Conclusion

In the present chapter I put forth an account of reparatory justice in which symbolic gestures represented the main focus. This account was based on relational egalitarianism, which considers that all citizens should attain equal standing in a society and that this is a requirement for calling that society a just one. Using this account, I analysed the measures taken by the Romanian authorities regarding Holocaust Remembrance. The main research question of the paper asked to what extent the public policies adopted by Romanian authorities contributed to alleviating the most tragic historical injustice, the Holocaust. After investigating the measures taken during the communist regime and after the 1989 revolution that involved a transition to democracy, my conclusion is that not enough has been done in order to achieve the ends of the mixed relational egalitarian – reparatory justice framework.

The most significant obstacle seems to be the reluctance of the authorities to acknowledge the role played by Romanian institutions and citizens in perpetrating the Holocaust. All the shortcomings of Holocaust Remembrance in Romania that have been mentioned in the chapter stem from this propensity to obfuscate and downplay the responsibility of the Romanian state. As Niven (2007, p. 42) mentions, the “memorialization of the Holocaust presupposes a preparedness to acknowledge national complicity”. Implementing measures such as the organisation of dialogues between descendants of victims and perpetrators can, in this context, be difficult. In Germany, Dresler-Hawke (2005, p. 145) mentions how individuals were reluctant to perceive their grandparents as perpetrators, tending to “view their own grandparents as victims or opponents of the regime, and to absolve them from responsibility”. Nonetheless, a difficult

task is by no means an impossible one. A better educational system, a more coherent curriculum that includes mandatory classes on the Holocaust, a better system of trainings for preparing teachers for dealing with this subject, the condemnation in public of any anti-Semitic acts, gestures or comments on social media platforms are all steps that have to be taken prior to such ambitious forms of symbolic reparations. Although Romania is far from realizing the ideal of the dual reparatory justice – relational egalitarian account, steps have been taken in the right direction. While it is the duty of institutional actors to implement public policies regarding the remembrance of the Holocaust as reparation for the past, it is the duty of every individual and civil society organisation to put pressure on the authorities to adopt such measures. Only this way could one at some point in the future respond positively to the research question of the chapter and affirm that reparations for the past have indeed been undertaken in a manner that could be considered adequate even by such a stringent conception as that of relational egalitarianism.

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Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS–UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, within PNCDI III.

Chapter 10

Demons, Saints or Something Else? Holocaust Actors and Victims of Communism in Theological Memorialisation in Romania (2017-2018)

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The present paper² aims to explore the ways in which the media channels of the Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church memorialised the biographies of Holocaust perpetrators during the “Solemn Year of Patriarch Justinian and of the defenders of Orthodoxy during communism” (2017-2018). More precisely, it focuses on Mircea Vulcănescu, Radu Gyr, Ion Dobre (Nichifor Crainic), and the Metropolitan Visarion Puiu. They are analysed according to the distinction between their roles as Holocaust actors (due to judicial sentences for war crimes) and victims of communism (due to the conditions of detention following their sentences). In the present study, I argue that while their “victims of communism” status is equivalent to the label of “defenders of Orthodoxy”, they are morally and legally responsible for the Holocaust in Romania.

Keywords: Holocaust, communism, orthodoxy, anti-Semitism, memorialisation.

The Commemorative Year of Patriarch Justinian and of the Defenders of Orthodoxy during Communism

At the ordinary working session of 28-29 October 2015, the Holy Synod took the decision to declare 2017 as the “Solemn Year of Patriarch Justinian and of the Defenders of Orthodoxy during Communism” [*Anul comemorativ Justinian Patriarhul și al apărătorilor Ortodoxiei în timpul comunismului*]. The decision was upheld during the following working sessions of 25 February 2016 and 16 December 2016. In addition to devoting the year 2017 to the memory of the Patriarch Justinian and of the defenders of Orthodoxy during communism, the Holy Synod approved the framework-programme of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which was meant to include a series of activities in the liturgical, pastoral, cultural, and media fields in order to meet this objective. One of the most important

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² I want to thank the reviewers for their comments on an earlier version of this study.

events in the programme were the pastoral and missionary conferences with priests that were held in late 2017 in all the eparchies of the Romanian Orthodox Church and that were devoted to the topics of Patriarch Justinian Marina and the defenders of Orthodoxy during communism.

The decision is important because it was proclaimed by the Holy Synod, which is the highest authority of the Romanian Orthodox Church in all its fields of activity (article 11 from the Statutes for the Organisation and the Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church). The Holy Synod is made up of all the hierarchs in function; that is the Patriarch, Metropolitan, Archbishops, Eparchial Bishops, Assistant Bishops, and Assistant Hierarchs. Currently, the Holy Synod consists of 55 members. The Holy Synod institutionalises the principle of synodality, which governs the decision-making in every autocephalous Orthodox Church. Currently, there are 14 autocephalous Orthodox Churches in the world. Consequently, every hierarch who is a member of the Holy Synod has only one vote, irrespective of the administrative position held within the Church hierarchy (Bishop, Archbishop, Metropolitan, or Patriarch). Thus, according to this ecclesiological principle, all members of the Holy Synod are equal in their capacity of hierarchs, and decisions are made by a majority of votes. Once a decision is made, it becomes mandatory in the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Church (*Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, henceforth BOR) and enjoys the highest degree of solemnity.

What is a solemn year? The “homage and commemorative year” [*an omagial și an comemorativ*] represents a missionary initiative of the BOR that is meant to address both the Church and society at large. This missionary project came into being on the very first year of Daniel’s presidency of the Holy Synod as Patriarch. Since Daniel’s election in the seat of Patriarch on 30 September 2007, the BOR organised the framework for activities devoted to 10 “homage years” and 4 “commemorative years”. According to Patriarch Daniel, “the establishment by the Holy Synod of homage and commemorative themes for each year has now become a common practice for coagulating and focusing on ecclesiastical activities in all the eparchies of the Romanian Patriarchate. [...] It was observed that we need major landmarks in the mission of the Church and we need refreshed spiritual perspectives in the pastoral work, but also iturgical and cultural commemoration concerning some personalities in the Church and Romanian people’s history” (Dascălu 2017). From this fragment we notice that while “homage years” concern subjects “that are inspired by the Orthodox faith, such as the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Fathers of the Church, the Holy Sacraments” and “spiritual values that are beneficial for the whole of society, such as religious education of the Romanian youth, caring for sick

people, the mission of the parish and monastery”, “commemorative years” concern “great personalities and historical events”, with a twofold objective: expressing gratitude and providing an “opportunity to know better the virtues of our ancestors, to value and to apply them in our life” (Dascălu 2017). Prior to the year 2017, which was devoted to Patriarch Justinian Marina and the defenders of Orthodoxy during the communist regime, the Holy Synod organised commemorative years for Saints Constantin and Elena, the Brâncoveanu martyrs, Saint Antim Ivireanu, and so on. In conclusion, Patriarch Daniel says that “the practice of proclaiming homage and commemorative years devoted to some saints or events from Church history showed us that this fact inspires more cooperation in the pastoral and missionary work of the Church and more brotherhood communion in Liturgy and social assistance, and it increases the participation of faithful laypersons, irrespective of their professions, in the life and mission of the Church” (Iftimiu 2017).

In this context, one might emphasise the fact that this was the first time when the Romanian Orthodox Church proceeded to analyse the impact of communism upon its own existence. Arguably, the impetus for this self-reflection was given by the centenary of the Russian Revolution (1917-2017) and, in addition to the involvement of the Holy Synod, the Solemn Year became even more important with Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Bucharest and his meeting with Patriarch Daniel (27-28 October 2017).

The presentation above presents the reasons for researching the ways in which the Romanian Orthodox Church memorialised the defenders of Orthodoxy during communism. Among these reasons, the most important are the fact that this topic was assumed at the highest level of the Church and it involved the entire Church, that is both clergy and laypersons. Secondly, this commemorative year was further given importance by the visit of the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in Romania, in the year when Russia celebrated 100 years since the Russian Revolution and the beginning of the communist regime that persecuted the Church. Moreover, the commemoration of the defenders of Orthodoxy during communism took place in the year when Daniel celebrated his first decade of Patriarchate, that is as *primus inter pares* of the BOR.

The way in which the Holy Synod’s intention was put into practice gave rise to a series of questions and nurtured confusions that became evident in the following years. For instance, on 5 June 2019 the Romanian Patriarchy delivered a communiqué in which it made the difference between a hero’s commemoration and a hero’s glorification, that is between the canonisation of saints and the commemoration of heroes. The situation was not accidental, because at the popular level there is high pressure to glorify

Father Arsenie Boca, arguably a victim of communism, and, apart from this, there are some private organisations and interests that lobby for the recognition of ‘prison saints’ [“sfinții închisorilor”], a category which includes highly controversial personalities from recent history (e.g. members and sympathisers of the Legionary Movement). Moreover, the communiqué in question was released soon after Pope Francis beatified seven bishops of the Greek-Catholic Church who had been imprisoned in the communist penitentiary system in Romania. The echoes produced by this topic thus represent an important reason for extending the period analysed in this study to the following year (2018).

These are a few of the important questions that remained following the solemn year: what is a defender of Orthodoxy during communism? Who are these defenders supposed to be? Is a defender of Orthodoxy necessarily an anti-communist? What is the theoretical foundation of anti-communism: Christian faith and practice, political ideologies such as fascism, or democracy? Is a victim of communism necessarily a defender of Orthodoxy? To sum up, can a Holocaust perpetrator with fascist credentials be considered a victim of communism?

From the quite vast web of questions and confusions, we return to the potential conflict between the responsibility for the Holocaust in Romania and the status of victim of communism. Consequently, the present project aims at exploring the ways in which some public figures’ who are morally and legally held responsible for the Holocaust and who later became prisoners of the communist regime (and thus arguably victims of communism) are memorialised in the theological discourse. Put differently, the project aims at analysing the ways in which the Romanian Orthodox Church, through media channels and printed publications (considered as primary sources), spoke about persons who are controversial because of their involvement in the Holocaust involvement and suffering under communism.

The criteria for selecting the persons whose memory is thusly recovered in theological discourse is their involvement in the Holocaust, as ascertained through formal judicial inquiry. According to this criterion, these personalities are: Mircea Vulcănescu, Nichifor Crainic, Radu Gyr, and the Metropolitan Visarion Puiu. Whereas Vulcănescu and Crainic were condemned for war crimes and because they held administrative positions in the National Legionary State or Antonescu’s personal dictatorship, Gyr and Puiu were condemned only for war crimes.

Needless to say, the topic could be extended to the theological memorialisation of members or supporters of the Legionary Movement such as Fr. Toma Chiricuță, Fr. Nicolae Georgescu-Edineți, Fr. Dimitrie Bejan,

Valeriu Gafencu, Fr. Ilie Imbrescu. Although proponents of anti-Semitic discourse at least in some moments of their lives, they however had no direct or formal involvement in the Holocaust in Romania. Consequently, they are not analysed in this chapter. The study proceeds therefore to make a distinction between institutional (direct, formal) participation and moral participation in the Holocaust in Romania.

One episode of this potential conflict between responsibility for the Holocaust as certified by a definitive judicial sentence and the status of victim of communism as certified by imprisonment and eventually death, occurred in 2017, when the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania protested against the way in which one TV show was moderated on the television station of the Romanian Patriarchy, the religious channel Trinitas TV, with regard to Mircea Vulcănescu.

From a methodological perspective, qualitative discourse analysis will be used. The research will explore printed books, *Ziarul Lumina* and *Lumina de Duminică* (daily press edited by the Romanian Patriarchy), TV shows at Trinitas TV, and official speeches delivered by Holy Synod members. According to the synthesis of the BOR activities for the year 2017, *Ziarul Lumina* (daily) and *Lumina de Duminică* (weekly) were printed in editions of 23,000 issues, totalling over 7 million copies for the entire year, which means that they occupy the third place in the national daily press rankings. The press materials can also freely be consulted on the website of the respective publications (www.ziarullumina.ro).

The criterion for choosing the primary sources is the high degree of representativeness for the Romanian Orthodox Church (e.g. books published at the eparchial publishing house or books published under the benediction of a Bishop, TV shows and articles published in one of the Patriarchy Press Agency publications), although not all of them can be assumed to constitute the official position of the Romanian Orthodox Church (which is to be provided by the Holy Synod). There are many other sources that can be found at the local level (reviews edited by parishes or Bishoprics, groups of priests, and so on), but they will not be analysed. Although the eparchial reviews represent an important documentary resource, due to time constraints I will analyse only the press edited by the Romanian Patriarchy. The Romanian Patriarchy represents a central administrative structure and it does not represent, from a legal point of view, the official position of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Although not official, analysing the press edited by this administrative structure is useful, because of the diversity of the publications with respect to the sources of information and because of

their dynamic character. Consequently, it is more likely to have in this press an overview of the events and facts that are relevant for the Church.

Alternative biographical discourses

The first important personality that is disputed between his memory as a war criminal involved in the Holocaust and his memory as a victim of communism due to the conditions of detention that led to his death is **Mircea Vulcănescu**.

Mircea Vulcănescu was born on the 3rd of March 1904 in Bucharest, and he graduated the University of Bucharest in 1925 in the fields of Philosophy and Law. He enrolled in a PhD degree in Law at the University of Paris but never completed it. He nurtured a vivid interest in sociology and became involved in the monographic campaigns that were coordinated by Dimitrie Gusti. He was also Gusti's assistant at the university. From an intellectual point of view, he admired two prominent Romanian public figures of the interwar period: Dimitrie Gusti, the head of the Romanian School of Sociology, and Nae Ionescu, philosopher and important proponent of anti-Semitism. He publicly acknowledged Dimitrie Gusti and Nae Ionescu as his mentors. From 1927 to 1943 he authored over 10 books (that were published both during his life and after 1990) and he contributed to some influential newspapers of the time: *Cuvântul*, *Convorbiri literare*, *Familia*, and others. His complete works were edited after 1989 (Diaconu 2005). Unlike many colleagues of his generation, Mircea Vulcănescu was a state functionary, holding various offices in the 1930s and 1940s. He was director of the Customs Service (June 1935-September 1937), and then director of the Public Debt Service within the Ministry of Finance. During the National Legionary State he served as director of Autonomous Office for Financing (*Casa Autonomă de Finanțare și Amortizare*) and president of the Autonomous Office of the National Defence Fund (*Casa Autonomă a Fondului Apărării Naționale*). He reached the peak of his administrative career while serving as undersecretary of state in the Ministry of Finance during Ion Antonescu's government (27 January 1941 – 23 August 1944). After the coup d'état of 23 August 1944, he returned as head of the Public Debt Service and remained in office until 30 August 1946, when he was arrested and accused of war crimes as a member of Antonescu's government.

Following the criminal proceedings and the judicial trials, he was condemned and sentenced to 8 years of prison for war crimes. More precisely, he was found guilty of advocating Nazism while acting as undersecretary of state, under the provisions of articles 1 and 2 from Law

no. 312/24 April 1945 for prosecuting and punishing those responsible for the country's disaster or war crimes. The court established to judge persons who fell under the provisions of the law proved that Mircea Vulcănescu participated to 68 Council of Ministers meetings and to 58 meetings of the Economic Delegation. Among these meetings, those that took place on 20 March 1941, 8 May 1941, 5 August 1941, and 16 December 1941 were crucial in the 'resolution of the Jewish problem'. The minutes of the meetings confirm that he was present and that he not only consented to but also proposed anti-Jewish measures (Florian 2018, pp. 217-220; see also Florian 2014a; 2014b). He was also in charge of the financing of the German Army in Romania. The appeal was rejected and in January 1948 the Court upheld the sentence pronounced in 1946.

To be more precise with regard to the judicial evolution of his case, the prosecution act was read on 24 September 1946. The trial took place soon after, and on 9 October 1946 he was found guilty and condemned to prison by the Criminal decision no. 160. However, the Supreme Court of Justice overturned this by the Decision no. 3551 from 31 October 1947 and sent the case for re-examination at the same instance that had pronounced the first sentence. The new trial opened as a result of Decision no. 3551/31 October 1947 concluded on 6 February 1948, when the Bucharest Court of Appeals pronounced the Criminal decision no. 27 in the file no. 1921/1947. The decision became final after the rejection of the recourse declared by Vulcănescu through the Decision no. 1510/7 August 1948 pronounced by the Supreme Court of Justice in the file no. 214/1948. The instance that re-examined the case upheld the punishment he had received in the first trial, that is 8 years of "hard prison" [*temniță grea*] for the acts provided by the article 2 letter a from the Law no. 312/1945 and 3 years of "rigorous detention" [*detenție riguroasă*] for the acts provided by the article 1 letter a from the Law no. 312/1945 (Court of Appeals, Civil decision no. 967A from 26 June 2019).

Hence, the office Vulcănescu held in the fascist government led by the dictator Ion Antonescu and the activity he had had in this capacity led the Court to the conclusion that he was responsible for war crimes as defined by Law no. 312/1945. Compared to other cases that were brought before the Court in order to judge crimes committed against Jews, his case can be described as that of a second-level perpetrator of the Holocaust in Romania.

Vulcănescu carried out his sentence in the Aiud penitentiary. During his imprisonment, he was tortured by different means. He lacked proper medication, clothes, and adequate food. According to some testimonies, he made some philanthropic and political gestures while in prison. Allegedly,

he saved a young man of student age from death by hugging him so he would not sit on the cold cement. The student healed from pneumonia, but Vulcănescu died as a result (Constantin-Mărăcineanu 2003, pp. 27-29). Other testimonies emphasise, on one hand, his commitment to the Christian Orthodox faith and to the Romanian nation (Fay 1990) and, on the other hand, his engagement for the moral life during the years of prison (Diaconescu 2018). Because of the conditions of detention, he died of lung disease on the 28th of October 1952, at the age of 48. His body was thrown into the common grave of the Aiud cemetery. Consequently, he is seen today as a victim of communism as a result of the improper conditions of detention and of what his supporters see as an unfair sentence and imprisonment. At the same time, due to his profession of faith, Vulcănescu, as we will see, is memorialised as a Christian confessor and Christian martyr. However, he has not been declared a saint and, to my knowledge, there is no official plea to consider his case for canonisation.

Today, his memory is highly disputed in the public sphere. On the one hand, the way he died recalls the idea of sacrifice, although this is based solely on testimonies and on the conditions of detention that lead to the status of victim of communism. The situation is further complicated by the fact that he was not member of the Iron Guard (the main organisation of the Legionary Movement), he did not engage in the political campaigning for the Legionary Movement, although he was very close to the ideology of some legionnaires (Florian 2018, pp. 210-212), such as Nae Ionescu, Nichifor Crainic, or Mircea Eliade. His alleged sacrifice, the status of victim of communism, and the distance he maintained toward the formal organisations of the Legionary Movement, doubled by the contemporary quest for heroes motivate some people and institutions to honour him by attributing his name to different institutions and streets, or by erecting various monuments commemorating him. On the other hand, there is the judicial status of his sentence for war crimes that falls under the provisions of existing legislation: Government Emergency Ordinance no. 31/13 March 2002 on prohibiting organisations of a fascist, racist and xenophobic character, and the glorification of those found guilty of crimes against peace and humanity that was converted into Law on 6 May 2006; this law was amended in 2015 by Law no. 217, which expanded its scope by also banning legionary symbols and various acts related to the Holocaust. According to this law, the act of glorifying in public persons who were convicted for war crimes is forbidden and has a penal character.

The proclamation of 2017 as the Solemn Year of Patriarch Justinian and of the defenders of Orthodoxy during communism created an opportunity for the Church to reflect upon Vulcănescu's case. However, this

Solemn Year formalised a tendency that had taken shape in previous years. In this way, one shall evoke the conference “Mircea Vulcănescu – the image of a Christian confessor” [*Mircea Vulcănescu – chip de mărturisitor creștin*] that took place on 16 November 2013 at the General Consulate of Romania in München, with lectures delivered by Rev. Gheorghe Holbea (Lecturer and Vice-Dean at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from the University of Bucharest and Dr. Ionuț Butoi (Lecturer at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies from the University of Bucharest). The recording of the conference is available online. Another example dates from 28 October 2014 when the religious channel Trinitas TV broadcast the TV show “Testimonies and evocations” [*Mărturii și evocări*], which was dedicated to Mircea Vulcănescu.

The religious channel Trinitas TV devoted two TV shows to him in the series “Faith and Culture” [*Credință și cultură*], moderated by Vasile Bănescu. The first TV show, entitled “Mircea Vulcănescu, savant and Christian confessor” [*Mircea Vulcănescu, savant și mărturisitor creștin*], was broadcast on 17 July 2017 (Lavric 2017; 2018, pp. 231-253). It had the writer Sorin Lavric as a guest. Lavric had written a book about Constantin Noica and the Legionary Movement and in the previous years he had been an active proponent of Vulcănescu’s (positive) memory in the public sphere. The second TV show, entitled “Mircea Vulcănescu – a committed Christian intellectual” [*Mircea Vulcănescu – un intelectual creștin angajat*], was broadcast on 12 March 2018. This TV show had Ionuț Butoi as a guest. Butoi is known as the author of some studies on the work of Mircea Vulcănescu (Butoi 2015; 2017) From the very beginning, we thus notice that Mircea Vulcănescu was portrayed as a Christian confessor (and hence defender of Orthodoxy) and Christian intellectual.

Let us sketch Vulcănescu’s theological portrayal as it was spelled out in the first TV show (2017). From a moral point of view, Sorin Lavric depicted Mircea Vulcănescu as a “bright figure” [*figură luminoasă*], a “strengthening presence” [*prezență stenică*], an “optimistic nature” [*fire optimistă*]. From an intellectual perspective, he was an “encyclopaedic person”. From an ideological point of view, following Bănescu’s remark that Vulcănescu nurtured “some vague sympathy toward the Legionary Movement”, without belonging to it, Lavric replied by emphasising a twofold argument: the ideas of the time were favourable to the right and far-right of the political spectrum, and the Legionary Movement was not repudiated at that time as it is now. With regard to the office he held in the Antonescu government and his activity in that capacity, which led to his sentence, the moderator and the guest concluded that Vulcănescu was a good economist and the office he held had a technocratic, not a political

character. The Court that judged him was a communist one and the penal decisions that were pronounced for the former members of Antonescu's government reflected the judgement of the victorious side (i.e. communists) over the defeated one (i.e. fascists). A lot more attention was dedicated to the years of prison and the way he died. According to Lavric, "the way you die defines, in fact, all your life, and Vulcănescu represents a very suggestive case: he died under the weight of the cross [*nebunia crucii*] in atrocious conditions" (Lavric 2018, pp. 235-236). Hence, he resisted communism not through culture, but through martyrdom. In this sense, Vulcănescu played the same card as Radu Gyr (war criminal) and Valeriu Gafencu (member of the Legionary Movement).

In the second TV show (2018) analysed here, Ionuț Butoi argued about the fundamental differences between Nae Ionescu and Mircea Vulcănescu, drawing the conclusion that Vulcănescu did not subscribe to the ethnocentric perspective that dominated Ionescu's philosophy. Therefore, Vulcănescu was neither a xenophobe nor a proponent of far-right ideology. This remark strengthened the idea that the office he held in Antonescu's government was not political. Consequently, Butoi argued that his only guilt was the Christian faith that he professed in his work and life, and ultimately this was the real reason for convicting him to prison. This time, the TV show did not discuss the way he died. Thus, we can analyse the two TV shows in a complementary way: one arguing for the idea of martyrdom due to the way he died, while the other arguing for the idea of an active intellectual who wrote in the apology of Eastern Christianity.

Another media channel through which Mircea Vulcănescu is portrayed (exclusively) in positive colours is the newspaper *Ziarul Lumina*, which represents the printed format of the Patriarchy's mass-media enterprise. During 2017, there were two special articles devoted to Mircea Vulcănescu (Șontică 2017; Păunoiu 2017), while others mentioned his name in the context of certain arguments (Zamora 2017; Voicilă 2017). In an article produced for the "homage year", the journalist A. Păunoiu characterised Vulcănescu "as a model for the politicians of his time, which is unreachable for today's politicians" (Păunoiu 2017). With regard to the trial, it is characterised as a measure taken by the communists to punish him for "the love of the country and the [professional] competence that he had proven in all the offices that he had held" (Păunoiu 2017). The journalist then quoted his final words at two of the trials in which he was accused of the destruction of the country and war crimes. Moreover, the author further emphasised that the damages caused by Nazi Germany before 23 August 1944 were not as severe as it is said, and that Mircea Vulcănescu allegedly played a role in preserving the national gold reserves. While mentioning that

he was condemned for war crimes, Daniela Șontică focused on his years in prison, quoting the testimonies about his alleged sacrifice. Both journalists concluded that Vulcănescu loved his fellow human.

Other articles referred to Vulcănescu's memory today. For instance, the historian Marius Oprea replied to a series of questions asked by Elena Gabriela Zamora. In this interview, Oprea claimed that the Law no. 217/2015, which amended and replaced the Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002, condemns him (and other "personalities of our culture") for a second time by accusing him of complicity with far-right ideology. At the same time, he reiterated the ideological (i.e. communist) nature of the trials judging persons held responsible for war crimes. During the interview, Zamora asked a very interesting question: how would Law no. 217/2015 influence a hypothetical process of beatification of Christian confessors from communist prisons? M. Oprea, who served as the first president of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile, replied that "Law 217 cannot be a hindrance" to the Holy Synod's decision to canonise Christian confessors. The argument was that the Holy Synod's decision is above state law and if it happened to amend such decision, then Law 217 would prove its "anti-Romanian character and nostalgia towards communism" (Zamora 2017).

The sociologist Ciprian Voicilă proposed in an article published under the header "homage year" a reflection upon Romanian confessors during the 20th century. According to the author, "one of the exemplary virtues of the anti-communist martyrs and heroes was self-consistency, the perfect agreement between feeling, thinking, and acting"; "one of the cardinal virtues that the Romanian confessors acquired in the communist prisons was the courageous confession of faith in front of persecutors, irrespective of how many physical and moral hardships they had to endure for this confession"; "maybe the most impressive virtue in which the Romanian martyrs from the 20th century excelled was service to the point of sacrifice for the fellow human [*slujirea cu jertfelnicie a aproapelui*]" (Voicilă 2017). Who are these 'martyrs' who had proven, in authors' opinion, eminence in the practice of the Good Samaritan's virtue? According to Voicilă, these are Valeriu Gafencu, George Manu, Alexandru Ghica, Constantin Opreșan (who are notorious legionnaires), and Mircea Vulcănescu (condemned for war crimes). The author concluded by saying that "they represent the type of human personality that is worth following, especially today when the duplicitous spirit became the rule" (Voicilă 2017). Ciprian Voicilă creates individual portraits and makes tacit lobby for canonization by naming them saints, although there is no process of canonization at the level of the BOR in a previous book (Voicilă 2014).

Needless to say, this is a sample of what could be called ‘selective biographies’. This manner of reconstructing personal biographies implies a subjective selection of facts and ideas that are meant to sustain a certain idea. In this case, the idea expressed in the conclusion can be brought forward only by neglecting the dark sides of these persons’ biographies, especially their far-right allegiances after the First World War and their participation in the Romanian fascist government during the Second World War.

From a quantitative point of view, a simple search in the *Ziarul Lumina* archive for the years 2017-2018 reveals that the name “Vulcănescu” appears 59 times in over 700 issues. As for Trinitas TV, as mentioned above, there were two TV shows about Vulcănescu in 2017 and 2018.

Radu Gyr is the second disputed personality analysed in this study. He is far from enjoying the same intensity and level of public interest as Mircea Vulcănescu, but was however included in the theological memorialisation stimulated by the Solemn Year 2017.

Rady Gyr is the penname of Radu Demetrescu. He was born on the 2nd of March 1905, in Câmpulung Muscel. He was a journalist, poet, and Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest. He was a prominent legionnaire, authoring the official anthem of the Legionary Movement and serving during the National-Legionary State (September 1940 – January 1941) as legionary commander and director of theatres. He was found guilty of war crimes and was condemned on 4 June 1945 to 12 years in prison. He was part of the trial of journalists who, through their writing, had supported the fascist regime and instigated to racial hatred.

As in Vulcănescu’s case, part of the positive public image that his memory enjoys after 1989 is explained by the many years he spent in prison. As an active and devoted member of the Legionary Movement, he was imprisoned for some years during King Carol II’s royal dictatorship and during Ion Antonescu’s military dictatorship. After his sentence for war crimes, he carried out 11 years of his prison sentence (1945-1956). On his return home, he wrote an anti-communist poem and received a new sentence to 25 years of prison, out of which he executed 6 years (1958-1964). Another explanation for his positive memory is the poetry that he authored while he was in prison, where his poems were memorised and recited by other political prisoners. After the general amnesty of 1964, many former prisoners wrote down Gyr’s poems that they had memorised in prison, and soon after 1989 published them in the form of *samizdat* publications. The appeals to anti-communist resistance and the hard conditions of detention he

was subjected to made him a legendary personality. He died of natural causes in Bucharest, on the 29th of April 1975.

In terms of his theological memorialisation during the Solemn Year 2017 and its sequel (2018), Trinitas TV had no TV shows focusing on Radu Gyr and his memory today. However, there were some references to Gyr in Vasile Bănescu's TV Show "Communism and the Memory of Faith Confessors" [*Comunismul și memoria mărturisitorilor credinței*], broadcast on 31 October 2017, which had Prof. Alexandru Zub as a guest. The moderator asked his guest to comment on how he perceived the contemporary assessment of "traditional values" as "right-wing values". According to the moderator, the consequence of this equivocation was the fact that intellectuals who had proclaimed such values are seen "with hostility" and considered fascists. The moderator gave some examples: "the Christian savant Mircea Vulcănescu, Petre Țuțea, the poets of Communist prisons (although not named, Radu Gyr and Nichifor Crainic are some of them – N. D.)", and other persons of "irreproachable quality" [*calitate ireproșabilă*]. To this question, raised in the last minutes of the respective TV Show, the historian avoided providing an answer, due to what he claimed was a "complex situation". The fragment is relevant not for the question, but for the statement made by the moderator. Unlike an interview, where the moderator asks questions and the guest replies, this TV show format mixes up statements and questions and, sometimes, the moderator's statements are longer than guests' replies.

Ziarul Lumina published on 12 April 2017 a documentary by Daniela Șontică in which Radu Gyr was portrayed as a "poet of suffering" [*poet al pătimirilor*], because of his 16 years in prison under various regimes. She said that "he suffered with dignity and faith in God", as a "moral man, although he was very sick" (Șontică 12 April 2017). Other articles in this newspaper quote his poems, so he is very present in the discussion about the resistance to communism through his poems. All poems testify, in the opinions of the authors of these articles, the resistance through culture and the Christian confession of faith (Ursu 2017; Șontică and Ilie 2017; Deciu 2017). Other articles evoked and summarised the public and private events organised within the framework of the Solemn Year (*Ziarul Lumina*, 17 May 2017). Some of them characterised Gyr as "one of the confessors of communist prisons who, during the totalitarian regime of communism, proved verticality, sincerity, and dignity in the defence and confession of our national and Christian values". His poetic legacy "keeps Christ our Lord in the hearts of many faithful Christians from our country and abroad" (Mircia 2017). In some cases, Gyr's sufferings are

presented as intended to expiate “the sins of the Romanian nation” (Irina 2017).

From a quantitative point of view, a simple search in the *Ziarul Lumina* archive for the years 2017-2018 reveals that the name “Gyr” appeared 55 times in over 700 issues. On the television channel of the Romanian Patriarchy, Trinitas TV, he was mentioned once in 2018 and not at all in 2017.

Another personality that is disputed between the memory of a Holocaust perpetrator and the memory (in the making) of a victim of communism is **Ion Dobre** (penname **Nichifor Crainic**).

He was born on 22 December 1889 in Bulbucata, Giurgiu County. He studied Orthodox theology at the Central Seminary (1904-1912) and at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest (1912-1916). The Archbishop of Bucharest at the time refused to ordain him as a priest. Following this refusal, he started teaching at the Faculties of Theology in Bucharest and Kishinev. He published articles in important newspapers of the time (*Gândirea*, *Flamura*, *Neamul românesc*, *Cuvântul*, *Sfarmă piatră*, *Buna vestire*). He also wrote poetry. As a politician, he is one of the few who held offices both in the National Legionary State, as general-secretary in the Ministry of Propaganda, and under Ion Antonescu as Minister of Propaganda (Spînu 2013).

He was the creator of the nationalist and deeply anti-Semitic ideology named *Gândirism* and during the late 1930s he theorised the notion of the “ethnocratic state” that in his view had to be applied to Romania. According to the Final Report of the “Elie Wiesel” International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, Nichifor Crainic’s theological work “had an important influence on Cuza and on the younger generation that would assume the radical anti-Semitic banner in the interwar period. [...] He applied his theological and rhetorical skills to breaking the Judeo-Christian relationship by arguing that the Old Testament was not Jewish, that Jesus had not been Jewish, and that the Talmud, which he saw as the incarnation of modern Jewry was, first and foremost, a weapon to combat the Christian Gospel and to destroy Christians” (International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania 2004, pp. 35-36).

In court sentence no. 2 from 4 June 1945, Nichifor Crainic was found guilty of war crimes and was condemned *in absentia* to 10 years in prison. He surrendered to the authorities and he was imprisoned on 24 May 1947. He was released on 26 April 1962 by Decree no. 293/18 April 1962, issued by the Council of State. During his prison term he became a collaborator of the communist political police (*Securitate*). After 1962 he wrote for the *Glasul Patriei*, which was a propaganda publication of the

communist regime addressed to the Romanians in exile with the purpose of improving its image abroad. He died on 20 August 1972.

Upon examination of the articles that were published in *Ziarul Lumina* in 2017-2018, we notice that Crainic's memory was reconstructed along two basic lines: as a Christian confessor during communism and as an important theologian. Secondly, his poems are quoted and he is portrayed as a "poet of the prison" (Tuchilă 2017; Butnar 2017). In this sense, there are some authors who consider the poems written in prison as forms of prayer (Șontică, 26 November 2017), or as forms of resistance alongside prayer (Bordașiu 2017).

With regards to Nichifor Crainic's reputation as a theologian, he is considered the creator of a theological school during the interwar period which made Romania visible on a European level. From this perspective, Crainic is said to have made to theology a similar contribution as that of George Enescu to music and of Constantin Brâncuși to sculpture (Păunoiu, 25 March 2018). The same idea was put forth at the commemorative event "Academician professor Nichifor Crainic – great thinker and confessor for the Romanian nation and for the Orthodox faith", which was organised in 2018, in Constanța. On that occasion, the Archbishop Teodosie of Constanța stated that for his professors Nichifor Crainic was "a myth that should be preserved in the Romanian conscience" and, for this reason, "we rediscover him and bring him into present" (Bușagă 2018; Seară dedicată academicianului Nichifor Crainic 2018). Other events organized during 2017 and 2018 emphasised Crainic's theological work (Mărculeț 2018), or his Christian confession during the atheist communist regime that lasted from 1945 to 1989 (Laboș 2017; Apostolache 2017). Seemingly, in addition to his poems, the most quoted affirmation of Crainic the theologian is his assessment that "holiness represents the fulfilment of the human" (*sfințenia ca împlinire a umanului*), from his book on mystical theology (Nazăru 2017). There are three such references in the span of time considered for this study. Other articles spoke of the connections Crainic had with other personalities of the time, with whom he formed some kind of ideological family (read: extreme nationalist). Along these lines, Crainic's admiration for Fr. Toma Chiricuță (Dascălu 2017) or Crainic's gestures of solidarity with Rev. Nicolae Georgescu-Edineț on 24-25 January 1933, in Bucharest (Apetrei 2017) are (correctly) evoked. Other articles emphasise the connections established in prison between Crainic and Ion Ianolide, Valeriu Gafencu, or Radu Gyr (Șontică, 24 April 2017).

With regard to Crainic's trial and condemnation for war crimes, they are considered as indicative of a "communist repression" (*urgie comunistă*) that aimed at "eliminating the representative writers for the defence of

country's interests", a measure taken immediately after the "generals' trial" that aimed at destroying the Romanian army (Sămărghițan, 9 April 2017). In another article, which discussed the newspaper *Gândirea*, the same author claimed that the facts that led to Crainic's condemnation in 1945 were "his attitude of open anti-bolshevism" and "the deep mystical way of understanding the cultural phenomenon". Moreover, the same article made no reference to the anti-Semitic orientation and ethnic nationalism that Crainic professed (Sămărghițan, 19 February 2017). The author himself accounted for his penchant for Nichifor Crainic. On the ceremony marking his installation as parish priest of the Saint Apostles Church in Sibiu, Rev. Călin Sămărghițan said that he took Nichifor Crainic as a "model of ministry" since he had been arrested in the house of his grandfather, Rev. Ioan Sămărghițan, who was also arrested (Mărculeț, 3 February 2017).

From a quantitative point of view, a simple search in the *Ziarul Lumina* archive for the years 2017-2018 reveals that the name "Crainic" appeared 70 times in over 700 issues. As for Trinitas TV, the result is one mention in 2018 and none in 2017.

Visarion (Victor) Puiu is the fourth personality that is highly disputed between the memory of the Holocaust and the memory of communism. He was born on 27 September 1879 in Pașcani. He became an important personality of the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1921, when he was elected and installed as Bishop of Argeș. He later served also as Metropolitan of Bucovina (1935-1940). This was apparently the peak of his ecclesiastical career, which was abruptly brought to an end by his forced retirement (1 June 1940). He returned to service on 16 November 1942, when he was appointed Metropolitan of the Orthodox Mission in Transnistria. He headed the mission until 14 December 1943, when he had to leave the office. The Romanian Orthodox Mission in Transnistria was a canonical structure of the Romanian Orthodox Church that was established on 15 August 1942, with the Canonical See in Tiraspol, and afterwards in Odessa, in the wake of the Romanian administration of Transnistria (since 19 August 1941). The mission was headed by Archimandrite Iuliu Scriban (15 August 1941 – 6 November 1942), Metropolitan Visarion Puiu, and Bishop Antim Nica (14 December 1943 – 29 January 1944). The official mission of this ecclesiastical structure was to re-establish Christian life in a former Soviet territory. In 1944, Visarion Puiu took refuge in Western Europe, where he headed the Romanian Eparchy of Western Europe (1948-1958), with the see in Paris, which was a canonical structure of the Russian Orthodox Church in New York (Păcurariu 2010).

Due to his tenure in Transnistria, he was condemned to death *in absentia* by the People's Court as a person responsible for war crimes. Later

on, at Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan's proposal, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church unanimously took the decision to exclude Visarion Puiu from its jurisdiction and to ban him from celebrating the Holy Liturgy. The decision was carried out until 25 September 1990, when it was revoked by the Holy Synod. Thus, on the one hand he is responsible for the Holocaust in Romania following a court decision to this effect, and on the other he can be considered a victim of communism (even if he was never imprisoned under the communist regime).

Following the Holy Synod's decision to rehabilitate Visarion Puiu, an association bearing his name (*Asociația Mitropolit Visarion Puiu*) was established, with the headquarters in Roman and currently headed by Fr. Florin Țuscanu. Starting with 1996, the association has organised the event "Metropolitan Visarion Puiu's Days" (*Zilele Mitropolit Visarion Puiu*) which takes place yearly in Pașcani (his native town), the Neamț Monastery (where he retired), and Roman. In 2017, this event reached its 21st edition and took place with the blessing of Metropolitan Teofan.

Even though arguably there is no other hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church commemorated by such public events that occur in the important places of his biography (including yearly events that take place at the Romanian parish "Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Rafael" in Paris, which after 10 May 2009 recognised the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Church), his memory is not discussed and analysed in the Patriarchy's mass-media. Thus, there is apparently a contrast in this case between the local events and media broadcast on a national level. A search for the name "Visarion Puiu" on *Trinitas TV* yields only one TV production which provides some information about the events that took place in Roman. As regards *Ziarul Lumina* or *Lumina de Duminică*, there is a slight difference. In 2017 and 2018 there was only one article devoted to Visarion Puiu, written by Archimandrite Mihail Daniliuc (Daniliuc, 11 August 2017), who is actually an abbot of the Vovidenia skete, which is under the jurisdiction of Neamț Monastery. This skete was a home for Visarion Puiu during his retirement years.

In addition to these media productions consisting of articles and interviews, there is also another important source for our discussion. When considering the degree of solemnity, this source is perhaps the most important one. While the investigation above concerned the Patriarchy's publications aimed at a lay audience, the following one concerns the publishing house of the Holy Synod, which is basically devoted to liturgical publications that are used in domestic ceremonies. Another reason for its importance is the fact that it resulted from a Christian inter-confessional effort to identify the martyrs for Christ during communism.

In 2017 the Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which functions as the official press organ of the Romanian Orthodox Church, took the initiative to publish a second edition of the Christian Martyrology *Martiri pentru Hristos din România, în perioada regimului comunist* (Martyrs for Christ in Romania during the Communist Regime). The first edition had been published in 2007 and appeared under the benediction of the heads of the three historical Churches in Romania: His Beatitude Teoctist, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church; His Eminence Ioan, the Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman-Catholic Church; and His Excellency Cristoph Klein, the Bishop of the Evangelical Church in Romania. Hence, the book enjoyed the highest degree of solemnity and representativeness for the Christian confessions in Romania and it articulated the Christian perspective on the issue of religious sacrifice during the communist regime. The Christian Martyrology was prepared by a scientific commission which worked for almost five years (from the inaugural meeting in Timișoara in 2002 to the book's publication in 2007). The commission aimed at creating a list of faithful Christians (laymen or clergymen) who should be considered martyrs of Christianity in communist Romania. At the working session of 6-7 November 2002 that was organised in Suceava, the commission agreed upon three fundamental criteria that define martyrdom during communism: violent death (*martyrium materialiter*); the persecutors' hate for faith (*martyrium formaliter ex parte tyranni*); and the victims' conscious submission to the will of God (*martyrium formaliter ex parte victimae*).

From the list of personalities we discussed above, only Mircea Vulcănescu enjoys the religious status of martyr (which is not necessarily that of a saint). Therefore, Nichifor Crainic, Radu Gyr, and Metropolitan Visarion Puiu are not listed. Vulcănescu's case is analysed in a special entry, authored by Daniel Flonta and Adrian Nicolae Petcu (St. Gerhard's Werk e.V., 2007/2017, pp. 738-747). They used archival sources of the former *Securitate* and memorialist literature from Communist prisons (Ștefan J. Fay, Ion Diaconescu, Gabriel Bălănescu, Zosim Oancea). The authors evoked Vulcănescu biography by emphasising his academic background, his literary and journalistic activity, and the jobs he held. With regard to his intellectual outlook, the authors pointed out that his interest in religion stemmed from a strong faith. They correctly affirmed that Vulcănescu's faith was "the Orthodox religion" (sic!) and, more precisely, "The Romanian Orthodox religion". Hence, Vulcănescu professed a deep conviction that the notions of religion, Orthodoxy, and Romanian kinship are "inextricably correlated" (St. Gerhard's Werk e.V., 2007/2017, p. 740).

Special attention is dedicated to his criminal trial (1945-1948) and to the carrying out of the sentence in the communist penitentiary system.

The authors claim that Vulcănescu's acts as undersecretary of state in the Antonescu government were judged according to two laws that aimed at finding, prosecuting, and judging the persons responsible for war crimes: Law no. 312/1945 and Law no. 291/18 August 1947. Consequently, he was prosecuted and judged in two judicial processes. The first trial was judged at the People's Tribunal. Although Vulcănescu had been summoned to court in March 1945, he was detained for ten days (18-28 May 1946), and was arrested on 30 August 1946. Why this gap of more than one year in the criminal proceedings? The authors claim that the Romanian state needed his expertise at the negotiations for the Paris Treaty (St. Gerhard's Werk e.V., 2007/2017, p. 741), which was signed on 10 February 1947 between the Axis' former member states and the Allied states. The trial took place between December 1946 and January 1947 and it ended with a condemnation to 8 years in prison. The appeal was rejected on 14 February 1947 by the Supreme Court of Cassation. The case was opened again by the Bucharest Court of Appeal on the basis of Law no. 291/1947. Vulcănescu was brought from Aiud Penitentiary, where he was carrying out the first sentence, in order to appear before the Court. On 15 January 1948 the Court condemned Vulcănescu to 8 years of hard prison (*temniță grea*). On 7 August 1948 his appeal was rejected. The authors conclude that "he received the same accusations but with different legal framework with the purpose to compromise, to discredit an elite that Romania still had" (St. Gerhard's Werk e.V., 2007/2017, p. 743). Although is not our intention to evaluate the accurateness of this judicial review, it is important to note that there is no mention of the Decision no. 3551/31 October 1947, pronounced by the Supreme Court of Justice, to overturn the previous decision and to send the case for re-examination at the same instance. The point to bear in mind here is that the decision to overturn another decision means invalidating and re-examining the entire case.

With regard to the execution of the sentence, the authors make reference to the memorialist literature in order to underline Vulcănescu's humane and philanthropic conduct in prison by pointing out the two situations that made him very popular after 1989: his sacrifice for the young man who was suffering from pneumonia, and his call to posterity to not avenge them, the victims of communist prisons ("*Să nu ne răzbunați!*"). As regards the official documents, the authors bring to attention the confirmation that he was suffering from tuberculosis in a medical report

from the Jilava Penitentiary with the recommendation to hospitalise him at the Văcărești Hospital (10 April 1951) and the refusal of the *Securitate* (26 May 1951) to approve the transfer to the hospital in order to receive medical aid for his sickness. The death certificate from 29 October 1952 confirmed that Vulcănescu died because of tuberculosis (*miocardite pleurezii duble TBC*) (St. Gerhard's Werk e.V., 2007/2017, p. 744).

What do these biographies and their memorialisation reveal?

As a preliminary remark, out of all the war criminals that executed sentences after 6 March 1945 and especially after 30 December 1947, when King Michael I signed the act of abdication, only few of them enjoy the attention of the Patriarchy's publications. More precisely, they address those personalities that had ties with the Church and with the Orthodox faith. From this point of view, Puiu and Vulcănescu are two contrasting cases: while Puiu was a clergyman, Vulcănescu was a layman, and, prior to his detention, he was not reputed to have had a systematic participation to Church life. Moreover, he had a personal life that hardly fits the canon of religious morality; however, he had considered religion and, in particular, the Orthodox confession, in his written works and public conferences. Out of these personalities, the most persistent case in the Patriarchy's mass-media is Vulcănescu's. His memory within the Church was not created during 2017 and 2018. There is an interest with regard to his biography that dates back to the late 2000s (Lemeni 2010) in any case some years after Romanian editors started to publish his works in new or re-edited editions.

Whereas the interest in religion during their life and/or their participation to the life of the Church represent biographical details that are sufficient for the consideration of these cases, especially when the persons in question also executed some years of prison during the first decades of the communist regime, there are some important issues that came to the surface when it comes to memorialisation.

The first remark on the biographical reconstructions is their neglect of certain sensitive aspects. For instance, in case of Gyr and Crainic, the authors overlooked their legionary commitment and precisely the profound anti-democratic, far-right ideological orientation of the Legionary Movement, in line with other fascist movements of the time. In Vulcănescu's case, the authors mentioned his position within the Antonescu government, but they insisted on the fact that he was a technocrat, a competent specialist (an aspect which was recognised by the Court in the Criminal Decision no. 27/6 February 1948), and therefore he cannot be held

responsible for the political decisions that were taken by the ministers and, ultimately, the dictator Ion Antonescu. This inference is fallacious. The Court stated that his professional competence and activity as a technocrat is not tantamount to a lack of responsibility. The reason is that he participated to the work of government (*opera de guvernare*) as undersecretary of state and thus fell under the incidence of Law no. 312/1945, aimed at those who took part in the governing process irrespective of their professional competence and function exerted within the institutional hierarchy³. The testimonies provided by some witnesses in Vulcănescu's defence constituted mitigating circumstances that reduced the penalty, but did not absolve him of guilt. Consequently, the penalty of 8 years in prison that Vulcănescu received as undersecretary of state differs significantly from the death penalty that Ion Antonescu – as prime-minister and *de facto* absolute leader of Romania – received.

The second remark is the evaluation of the trials conducted against persons accused of war crimes as 'communist trials' being conducted under Soviet occupation or during the communist regime. Hence, the suggestion is that these trials lack legitimacy and were intended solely for political purposes, that is to eliminate from public life and sometimes to repress political adversaries of the communist regime. This argument neglects three important aspects. Firstly, Law no. 312/1945 was enacted as an obligation that Romania accepted within the Allied Commission under the Armistice Convention signed on 12 September 1944 (published in *Monitorul Oficial* no. 219/22 September 1944) between the following contracting parties: Romanian Government, on one hand, and the Governments of the Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and the United States of America, on the other hand. Therefore, Law no. 312 and the subsequent trials had the same purpose as the Nuremberg Trials. Secondly, due to the fact that between June 1941 and August 1944 Romania was an ally of Nazi Germany, the trials that were organised between 1945 and 1946 under the provisions of Law no. 312 had political and humanitarian intentions, namely to bring to justice those who had participated in the Holocaust. Thirdly, from 23 August 1944 to 30 December 1947 there was a gradual seizure of power by the Romanian Communist Party (Florian 2018, pp. 206-207), a transition from the attempt to reinforce democracy after 23 August 1944 to the complete seizure of power following the proclamation of the republic that took place soon after King Michael I's abdication.

³ The whole argument is quoted in the Civil Decision no. 967A/16 June 2019 pronounced by the Bucharest Court of Appeals in File no. 29432/3/2016.

The third remark is the confusion between a person as an author who produced literary or philosophical works and a person who held certain political and ideological commitments, in the sense that the intellectual background appears to be used in order to excuse someone's anti-democratic pledges. This is the case for the following authors: Vulcănescu, who had an extensive literary activity; Gyr, who wrote poems and became a symbol of resistance through literature during the communist penitentiary system; and Crainic, who was a famous theologian of his time. When referring to the anti-democratic political and ideological commitments, I do not mean solely the far-right ideology (Legionary Movement), but also the far-left ideology. The champion of encompassing these political extremes is obviously Nichifor Crainic, who served all of Romania's dictatorships: the National Legionary State as a legionary, the Antonescu regime, international communism as an informer of the *Securitate* while in prison, and national-communism as a propagandist writer. Against this background, it is hard to understand the type of memorialisation that we tried to sketch in the previous section of this paper. The situation is even more complicated if one considers some of his theological and political teachings (Bărbulescu 2010). Moreover, one condition for a person to be considered a confessor of the Church and, further, a candidate for sainthood is the righteousness of his teaching (*orthodoxia*). Along these lines, the question is: how orthodox can Crainic's teaching be considered as long as he acknowledged ideas that were from the very beginning of the Church's existence condemned as heretical?

From here, possibly, stems a fourth remark: the intellectual work of such authors is taken for granted and no competent discussion about the quality of this work ensues. In other words, there is a confusion between the apologetic discourse with regard to their work and the scientific discussion on their arguments and intellectual contribution to the debate of the time. The most amazing case is that of Crainic, who appears to be celebrated as a theologian although he professed ideas that were condemned by the Church from the very beginning of its existence (first century AD). More exactly, Nichifor Crainic and A.C. Cuza, leading anti-Semites, rallied to Marcion from Sinope, who aimed to purify Christian theology from any Jewish influence, which led to his excommunication from the Church and the condemnation of his teachings. For example, Crainic claimed that Jesus was not a Jew, and the Old Testament is not Jewish, with the implication of a divorce between Judaism and Christianity and the suggestion that it is the Talmud which is representative for the Jewish religious tradition and that this book was created by Jews in order to combat the Gospels and to fight

Christians (International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania 2004, p. 25).

Memorial conflict between theological discourses and historical discourses

So far, we have looked at how the media of the Romanian Orthodox Church Patriarchate memorialised during the “Solemn Year of Patriarch Justinian and of the Defenders of Orthodoxy during Communism” those personalities that had been previously convicted for war crimes, that is for their activity during the Holocaust in Romania. We saw that Mircea Vulcănescu, Radu Gyr, Nichifor Crainic, and the Metropolitan Visarion Puiu were presented as “Church Confessors” (*Mărturisitori ai Bisericii*) and, in any case, as “Defenders of Orthodoxy during Communism” (*Apărători ai ortodoxiei în timpul comunismului*). According to a certain line of argumentation, Mircea Vulcănescu is considered a Martyr for Christ. If we analyse the ways in which the notion of “Defenders of Orthodoxy” was used in various media productions of the Patriarchy during 2017 and 2018, we reach an interesting conclusion. On the one hand, this notion covers all people who were imprisoned during the communist regime and professed the Christian faith in its Orthodox variant. On the other hand, the notion of “Orthodoxy Defenders” is used synonymously to notions from the theological vocabulary such as “Church confessors”, “Christian confessors”, “Church martyrs”, or “Martyrs for Christ”. Without elaborating further on this argument, I consider that this confusion cannot be sustained in theological terms, since many of the so-called “Defenders of Orthodoxy” were imprisoned not because of their faith, but for other reasons. They could have had a Christian behaviour or experienced a spiritual renewal during their detention, but this does not necessarily qualify them as “Defenders of Orthodoxy during Communism” and even less so as Confessors or Martyrs. Looking at the relation between Confessor and Martyr, we have to acknowledge that the notion of Martyr denotes a spiritual reality which is higher than that of a Confessor, because it involves confessing the faith at the cost of life, of one’s very existence. Consequently, while the notion of Martyr is included in the larger category of Confessor, its spiritual and theological dimension is higher than that of Confessor. However, persons from both categories can be candidates for sainthood. In the Christian Sinaxars there are Saints Confessors and Saints Martyrs.

The memorialisation of the personalities discussed above, although carried out under the neutral denomination of “Defenders of Orthodoxy”, is possible only by sacrificing some demands of objective inquiry (full

reconstruction of biographies with all aspects of their lives, correct reconstruction of their theological teachings, and, in general, objective assessment of their intellectual work) and some deformation of reality (the presentation of the trials for war crimes as political trials organised by the communist regime).

However, the quest for persons that defended the faith by confessing and being martyred for it is absolutely legitimate from a theological perspective. According to its teaching, the Church is built on the sacrifice of Saints as confessors and martyrs. The Holy Table (*Sfântul Prestol*) which is located in the Holy Altar and the Holy Antimins (*Sfântul Antimis*) have in their constitution relics of Holy Martyrs. Without these relics the building of the church cannot be consecrated and, furthermore, no liturgical ceremony can be organised. The importance of Martyrs can be proven in other aspects of Church life too (Bilalis 2016; Caragiu 2017).

Although not every confessor and martyr is automatically canonised, the confession of faith and martyrdom are two important conditions for starting a process of canonisation once they are acknowledged as such by the Church and/or by popular devotion. While the cases of Radu Gyr and Nichifor Crainic are relatively easy to counter-argue by proving their heterodox teaching and their behaviour during the communist detention and afterwards, the most complicated case seems to be Vulcănescu's. As a victim of communism, can the conditions of detention he was exposed to and his behaviour during the last years of life qualify him as a Christian Confessor and, moreover, as Martyr? Aside from the answers already provided above, let us try to evaluate the situation even further with regard to an important distinction derived from penal doctrine.

One distinction, between Holocaust perpetrator and victim of communism, has already been discussed above. Another difference stems from penal doctrine and criminal law. It concerns the three phases of the criminal process: the criminal investigation (*urmărirea penală*), the judicial trial (*procesul penal*), and the execution in the penitentiary system of the penalty received by a definitive criminal decision (*punerea în executare a hotărârilor penale rămase definitive*). Although parts of the same criminal process, the definitive condemnation that ends the first two phases and starts the last phase of execution makes a distinction between guilt and the execution of the punishment. According to the definitive solution of the judicial trial, Mircea Vulcănescu was found guilty of participation to the Holocaust in Romania in his capacity of undersecretary of state. According to the way in which he executed his sentence, Mircea Vulcănescu is likely to be a victim of communism. The main arguments that support this contention

are the following: the conditions of detention to which he was subjected and the refusal of his internment in hospital and of providing him with proper medication. These aspects could support the hypothesis of the communist regime's intention to terminate his life. In these circumstances, we can raise the following question: is his *victim of communism* quality apt to pardon his *Holocaust perpetrator* status, which is undeniable according to the judiciary system that gave a solemn interpretation of the evidence that was collected against him? Based on the distinctions mentioned previously, the answer is downright negative: the quality of victim as a result of conditions during detention cannot excuse his guilt of having been part of the governmental mechanism that implemented the Holocaust in Romania.

To better understand this issue, we shall proceed to making an analogy with the current situation. For the states under the jurisdiction of the European Court for Human Rights, one citizen condemned by penal law may have his fundamental rights violated by the conditions of detention, but this does not mean in any case that he is absolved of guilt. Nevertheless, the fact that Mircea Vulcănescu died because of his conditions of detention is interpreted as absolving his guilt, and this is the main source of the confusion surrounding his case. Moreover, public opinion tends to focus solely on his quality of victim and to forget his acting in a capacity of Holocaust perpetrator, and this is the result of selective research into the past.

How is this related to his alleged quality of martyr? For the theology of martyrdom, which is formulated from the very beginning in St. Paul's teachings, an essential aspect is the attitude of the faithful toward the persecutors (Bilalis 2016, p. 73). According to the testimonies, Vulcănescu's last words before dying were "Do not avenge us!" (*Să nu ne răzbunați!*). These suggest a behaviour that is similar to those of the Christians persecuted during the first three centuries of our era. However, there are other things to bear in mind when talking about martyrdom. One important condition is the defence of the faith through a correct teaching. How *orthodox* is a teaching that links religion and ethnic background so intimately? Another condition that comes to the surface when referring to the first centuries of the Church that are referential for martyrdom is the fact that the sacrifice comes ultimately when the Christian should reply to the question whether (s)he gives up the faith in Christ. The important difference is that Mircea Vulcănescu was not jailed because he had to answer such a question. The reasons for sending him to prison were very different. The intense feeling of faith that he had according to testimonies and that we cannot contradict or support, but rather we take for granted, should be rather

seen as the result of his perception of an imminent death. Of course, there are minimal criteria for considering martyrdom, as the ones adopted in the important volume “Martyrs for Christ from Romania during the Communist Regime” (*Martiri pentru Hristos din România, în perioada regimului comunist*), but either we make a distinction between martyrdom in the contemporary world (especially during the 20th century) and we apply new criteria or we consider the martyrdom of the first centuries of the Christian era as referential and we try to analyse every case of martyrdom against this background.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the ways in which the media of the Romanian Patriarchy aimed to memorialise some public figures that were imprisoned during the communist regime and, at the same time, were responsible in various capacities for the Holocaust in Romania. The context was provided by the 2017 “Solemn Year of Patriarch Justinian and of the Defenders of Orthodoxy during Communism”. This was the first time when the Romanian Orthodox Church created a public framework for dealing with the communist past. Previously, in the wake of the Final Report (2006) published by the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania, chaired by the political scientist Vladimir Tismăneanu, the Romanian Orthodox Church published an alternative report on the issue of Church-State relations during the period 1945-1989. The counter-report was released to the public in 2009 (Enache et al. 2009). This does not mean that the experience of detention during the first decades of communism is not commemorated in Romania. There are some laws that were designed for this purpose: Law no. 198/7 November 2011 declaring 23 August as the Day for Commemorating the Victims of Fascism and Communism and 21 December as the Day for the Memory of the Victims of Communism in Romania; Law no. 247/5 December 2011 declaring 9 March as the Day of the Anti-Communist Political Prisoners from 1944 to 1989. While Law no. 198/2011 followed the European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Stalinism and Nazism that was observed by EU institutions since 2009, Law no. 247/2011 was adopted at the initiative of the Romanian legislator and obviously aimed at linking the day commemorating the martyrdom of the 40 Roman soldiers in the Sebaste lake in the year 320 with that of the political prisoners in Romania during the period 1944-1989. This time the Church itself decided to create an outline for commemorating the political prisoners under the criterion of “Orthodoxy defenders”. Consequently, this category would not include all political prisoners, but

only those who defended the Orthodox confession of the Christian religion through teaching and sacrifice.

In this context, the present study examined the memorialisation of some people who were found guilty by judicial authorities for their role in the Holocaust in Romania and who carried out their sentences in the penitentiary system during the communist regime. This raised a number of theological and judicial problems that we discussed and tried to elucidate. Yet, the discussion is far from reaching a definitive conclusion here. There are many other issues that should be considered in order to expand and deepen this debate. Let us presume, however unlikely this may seem today, that in the upcoming years there would be a wave of popular devotion to some of these personalities and that in a more distant future the Romanian Orthodox Church would consider them for canonisation. In such circumstances, how relevant would a decision of condemnation by a judicial instance in secular Romania be to the canonisation process?

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Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS–UEFISCDI, proiect number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, within PNCDI III.

Chapter 11

Holocaust Remembrance, Memorial Space and Otherness. Dialogue between Memory and the Spectator

Astrid ROTTMAN¹

Architecture places human behaviour on its fundamental ground. Holocaust memorial architecture sets the stage for remembrance. Its architecture becomes a natural environment for memory to grow, not just preserve. Through its built shell, the mute speech of those who vanished becomes heard again. The memorial is a continuous meeting space between now and before, between the memory (testimony of the past) and the ephemeral visitor. Put face to face, their encounter is placed under the sign of alterity: the otherness of time and existence, of experience and space. Architecture mediates this relationship established between self and the Other. The portrayal of the Other through his memory collection can be witnessed, absorbed, and experienced in the memorial space as a living form that should follow and guide us outside the memorial, in our repeated times. In a regular type of meeting, both entities, the spectator and the narrator, could remain unaltered on each side, while in an ethical one, the self becomes the Other, therefore aware and responsible. Also, a clear necessity of unfolding and highlighting the diversity found between both characters – memory and spectator –, but also their similarities and common ground revealed through generations and historical times, is needed in order to move toward a transcendental representation. Emmanuel Levinas' writings and studies, whose central tenet is that ethics is "prime philosophy", play a crucial role in understanding the fundamentals of ethics and the distance set by the other's alterity. In the last 30 years, another type of commemorative concept is highlighted in the urban landscape, a narrative deprived of conventional rules, driving the public toward critical reflection and interpretative empathy in relation to the collective trauma. The actual discovery and recognition of the Other leads to self-recognition and identity, leaving behind totalitarian homogenisation and reductionist forms. Therefore, memorial space is defined by the self and the Other, from the past, present, and future times.

Keywords: Holocaust; memorial architecture; ethical space; face-to-face; neutral; identity.

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“The Other is the sole being I can wish to kill.”²
Emmanuel Levinas



Fig. 1

The Holocaust was a disruption in Western culture and civilisation. This historical episode which placed humankind at the limit because of the dehumanisation - by both sides – it involved was discussed and analysed in numerous scientific and humanistic studies. Within of that collective utterance, partially lacking clear and rational answers about the unaccountable dimensions of evil, architecture plays the part of a marker in public space. It physically puts this painful moment of European civilization on the map of the present, actually enlightening it in the process.

In 10-15 years, at most, the direct testimonies of the survivors will reach their biological limits. Afterwards, the story will be based mainly on images and narratives operating through the channels of media communication. The testimonies of the survivors will be replaced exclusively by symbolic representations – books, performances, films, and exhibitions. What will be the consistency and significance of this memory? Can we still use the term ‘memory’ in an era of post-memory? How will this type of representation create a living and affective connection with a distant past? How will it be received? And how will it be conveyed later?

In the present socio-political context, where more and more voices restage and reactivate publicly (paradoxically, even in the same European cultural space!) all kinds of racist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic discourses, based on a purposely misguided nationalism, it becomes obvious that we have the obligation to speak out about the very thin line that separates the tendencies of perpetuating what is good and the full unchaining of evil, both existing simultaneously in the human being.

² Levinas (1999, p. 171).

The Latin word “monumentum” is derived from “monere”: to warn, to recall. Thus, a monument in its original sense represents a structure that evokes a certain historical period, and also an engaging edifice invested with a living memory.

Memorial architecture is the space that shelters the testimonies and the living memory of the survivors; it is an escape from oblivion and annihilation. It is the proof that we acknowledge the traumas and the sufferings, and through the space presently created, the memorial provides a place for the community, where people are able to channel their emotions, united around a feeling of continuity and membership.

Memorial architecture is a host. It guides us through spatiality toward sensorial and physical experiences which hide symbols. Depending on the education, the culture, and the sensibility of the one who looks, the message is decoded and interpreted in different ways. Any interpretation is actually a recreation of the hosting space, therefore a reinterpretation of the original symbol; in this case, a reinterpretation and a rewriting of memory.

Naturally, we wonder how much and what memorial architecture manages to convey. How much of the reality experienced in that respective time are those memorials, those built representations, able to convey? How do they make us empathise with such an uncomfortable and delicate matter? And, most importantly: how does architecture influence us in what we convey further, in the private familial sphere and in the public social space?

In the last 30 years, the memorials dedicated to the Shoah acquired shape and substance through interventions in public space, becoming hosting and even relaxing spaces. They relinquished their own centre of gravity, the traditional, solemn monumentality, needing to be perceived as friendly and permeable spaces. The conjured past is kept in a continuous present and penetrates naturally our collective township, our daily existence. It is activated by its contemporary appearance, but, at the same time, it is neutralised. This intimate-familiar identity redefined the concept of approaching architectural themes and imposed a new kind of monumentality, in which public experience needs decoding and dialogue in order to process the narrative message.

The memorial is a continuous meeting space between now and before, between the memory (testimony of the past), and the ephemeral visitor. Put face to face, their encounter is placed under the sign of alterity: the otherness of time and existence, of experience and space. Architecture mediates the relationship established between those two characters: memory and the spectator.

Therefore, the study³ first describes the ways in which memory, the main character / exhibit of the memorial space, structured and coagulated in time. I will subsequently analyse the diversity and the similarities found between the two characters – memory and the spectator. To understand the fundamentals of ethics (as one of the main purposes of the memorial space is to convey an ethical message) and the distance set by *otherness*, my study is primarily based on Emmanuel Levinas' writings, which are underpinned by the idea that ethics is "prime philosophy". In the final part, I will present, through some examples, a number of gestures, of urban interventions which generated in public space a different kind of commemorative concept: a narrative deprived of conventional rules, driving the public toward critical reflection and interpretative empathy in relation to the collective trauma.

1. Holocaust remembrance / The memory

"To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Adorno 1983, p. 34) is one of the most renowned and controversial quotes about artistic production as an act. The Holocaust was a disruption, all the more shocking and impossible to account for as it emerged in the European cultural space in a moment of full maturity of the Western civilisation. With this quote, Theodor Adorno made a 'live' incision that cuts both ways: how can we write 'poetry' after, if that what we named 'poetry' before generated barbarity? How can we write poetry after, without validating the artistic and cultural space which generated that barbarity? At the same time, here he also traces and reveals a border between two realms: the one of testimonials and the one of voicelessness, the one of absence and the one of representation. People that experience a traumatic episode choose either to speak or to keep silent. Whatever testimony we choose to make is always weighed in relation to the option of keeping the silence. Silence/absence is the realm of those who are gone, while testimony/representation is an option, but only of those who are still present. Silence is a memorial by itself, as with the moments of silence we observe on certain occasions.

Memory, along with reflection and imagination, are superior psychological processes. Memory defines the dimensions of our integration and mental organisation on the three sections of the temporal horizon: past, present, and future. Its three fundamental processes – memorising, storing,

³ The present chapter is part of my PhD thesis (in progress), *Ha Shoah, Arhitectura graiului*. Parts of it were also presented and published in the second volume of the collective work *PSIHOARHITECTURA*, the proceedings of the conference "Psihosomatica Arhitecturii" held at the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism - UAUIM, 17-18 May 2018, Bucharest.

and updating – are mentioned in almost all its definitions. “A psychical process consisting of imprinting, acknowledging and reproducing sensations, feelings, movements, knowledge and others from the past” (DEX.RO 2019). Thanks to memory, the personal ego acquires continuity and identity over time. Our memory might be seen as a space where the past regains life and lasts. At the same time, architecture ‘places human actions in space’⁴, meaning that, in our case, architecture places in space the act of memorising (imprinting, acknowledging, reproducing events and feelings).

For almost four decades after the Second World War, the stories related to the Holocaust were mainly confined to the private sphere (family, acquaintances). Starting with the 1980s, the narration of Holocaust survivors gained testimonial status. Every survivor became responsible for preserving the memory of the Holocaust in an unaware and sceptical world, one that forgets easily.

In spite of the 75 years that separate us from the end of the war, this historical episode remains, more than any other, a reference and analysis point in European culture allowing us to comprehend communal morals and ethics. Therefore, memory needs to be preserved and needs new concepts of representation in which the emotions, the experiences, and the genuineness define the commemorative and museal space.

The memorial is a healing environment that is so useful for the victims and their relatives, while memory is preserved and conveyed to the future generations.

There are memorials and monuments which commemorate an event, a historical moment, or a hero, and there are memorials which commemorate a speech (a voice). In the case of the Shoah, we commemorate a trauma, a collective discourse ended and muted by means of violence.

In life, we speak. We speak for the other or we speak to ourselves through our thoughts. We speak through our acts, our actions, our behaviour, through the things we surround ourselves with. Our whole existence is, basically, a testimony of our own speech and an imprint of it.

Each Jew coeval with this moment of history did speak at that time on an individual level: by the way he lived, by his thoughts, his acts, by resignation, hope, pictures, records, arts, literature, philosophy, and so on. We commemorate their lost speech through the voices of those who narrated and testified and we build, through memorials, the architecture of their collective discourse.

⁴ “... the human actions placed in space by architecture might mean its most lasting contribution for humanity over centuries” (Perez-Gomez 2018, p. 31).

The survivors 'voices become a central part for us in understanding the Holocaust. These testimonies capture the emotions and humanity of the very people who endured those horrors and facilitate an unmediated and empathetic response from the present public. The survivors' testimonies not only counterbalanced objective gaps in the historical record, but also contributed to identifying and labelling in society some human actions and typologies which may generate potential atrocities.

Worldwide, the estimated number of living Holocaust survivors decreases every year. Many of them are in their 80s and 90s. Holocaust remembrance educators agree that no book, film, or traditional exhibition can be compared to the voice of a survivor. The day when no one will be able to tell their story is coming soon.

Marko Feingold, the oldest Austrian Holocaust survivor, died in September 2019 at the age of 106. He was one of the last survivors of the Holocaust who were adults at that time. Despite his advanced age, he was active in speaking out about the Holocaust, and he took part in many conferences and events, especially for schoolchildren. "I must have spoken to around half a million people", he said in a 2018 interview (Timesofisrael.com 2019).

Memory is the foundation of our culture and identity. The capacity to remember is what separates us from all other living creatures. Identity is rooted in knowing and remembering our origin and history, whether it be that of an individual, a family, an institution, a country, or even a religion. And identity and meaning are strengthened when we gather and share our stories.

"What is a witness if not someone who has a tale to tell and lives only with one haunting desire: to tell it. Without memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future. After all, God is God because he remembers." said Elie Wiesel in one of his interviews (Npr.org 2019).

1.1. The origin of the memories

As mentioned above, when we talk about the Holocaust, remembering and re-remembering is a duty for the survivors. This memory belongs to the realm of ethics and it represents by itself a form of justice. The Holocaust cannot leave the sphere of memory and become history, like other historical events or phenomena, first of all because of its survivors, and second, because of its historical uniqueness.

Avishai Margalit (2002, p. VIII), in *The Ethics of Memory*, tells us that his mother used to say: "...the role for the Jews that remain is to form

communities of memory – to serve as ‘soul candles’ like the candles that are ritually kindled in memory of the dead”. And Aleida Assmann (2014, p. 29), talking about trauma and testimony, said: “...the testimony of trauma includes the listener too. He is like a piece of paper on which the story is written for the first time.”

The memory of Holocaust is formed and structured in several stages. In her essay, ‘Transformations of Holocaust Memory, Frames of Transmission and Meditation’, Aleida Assmann (2015) speaks about three major moments when the memory related to this event gained contour and was perpetuated till today: 1945 – with the direct testimony of the victims; 1985 – a “culture of memory” conveyed mainly in an institutional public setting; and starting with 2015 – as an exclusively “mediated memory”, seeing that the direct memory of the survivors is disappearing.

1.2. The surviving witness

“In the camp, one of the reasons that can drive a prisoner to survive is the idea of becoming a witness” (Agamben 2006, p. 11).

The witness unites in his person the role of the victim and that of the witness. As a survivor, he epitomises *the lost speech* of those who did not survive and brings back to memory their lost names and identities.

In his turn, the witness depends on a second person, the receiver of his narrative. When still in Auschwitz, Primo Levi often feared that he would go back home and find out that nobody would be willing to hear his story. In case of a lack of reception, his survival – if that was the motive for his desire to stay alive – would become futile.

“Remembrance, as we learned from Maurice Halbwachs, means in no way a subjective and interior matter, it implies in every situation the existence of potential recipients and interests, but also of social instances for confirmation, evaluation, filling of correction” (Assmann 2014, p. 29).

1.3. A memory of oblivion

In the first years after the war, the memory of the horrors experienced by victims of the Holocaust found no place within the cultural arena, which was oriented to modernisation and progress. The past was meant to be forgotten. Europe was meant to be reborn, and that could not be built by vengeance.

“We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past and look to the future. We cannot afford to drag forward across the years to come hatreds and revenges which have sprung from the injuries of the past.” This

is an excerpt from a speech delivered by Winston Churchill at the University of Zurich in 1946 (Aei.pitt.edu 2019).

The first decade after war was marked by a ‘memory of oblivion’. The survivors had chosen, mostly, to keep quiet. Oblivion had become a necessary step, an antidote for their sufferings. The stories about the Holocaust were confined, at best, to the limited sphere of the family, and the victims were commemorated discretely, in the intimacy of close acquaintances. At the same time, society by itself observed a certain self-imposed ‘policy of silence’. The narratives and testimonies of the survivors were received with reticence in public. The Holocaust, during the first decade after the war, became *taboo*, a fracture between the survivors and the world they lived in.

In his acceptance speech at the ceremony where he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Elie Wiesel said: “No one may speak for the dead; no one may interpret their mutilated dreams and visions” (NobelPrize.org 2019).

1.4. A culture of memory

In 1950, four years after Winston Churchill’s speech, Hannah Arendt wrote *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and spoke for the first time about a new approach to conveying the memory of the Holocaust. According to her vision, another point of view on the past was needed, a critical analytical attitude, an ethical vision for preserving and conveying the memories.

“We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain” (Arendt 2014, p. 9).

This is ground zero for building a conscious memory based on acknowledging the past, however uncomfortable. The traumatic memories and narrations of the victims must be incorporated in written history. We are talking here about a new kind of approach concerning the past, implying a self-critical and responsible attitude from the political actors.

Subsequently though, the 1990s were marked in public space by a ‘politics of regret’. A plurality of excuses voiced by politicians built a so-called ‘negative memory’ concerning the historical events of the Holocaust.

1.5. An institutionalised memory

Starting in the 2000s, whereas the survivors' direct memory began to disappear, the long-term transmission of the memory of the Holocaust became a project in itself. In 1998, IHRA –International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance – was founded. On 27 January 2000, the representatives of 46 governments from all over the world met in Stockholm to discuss about education, research, and the future memory of the Holocaust. By the end of that meeting, all the participants signed a declaration, known since as 'The Stockholm Declaration'.

“The Holocaust (Shoah) fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization... The magnitude of the Holocaust, planned and carried out by the Nazis, must be forever seared in our collective memory... We pledge to strengthen *our efforts* to promote education, remembrance and research about the Holocaust” (Hmd.org.uk, 2019).

1.6. Individual or collective memory. The generation of postmemory

In the last few years, the theories concerning the study of memory already shaped curatorial concepts and, implicitly, the message transmitted to the public. 'Individual memory' is obviously connected with the ones who directly experienced certain events. Those eyewitnesses have powerful and direct personal memories from that period. “There is no need to convince anybody that there is such a thing as an individual memory. Memory attaches to people in the singular, but does it attach to them in the plural?” (Assmann 2010, p. 35). 'Collective memory' is related to the concept of collective identity, which encompasses social, political, and cultural memory (Assmann 2010, p. 40). Susan Sontag, on the other hand, denies the existence of such a notion: “All memory is individual, unreproducible – it dies with each person” (Sontag 2003, p. 86). She claims that what we call 'collective memory' is not a general memory, but it refers to information induced in society by means of photographs recognised by people as meaningful examples.

The memories from the years 1940-1945 are thus transferred to the so-called “Generation of Postmemory” (Hirsch 2012, p. 29). From the end of the 20th century, the generation who lived through those historical events is decreasing rapidly, year by year. The target public, the contemporary public, is no longer directly related to the memory and the moment of the war. The events thus signify *the others' past*, not the personal past.

'Individual memory' thereby gives way to 'social memory' (Assmann 2010, p. 41). 'Postmemory' therefore signifies the relation

between the second or third generation and the traumatic experiences preceding their birth. In spite of the fact that they did not experience them personally, the descendants are profoundly connected with their parents and grandparents' memories, and the ties with the past are becoming a sort of personal memory. 'Postmemory' is imprinted in us by imagination and not by experience, as it is the case for the first generation. "Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated, not by recall, but by imaginative investment, projection and creation" (Hirsch 2012, p. 33). Marianne Hirsch identifies the addiction to images – photographs – as the main medium for the transgenerational conveying of the trauma, and the family as the place where this conveying takes place. Stepping ahead, we can therefore understand why art, as a form of visual expression, is a medium by which we can so thoroughly connect with the past. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, however, Susan Sontag (2003) sees with a critical eye the effects produced in contemporary culture by images representing violence or war, and tries to answer a set of questions: Which is the goal of exposing atrocities in the media? How does the showing of sufferings affect us? Do we become, in our turn, guilty for watching those images? Do we become responsible only because we are watching them? "Narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us" (Sontag 2003, p.71).

1.7. A globalised memory

By means of representation (images, movies, events, speeches, and so on), the Holocaust has become a universal symbol. Almost disconnected from its historical substance, its signification is understood in countries all over the world. It features on most media channels. The representations of the Holocaust in museums and monuments have become models and sources for commemorating other similar historical traumas.

2. Memorial space and otherness

Memorial architecture represents the habitat – place and space – in which the ego created and preserved by memory is sheltered and protected from the neutral and indifferent diurnal. In its built interior, the collective speech of those who are gone acquires a voice. Although its world is dead, here it revives and regains materiality in a continuous and boundless time. Here, inwardly, at home, it speaks and tells its story. Memory acquires contours by means of representation, while by message and hospitality it mediates the encounter with the other, with the exterior. Thanks to memory,

the personal ego acquires continuity and identity at the same time. In the space of memory, the past regains life and survives.

2.1. The ethical speech

In the first place, through its spatial representation and curatorial concept, the role of the memorial is to convey an **ethical** message: “The next time you witness hatred | The next time you see injustice | The next time you hear about genocide | Think about what you saw!”⁵

Hence, knowledge, empathy, and action are needed.

We may **know**, but remain neutral and indifferent. We may **empathize**, we may share another person’s pain and sorrow, but our thoughts may end there, at developing feelings of compassion and understanding. Therefore, **empathy is not the purpose**. While feeling another person’s pain may lead to pity, empathy must lead to unity and partnership. However, the danger of seeing empathy as the end of our commitment against injustice is still present. Actually, we must see it as a starting point for our future actions in the name of justice and liberty, in the name of what is genuine and natural. It is all about empathy and action, because: “Never Again. What You Do Matters!”⁶ Elie Wiesel always saw memory, the act of remembering, as a starting point for preventing future evil. “My goal is always the same, to invoke the past as a shield for the future” (*Wiesel 1985, p. 36*).

Second, the memorial – as a structure – represents a meeting place of two characters: on the one hand, the **memory**, the testimony, and on the other, the **visitor**. The encounter occurs *face to face*. It happens and it is filtered by our senses, based in the present. We see, we hear, we imagine. The encounter occurs in the first place under the sign of *otherness*: we exist, they are no more. Architecture mediates this relationship established between *Self* and the *Other*.

2.2. The philosopher’s speech

In this research journey, in order to understand the distance set by the other’s alterity, we draw our inspiration from Emmanuel Levinas’ studies, which argue that *ethics* is “prime philosophy”. The choice is not a random one. As he acknowledged, his work “is dominated by the feelings

⁵ Text belonging to Elie Wiesel which is inscribed at the entry to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

⁶ “Never Again. What You Do Matters” is the name of a campaign initiated in 2013 by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

and remembrance of the Nazi horror” (Malka 2005, p. 60). Levinas survived the Holocaust and believed that a major change was needed in traditional philosophical thinking in its aftermath. Levinas, thus parted with ontology, a philosophy of injustice which reduces ‘the other’ to ‘the same’. The discovery of otherness, against a totalitarian homogenisation, is the central concept of his thinking.

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), one of the most influential philosophers of the second half of the 20th century, was the founder and promoter of French phenomenology. He was born in a Jewish family in 1906, in Kaunas, Lithuania. After being raised, in his first years of life, as part of the cultivated Jewish society to which he belonged (his father owned a bookshop), he left in 1923 to Strasbourg in order to study philosophy. Between 1928 and 1929, we find him in Freiburg, where he attended the classes and seminars held by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. In 1930, he returned to France, settling in Paris, married Raissa Levi (whom he knew since childhood), and received French citizenship. In 1939, he reported for military duty and left for the front, but soon (in May 1940), he became a prisoner of war. During the next five years, he was imprisoned in a camp near Hannover. Being a Jew, he managed, paradoxically, to survive the Nazi regime due to his status of prisoner of war, while his family, still in Lithuania, was murdered. After the war, he returns to France, wherein 1961 he received his first academic appointment at the University of Poitiers. From 1967 he becomes a professor at the University of Paris Nanterre, and from 1973 at the Sorbonne.

Speaking frequently of his studies in Freiburg, Levinas said “I came to see Husserl and I saw Heidegger” (Malka 2005, p. 54). I am mentioning this because the encounter with those two, but especially with Heidegger, in conjunction with his own biographical experiences from his early life (the war and the Nazi regime), had a great influence on the essence of his later philosophical studies.

In the 1930s, Levinas introduced phenomenology to France, by means of translating and commenting the works of Husserl and Heidegger. Later, with his first essential work, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, written 15 years after the war ended, his voice, calm and thoroughly argumentative, detached itself from existential phenomenology – the kingdom of ‘being’ – in order to focus on affection and sensibility, analysing tenderly, but firmly, subjectivity as the basis for interpersonal relations.

Contrary to ontology – about which he stated: “Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the Other to the Same, by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of

being” (Levinas 1999, p. 26) – Levinas draws attention to the *unique* and *singular*, to *exception* and *difference*. We can define and comprehend the other one, the *Other*, not only by analysing him, for he is not an object, a synthesis, a result of a description. The *Other*, related to me, in his encounter with me, leaves a mark, an imprint, imposing on me *respect*, *hospitality*, and, not least, *responsibility*. This duty, however, does not emanate from a set of rules determined by default according to a context: political, economic, or cultural. Most often, in history, rules damage the human, serving instead the system, by imposing *violence*,⁷ albeit in the name of truth, reason, or integrity. For Levinas, responsibility is not a set of values. It must not be confused with morality, because it does not benefit from rules and institutions that enforce them. Levinas regards responsibility as something subjective and spontaneous, beyond reason, a “signification without a context” (Levinas 1999, p. 7). He leaves behind the traditional philosophical thinking and leads us toward that which he calls *the first philosophy: ethics* – “ethics is an optics. But it is a ‘vision’ without image, bereft of the synoptic and totalizing objectifying virtues of vision, a relation or an intentionality of a wholly different type” (Levinas 1999, p. 7).

In Levinas’ demonstration, *the face of the other* and the *face-to-face* relation represent key concepts. The face is not a physical detail. The contact with the other’s face is, actually, the reaching of a limit, of a border, of a virtual perimeter which you can cross or not. It is the place from where I can return in **totality** or step further to **infinity**. The steps forward, in exteriority, mean, or should I say, carry myself to transcendence. The purpose of the human being is out there, in the light of infinity. We do not limit ourselves to understanding the other, but, in this established relationship, become responsible for him, even to the point of wishing for one’s death for the other. “This height is no longer the heavens, but the Invisible is the very elevation of height and its nobility. To die for the invisible – this is metaphysics” (Levinas 1999, p. 18). The other I must *let be*, I must accept him and maintain the relationship with him, dedicate myself, even in the situation of his *unconfessing* to me, all that because “not every discourse is a relation with the exteriority” (Levinas 1999, p. 52). According to Levinas, speaking and oratory bear in themselves the signs of violence and injustice. Contrary to *dialogue*, where the two speakers are face to face, in a relation based upon equality and balance (strangers but free), discourse approaches the *Other lopsided*, because by default it claims

⁷ “But violence does not consist so much in injuring and annihilating persons as in interrupting their continuity, making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves, making them betray not only commitments but their own substance, making them carry out actions that will destroy every possibility for action.” (Levinas 1999, p. 5).

his approval, deprives him of freedom and, thus, subjects him to an injustice. “We call justice this face to face approach in conversation. If truth arises in the absolute experience in which being gleams with his own light, then truth is produced only in veritable conversation or in justice” (Levinas 1999, p. 53).

Being alive and being in this world is a joy. The meaning of life is my accomplishment alongside the other. Life is not solitude and fear of death, as Heidegger claimed. The life of the other becomes my own destiny and, therefore, I become responsible for both. For Levinas, life, seen from the perspective of ethics, is the wisdom of love. Levinas puts up for us a totally different way of thinking, a different way of being in this world. He dares us to look beyond being, beyond its appearance, and beyond what one can see in the light. Basically, he tells us that being good means more than being. He carries us, tenderly but argumentatively, to a philosophy of kindness.

2.3. The conceptual speech

Architecture “places in space”⁸ human actions; therefore, in our case, architecture places the action of memorising in space. Holocaust memorial architecture sets the stage for remembrance. Through this spatial ‘setup’, can we really feel a Holocaust victim’s pain? Can we really understand their tragedy after we visit a memorial?

In the memorial space, I can find and experience the image of the *other*, the representation of his trauma, as something ‘exposed’ – eventually, empathising with it, or I can bring and adopt those experiences in my daily life to generate actions or life choices.

Further, based on Levinas’ studies, we can highlight a series of concepts (Mureşan 2005, p. 13) that could define the imaginary meeting space of the two characters: memory and the spectator. These concepts could be used to define the commemorative public space. The individual and the particular thus become the starting points for understanding and representing the Holocaust. The subjects of the representation are introspective. The emphasis is on ‘me, here and now’ as much as on ‘them, there and then’.

Speech versus dialogue / Speech and rhetoric can be signs of violence and injustice. But dialogue, in which the two interlocutors stand face to face, represents a relationship of equality and balance.

⁸ “... the human actions placed in space by architecture might mean its most lasting contribution for humanity over centuries” (Perez-Gomez 2018, p. 31).

Otherwise than being / Being good means more than being. We are all human beings, the victims and the executioners as well. But it is important to do *good*, to make the leap over being.

Trace and affect / The relationship with the other is not knowledge but affect. The other becomes present in me. The trace is not a former presence, it becomes present.

Proximity, neighbourhood, hospitality / These notions do not mean a space, the distance from the other, but the quality of the relationship with the other.

Totality or Infinity / Totality (the same) represents an enclosed relationship, lacking evolution, dead even, while infinity (the other) instigates to an open and lively relationship, a relationship subject to a perpetual new. The independence and the freedom of the two poles imply resisting the attempts to blur the differences between them.

The Dialogue / The commemorative speech

In public debate, the Holocaust is almost exclusively associated with Nazi concentration camps – in particular with Auschwitz. We all know the problems societies face in accepting responsibility for their national contribution to the Holocaust. In their collective memory, the Holocaust was performed exclusively by the Germans, and that is the whole story. Apart from the historical or political motivations that undoubtedly exist, I think that an important cause of this may be the type of visual representation of the event. Several symbols have become emblematic for the Holocaust: the railway, the freight car, the piles of suitcases, of clothes, of shoes, the star of David, etc. All these symbols are legitimate and have their origin in what we can identify as the ‘ground zero’ of the event – when the camps were liberated, but the use of these symbols with obstinacy over 75 years imprinted in the collective mentality a notion that ‘this is what the Holocaust means’. The visual dialogue, the concepts, and the symbolism of representation also need a different paradigm, to represent the reality of the Holocaust in its complexity.

The contemporary city, with its fluid and dynamic shape, calls for a commemorative discourse adapted to the modern lifestyle. Even if we are locals, tourists, or just passers-by, we walk through our urban spaces most often thinking about something else. The classic commemorative gesture imposed by traditional monumentality hardly finds its place in our daily, even occasional agenda. Consequently, a new type of commemorative language has appeared. Usually generated by private artistic initiatives, these ‘frames of memory’ have reinvigorated the public’s interest and

generated, through specific forms of representation, another type of interaction. Carrying a non-conformist message or one that is difficult to decode, the new memorials are far from the classic figurative forms of expression and are often criticised by the general public. Being almost invisible in space, they make the traditional function of monuments, to represent landmarks in the city, disappear. Instead, their impact becomes more durable through their innovative concept: the dialogue.



Fig. 2

THE INVISIBLE - 2146 stones. Monument against racism

Between April 1990 and May 1993, a memorial was made in Saarbrücken, Germany, which is, actually, invisible. The German artist Jochen Gerz (jochengerz.eu 2019), together with his students, furtively inscribed 2,146 cobblestones from the 8,000 which up made the pavement of the promenade leading to Saarbrücken Palace – the current state parliament and the former Gestapo headquarters. For three years, during the night, they successively removed ten to twenty cobblestones from the pavement, subsequently engraving them with the names of the Jewish cemeteries disaffected during the Nazi administration, and then, also secretly, replacing them in the pavement, but with the inscription facing down.

Abstract or avant-gardist, artistic creations base their perception mainly on the sense of sight. But “sight separates us from the world, while all the other senses reunite us with it” (Pallasmaa 2015, p. 48). Jochen Gerz’s intervention answers the very dilemma concerning the representation of Shoah by non-visual means. By his act, the artist represents just ‘the unspeakable’. Holocaust is a historical event impossible to describe and represent, first because it is impossible to even imagine those acts of violence, and, second, because it is improper to use art as a means of representation.

The artistic deed becomes metaphoric through the fact that it is invisible. The disappearance of the Jewish graves and tombstones gains materiality by the very fact that the visual perception is absent. Even if we cannot see them, they exist, deposited, archived somewhere in the collective memory. “In the beginning there was silence – no words. The word itself is a breaking out. The word itself is an act of violence; it breaks the silence” (Wiesel 1985, p. 119).

Strolling through that public place, the cobblestones we step on do seem to be the same. Nothing distinguishes a stone from another. *All* are the same. But, if we look *beyond* the image they show to us, if we wish to see the differences, to search them and to comprehend them, we will find the reality. We will discover the *alterity*. We must find out and wish to see in order to transcend toward infinity, because the 2,146 cemeteries are multiplying in infinity of destroyed graves.

“... the world is what we see, but still we must learn to see it – first of all, meaning that we must equate by cognition this vision, to conquer it, to tell what means that we and that see, therefore to behave as though we don’t know a thing, as though we have, therein, everything to learn” (Merleau-Ponty 2017, p. 16).

THE INFINITY

To date, artist Gunter Demnig has placed around 70,000 cubic stones throughout Europe. The first 50 were illegally installed in Berlin in May 1996, but the very first one was set on 16 December 1992 in front of the Cologne City Hall and it is inscribed with Heinrich Himmler's order for the initiation of deportations.



Fig. 3

Stolpersteine (Stolpersteine.eu, 2019) is today the “largest decentralized memorial in the world”, as Gunter Demnig puts it. Despite their small individual size – 10x10 cm – the 75,000 cubic stones make up a huge memory landscape, and one which is constantly growing. They constitute a network that unites past and present destinies through a unique and moral gesture of commemorating. The Stolpersteine is already a social phenomenon, due to the fact that it engages not only the relatives of the victims but also volunteers, historians, associations, etc. Abandoning almost all the space symbols of monumental art, the Stumbling Stones capture and

gain the attention of people by surprise. A conventional memorial ritual is usually met with the general public's indifference. The inscribed brass on the stones catches the one's eye only when the people are very close or when they have already passed it. The stones are not large enough so their presence would remain in the spatial memory of the place, but they certainly cannot be ignored. Stolpersteine represents a new concept of urban commemoration. On the city scale, the discrete gesture focuses on the individual and the particular tragic destinies. It actually celebrates the diversity of those who disappeared or were forced to leave their homes during the Holocaust. Discreetly, they somehow return them with these stones to the place where they spent their *lives*. "A person is only forgotten when his or her name is forgotten" says Gunter Demnig, citing the Talmud (Stolpersteine.eu 2019). But the most important thing is the actual message that the Stolpersteine transmit to the people: reading the inscriptions it is impossible not to think about those who lived quietly in the house in front of us and were brutally forced to leave. What would we do today if our neighbours were gone? What if we were violently removed from everyday life?

THE TRACE



Fig. 4

Shoes on the Danube Bank (Yadvashem.org, 2019) is a haunting tribute to this horrific time of history created by the film director Can Togay and the sculptor Gyula Pauer. Installed along the bank of the Danube River in Budapest, the monument consists of 60 pairs of 1940s-style shoes, true to life in size and detail, sculpted out of iron. It is a memorial to the Hungarian Jews who, in the winter of 1944-1945, were shot on the banks of the Danube River. This was considered convenient because the river carried the bodies away. The shoes are so tangible that it is easy to imagine the people who wore them. Each shoe has a personality; each has the imprint of the foot that wore it, turning them from mere statistics into living, breathing human beings.

The dialogue

We live in a divided world, composed of many parts, parts that compose a whole – the earth, the water, the sky. Even God, in the six days of the Creation, composed the world that way. Alongside those, humans added many other divisions: territorial, political, cultural, linguistic and so on. The paradox is that each of those constitutive parts tends to become a whole *in itself*, instead of being part of a whole. Furthermore, the cooperation between those parts started to be difficult. We forgot, over time, to be together with the other. We forgot to ‘coexist’, to ‘share’ the world equally and unprejudiced. To cultivate ‘being with the other’ means to understand and accept diversity inside of the ‘primordial’ whole. The other should not be reduced to a quantitative evaluation, ontological in relation with my identical one. The same thing with his memories and experiences.

Unlike other artistic fields (literature, painting, sculpture, cinematography, and so on), where the representation resides somehow in stand-by, being of interest whether for a directly involved audience, or needing to be comprehended and explained, architecture (museums, monuments, memorials) puts it on the map – includes it in public space. I can go and see a movie about the Holocaust; I can read a book or visit an exhibition about this subject, if I am interested (personally or for educational purposes). But even if I am not interested, because of architecture I stumble into these spaces, whether I like it or not. Objectively, it becomes part of my daily or touristic itinerary, and so on. I discover it, sometimes I am surprised by its presence, so it becomes part of my present, and it interferes with my everyday existence.

The historical event, due to the moment and the nature of the contact between me and it, loses some of its solemnity – becomes somehow

‘friendly’ to me. I take it with me in my personal memory and I pass it further by my testimony – it becomes a living memory: diluted, but still present.

As an act of creation, memorial architecture is, at the same time, the concept and the personal vision of an author and so, by default, bears within it the speech and the subjectivity of the narrator. On the other hand, it is a cultural, social, economic, and finally, a political command. Basically, it depends on the pragmatism of a communal developing context. Placed at the crossroad of those worlds so different by provenance, memorial architecture is a moderator.

I will conclude my chapter with a quote from Derrida that places the architectural gesture first, before the act of creating a space. Architecture is not a sophisticated representation of a thought, a vision of space, it must be a type of thinking itself.

“Let us consider architectural thinking. By that I don’t mean to conceive architecture as a technique separate from thought and therefore possibly suitable to represent it in space, to constitute almost an embodiment of thinking, but rather to raise the question of architecture as a possibility of thought, which cannot be reduced to the status of a representation of thought” (Derrida 1986, p. 17).

List of illustrations:

Fig. 1: “Snowy forest” by Philippe Lejeanvre

https://web.500px.com/photo/61140042/Snowy-forest-by-plej-photo/?utm_medium=pinterest&utm_source=500px&utm_campaign=nativeshare&utm_content=web

Fig. 2: “2146 stones. Monument against racism”

<https://www.jochengerz.eu/works/mahnmal-gegen-rassismus>

Fig. 3: “Stolpersteine fotografieren in Kolin ” by Francisco Peralta

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GS_0793-Peralta.jpg

Fig. 4: “Shoes on the Danube Promenade - Holocaust Memorial” by Nikodem Nijaki

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shoes_Danube_Promenade_IMGP1297.jpg

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Fourth part
THE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST AND SOCIAL
REPRESENTATIONS

Chapter 12

Truncated Images of the Holocaust: The Deportation of the Roma in the Censored Romanian Literature. The Case of the Novel *Şatra* by Zaharia Stancu

Sorin MITULESCU¹

*During the Second World War, an important part of Romanian society believed, especially when it came to the nomadic Roma, that deportation could be considered justifiable. However, after the war, very few official initiatives have tried to bring to light the events that had led to genocide within the Romanian territories. In fact, some of the very few people who did so were the public prosecutors in Marshal Ion Antonescu's trial, although exaggerated and without details. Against this background of purposeful neglect of the tragic events of the Holocaust, the year 1968 witnessed the publication of the novel *Şatra*, the first publication that addressed the issue of the Romanian deportations of Roma people during the Second World War. Although it violated a series of taboos of the communist regime's propaganda, the publication of this novel was allowed by the censorship with surprising ease and tolerance, which was not usually the case. Whether or not this was a real act of civic courage on the part of its author remains to be elucidated. What we can say is that *Şatra* is not a work of fiction that lacks a basis in reality, as much of the literary criticism of the 1970s and since then has claimed. However, the novel has an ambiguous message. While the author seems very aware (and well documented) about the development of the deportation, even we do not know what sources he used, this does not mean that Stancu's account is fully faithful to the historical truth. Moreover, it is likely that the author knowingly omitted certain aspects of the story. His limits of understanding and assuming historical responsibilities can be understood when we realise that, in his view, no one has to be blamed for the tragedy of the deportation. Therefore, while *Şatra* has the merit of having conveyed to the broader public some historical knowledge about events that were officially ignored, it missed the chance to express the right judgment about the real responsibilities and causes that had led to the tragedy. Without reducing a writer's work to its historical references, the analysis focuses on the political and moral message transmitted by Zaharia Stancu through his novel with regard to the Roma deportation. We cannot avoid suspecting the author (and, at the same time, a significant part of the literary criticism that followed) of minimising unpleasant episodes of the Romanian national history under the pretext of an author's freedom of conscience and expression.*

Keywords: Roma; deportation; communist propaganda; historical responsibilities; fiction.

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Introduction

The discussion in the following pages, on the content of a work of fiction in comparison with historical reality, may not be to the liking of literary critics according to whom literature is not responsible for shedding light on controversial historical events. The role of literature – for most of us – is to create aesthetically valuable texts. And yet, in the case of a novel such as *Şatra*, which was the only evocation of the deportation of the Roma for more than 40 years after the event, such an analysis is worth carrying out. This is not necessarily in order to find merits or to blame the author, but to understand why Romanian public opinion is sometimes so ignorant of such a historical episode and of other similar ones related to the Holocaust.

The deportation of Roma people during the Second World War

Following the *Final Report* of the The International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, today we know that the tragedy of the deportation of the Roma people in Transnistria resulted in the death of approximately 11,000 men, women and children (Frilig et al. 2004, p. 236). Another 14,000 innocent Roma people were subjected to extremely difficult living conditions, starvation, cold and diseases. The Romanian authorities had promised to provide the deported with the necessary means to earn a living under circumstances of compulsory residence. However, their promise was never put into practice, but remained only on paper. In fact, the Roma deported to Transnistria “were given few possibilities of work or means to live” (Frilig et al. 2004, p. 232). Accordingly, their living conditions “were very harsh. The Roma were not provided with enough food and were unable to support themselves. The food rations established by the government were not observed; sometimes none would be distributed for weeks. The Roma were also not provided with firewood; so, they could neither prepare their food nor warm themselves. Clothing was another major problem, since they had not been allowed to take any clothes or any personal belongings with them. The deportees lacked the most elementary items, including pots for preparing their food. Medical assistance was almost non-existent, and they lacked medicine” (Frilig et al. 2004, p. 232).

The perception of the deportation in public consciousness

The tragedy of the deportation of the Roma people to Transnistria during the Second World War was accompanied by a lack of public knowledge and responsibility, with the exception of some individual protests. The

general lack of knowledge and recognition among the Romanian population regarding the Holocaust and the deportation of the Roma to Transnistria are already known. Even in the memoirs produced by the members of Romanian military during the Second World War, there is no recognition of the role of aggressor played by Romania in much of the war and of “deportation of Jews and Gypsies to concentration camps in Transnistria”, as well as other horrors (Bowd 2006, p. 121). In addition, the wartime Romanian society did not seem to be very aware of the sufferings of the deported Roma people. As one Roma survivor recalled in 2002, when in the spring or summer of 1944 he and his friend managed to sneak back to Romania from Transnistria, the two tried to hide their ethnic identity while demanding food because, when the Romanian ethnics “heard that we were coming from Transnistria and that we are Gypsies, they didn’t even look at us: Get out of here, come on...” (Solonari 2015, p. 267). It is also known that very few public figures in Romania protested against the deportation measures taken by Marshal Ion Antonescu: only George Enescu, who specifically protested on behalf of the Gypsy musicians, and Constantin I. C. Brătianu, the liberal leader.

References to the deportation and the ‘Roma issue’ during communism

A similar attitude was also adopted after the war by the communist authorities, who for decades forbade approaching this matter, pretending it did not exist. Recent history or sociology investigations on such topics were also not allowed. During one of the interviews published in a recent study (Furtună 2018, p. 67), a senior Roma person remembered the researcher Nicolae Gheorghe (Roma sociologist who died in 2013) as follows: “during Ceaușescu’s rule (...) there was one who came to write the history of the Roma (...) and when the policemen came in, for fear (of not recognising and punishing the mentioned researcher [the author of this study’s note]), he has been dressed in ‘romanes’ clothing” (Furtună 2018, p. 44). On such circumstances, it was only in works of fiction that one could provide the public with some details about what had happened during the war years.

This ‘phobia’ of the communist authorities to talk about the Roma population and their deportation to Transnistria might be considered surprising if we take into consideration that, following the trial of Marshal Antonescu in 1946, the death of “6000 to 8000 gypsies” was attributed to him and his collaborators. The public prosecutor identified the person responsible for this crime as colonel Modest Isopescu, government

representative for the Golta County in Transnistria (Procesul marii trădări naționale 1946, p. 301). This accusation could be only partially validated due to the fact that, while several thousand Roma had died in Transnistria, very few of them were executed by the authorities – with executions occurring only in exceptional cases –, but more often died due to the very poor living conditions – hunger, cold, illness and misery (Achim 2004, p. XX). In fact, the accused acknowledged their responsibility for the deportation, but not for the death of the Roma. Although the Soviet authorities and their communist supporters in Romania were in charge of that trial, in the following years there was no discussion of the crimes that had led to the sentencing of Antonescu and his collaborators. In addition to the pogroms committed against the Jewish population in Romania and their mass deportations to Transnistria, the Roma deportation represents an important chapter in the history of the Holocaust in Romania that is still not fully elucidated. We can account for this attitude by considering the communist project to destroy the moral benchmarks of the Romanian people and by the purpose of the authoritarian regime to create a ‘new man’ who would be characterised by a lack of moral autonomy and submissiveness, malleable and therefore easy to manipulate from an ideological point of view.

Publication of the novel *Șatra* under favourable auspices

With or without ideological justification, it turns out that during the communist rule, the history of the Roma could not be researched and materials or articles that would enlighten the public on those events could not be published. Along the same lines of more or less explicit interdiction, no literary or evocative texts were elaborated – with, as we shall see below, one single, notable exception. In these circumstances, the initiative of a great Romanian writer – Zaharia Stancu – almost forgotten today, and still accused of supporting the communist regime, was all the more laudable (and at the same time difficult to explain). In 1968, Stancu published the novel *Șatra* (*The Gipsy Tribe* was the title of the English translation, published in 1973), the first and only attempt made during communism to lift the veil of mystery on the deportation of the Gypsies in the years of the Second World War.

It does not seem to be a coincidence that Zaharia Stancu chose to publish his novel during the short period of liberalisation after 1965. The death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej on 19 March 1965 marked the end of a period that had been characterised by the radical transformation of

Romanian society. After the Declaration of 1964, which announced a certain divorce from the Soviet Union, the authoritarian political regime started to present itself as a defender of national values. Therefore, the time when Zaharia Stancu published his work corresponded to a timid liberalisation in the field of culture. We do not know exactly when the writer actually finished his work or how long this was before being published. Given that the author published two novels that year,² we could assume that he had waited for a favourable moment for its publication.

Surprisingly, Zaharia Stancu's novel does not seem to have had any problem with the censorship prior to its publication. It also seems that censorship either did not notice or did not want to notice some ideologically suspect features present in the simplistic and metaphorical account of the nomads' pilgrimage. One of the enigmas related to the publication of the novel is why, given the conditions of imposed silence about the subject of the deportation of the Roma to Transnistria, it was published without stirring up any political discussion. Studies that inventoried many official notes written by the officials of the communist censorship institution for a period of 11 years (1960-1971) did not identify any reference to this novel. Instead, many objections were made to publications written by Paul Goma, George Bălăiță, Alexandru Rosetti and others during the same period when *Șatra* was published. Only one book written by Zaharia Stancu during that period was checked by the people working for the censorship office – *The Mad Forest* – but without meeting with any objections, as was the case for other books written by Ioana Postelnicu, D.R. Popescu, Ioan Alexandru, and many others (Mocanu 2003). In other words, it seems that Zaharia Stancu was among those (lucky) writers who had no problems with censorship.

The opinion of literary critics

Within the same alleged conspiracy of silence, literary critics of the time did not want to complicate things and make a connection to any of the historical references of the novel. At the time of *Șatra*'s publication, no one received it (or, better said, no one had the courage to receive it) as a prose “about Bessarabia (Transnistria, much less)” and about Gypsies. As those were topics that could not be discussed at that time, one important literary critic of that period – Alexandru Piru – chose to describe the recently

² In 1968, he published both *Ce mult te-am iubit* and *Șatra*. Zaharia Stancu confessed in an interview to Ilie Purcaru that he worked on the novel *Șatra* for over seven years (Purcaru 1975, p. 43).

published novel as “the dramatic story of a nomadic tribe’s displacement during World War II” (Piru 1972). Something that was very obvious, namely that the novel was about a nomadic gypsy tribe deported to Transnistria, seemed unnoticeable.

As yet another curiosity, in the same journal which published Piru’s aforementioned article, one could see two years later after *Şatra* was published a picture of Zaharia Stancu as a distinguished gentleman wearing an elegant coat and hat while surrounded by a group of apparently poor children and women.



The person in this 1970 photograph is Zaharia Stancu, probably during a visit to some Oriental country or region. We have to notice that the photograph above was published without any explanation, so as to suggest a possible hypothesis concerning the writer’s documentation for the novel *Şatra* (Source: *Romania literară*, no. 41/1970).

While literary criticism did not link Stancu’s narration with the Roma deportation at the time of the book’s publication, not even later literary criticism seemed to pay more attention to the historical and geopolitical background in which the novel’s action took place, insisting instead on the psychological aspects. In 1978, Eugen Simion (2002 [1978], p. 48), a

reputed literary critic, characterised the novel *Şatra* as “Stancu’s only work of pure fiction”.

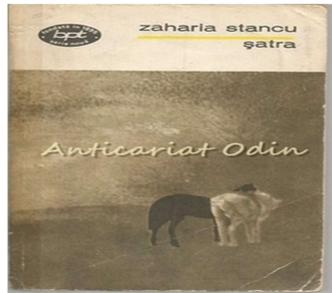
There is only one daring interpretation of the realities that *Şatra* speaks about and this interpretation was made by Mircea Iorgulescu. He acknowledged in the preface of a 1986 edition of the novel that we are dealing with a “realistic-looking and sometimes documentary-focused novel, which seems directly inspired by authentic facts and situations that occurred in the time of the Second World War, when entire populations, considered to be of ‘lower race’, were condemned to extinction and subjected to a delusive program of massacres, by internment in camps of industrial-type destruction and by mass deportations in far-flung lands, where the survival was practically impossible” (Iorgulescu 1986, p. 7). Yet, he pointed out in the general tone of literary criticism that *Şatra* “is not a chronicle, an objective and faithful reconstruction of events, although it starts from attested historical realities” (Iorgulescu 1986, p. 7).

Even the illustrations on the cover pages of the first editions of the novel *Şatra* are as far as possible deprived of any reference to the Roma population. These are all neutral images: some horses grazing on a field or human figures without any specific ethnic identity. In turn, the editions published after 1989, as well as the translations published abroad (on the right side of the table), almost without exception made very obvious references to the Roma characters.

During the communist period, the reader had to be convinced that this book spoke rather of imaginary people, from immemorial times; and that what really mattered was the very general reflections that the author provided as a transmitter of archaic wisdom. Obviously, even the images on the covers of the post-communist editions are not without the usual stereotypes of the artistic representation of the Roma figure. Nothing from the dramatic scenes associated with the deportation is visible on the covers of the different editions of *Şatra*. The Roma people are still perceived only as stridently colourful exotic occurrences that do not fit into the patterns of modern civilisation. The reader’s compassion is by no means solicited by the images on the covers, presented below:

Covers of different editions of the novel *Şatra*

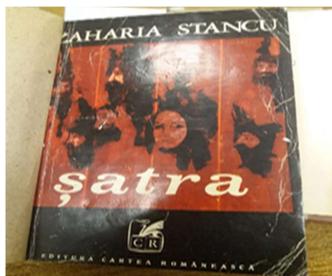
Covers of editions published until 1989



Şatra, First edition, 1968

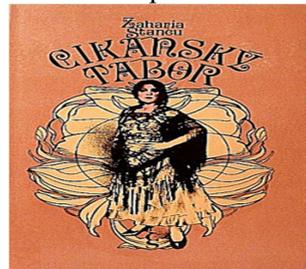


Şatra, 1971



Şatra, 1973

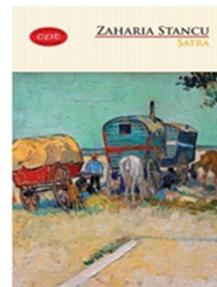
Covers of editions published after 1989 or translations published abroad



Şatra, Czech edition, 1973



Şatra, Chişinău, after 1990



Şatra 2016

After 1989, the vision of literary critics changed. There was no longer the pressure of communist censorship and critics (and authors too) could express what they thought. In these conditions, the historiographical aspects were no longer denied, just minimised. “It is clear” – wrote Răzvan Voncu in 2010 – “that we are in front of a novel that does not intend to do undercover historiography, a novel” about “deporting Gypsies to Transnistria, but about the destiny of a traditional community that falls under the implacable tyranny of History. Of a History, it is understood, in delirium. (...) the tribe lives under the fascination of the struggle within the

amorous triangle, under the harsh gypsy moral conditions of the couple, while the historical events – in this case, the war, with all its accompanying misery – fade into the background” (Voncu 2010, p. 28).

Actually even Nicolae Manolescu (2011, p. 121), although he stressed the fact that the exodus is presented as a biblical one, eventually recognised that it is “historically fixed”. It is true that this historical fixation is portrayed through extremely scarce details that the author provides, suggesting however (quite precisely) the place and time of the action that is unfolding, at least for the Romanian reader. In 2011, Manolescu recognised *Şatra* as a “war novel”, specifying that the tribe of Him is banished on the banks of the Bug river, near a salt lake where it has to survive.

A more unambiguous interpretation, in the historical sense of the events evoked in the novel, was proposed by Ion Simuţ (2007). He considered that, although the writer did not focus on the idea of political persecution, “the reader can speculate or deduce that the tribe (along with other ones) is suffering the consequences of an order given by the Antonescu-led dictatorship regarding the gypsy deportation in Transnistria. An obscure order of the gendarmerie forces the nomadic gypsies to go in a controlled direction towards the East” (Simuţ 2007).

In other words, it took literary critics more than 30 years to acknowledge the historical realities evoked by Stancu’s novel. However, even after such a long period, there has not been much interest in this kind of interpretation.

Historical reconstruction in *Şatra*: between accuracy and omission

Without accusing the literary critics of not reducing a writer’s work to its historical references, we cannot avoid suspecting them of the same reflex to minimise unpleasant episodes in the history of Romania that we noticed in the case of the wartime memoirs. For me personally, the novel can be subjected today to questions regarding the deportation of the Roma in 1942. As such, in the following section, we want to see how objective and faithful are the reconstructions of the events that had happened so many years ago.

Yes, perhaps Stancu’s novel does not (first and foremost) aim to provide an accurate account of the deportation of the Gypsies to Transnistria. In any case, such a topic was considered taboo at the time. Although not being able – under the threat of censorship – to supply any details that could identify the territory beyond the Prut (first Bessarabia and finally Transnistria), the author was clearly interested in certain concrete

aspects and so it is impossible that he would not have documented himself on the historical events relating to the deportation. It is interesting that today it is not even known if Stancu had actually seen the places he described, nor how he carried out the documentation for writing this novel. Moreover, in the novel itself, although he is careful to camouflage any detail that might accurately locate the plot, he nevertheless does not place this exodus into some imaginary territory lacking spatial or temporal coordinates. We can get – through careful reading – enough details to frame the unfolding of the action in both space and time.

The question we ask ourselves is: “How did the writer Zaharia Stancu carry out the documentation necessary to write this novel?”. As he confessed, “It’s a novel that has nothing to do with my biography, it’s a novel for which I had to talk to people, see places, look even for the characters’ names of this book.” (Purcaru 1975, p. 58) Therefore, according to his confession, *Şatra* is one of Stancu’s few writings where he did not use his own memories, which for him, as an author of many great autobiographical writings, is a unique experience.

Some details of Stancu’s writing prove very good documentation:

I. First of all, he seems to be very familiar with the Gypsy community. Even if, in the novel, he does not provide as many details about the tribe as he did with the villages in his other novels, he portrays the essential elements of the lifestyle of a Gypsy tribe. The tribe is portrayed – as one critic noted – beyond the picturesque, beyond the trivial, including even a mythical suggestion, but... preserving the fundamental issues (Craia 1985, p. 142). In this regard, there are also some opinions that the presentation of the Roma in the *Şatra* novel is tributary to the ethno-cultural stereotypes that Europeans (and in particular Romanians) generally have toward the Roma population. Nastasă-Matei (2017, p. 95) considers that “Stancu’s novel (1968) (...) evokes the deportation of the Roma in Transnistria, but reproduces the stereotypes about them”. This limitation of Zaharia Stancu’s vision of the Roma does not contradict the idea that we want to support, namely that the writer had documented himself for writing the text. It did not consist only of memories or imagination. The fact that the sources he consulted gave him such a vision, limited to stereotypes, is not surprising given the entire literature on the Roma available for use.

II. The actual historical calendar is strictly observed by the writer. The documentary research on archive documents established that the deportations of the nomadic Roma took place between July and August 1942 (Achim 2004, p. 28), followed by those of the sedentary Roma in September 1942. As for the literary text, it states that the beginning of the march takes place during the wheat-threshing season. Shortly before finding

out from the authorities that it must leave to the east, the tribe sit on the edge of a ridge where “the peasants gathered the harvested wheat, tied it in bundles, and with these they built large haystacks” (Stancu 2016, p. 14).

III. Speaking about the march carried out by the tribe from certain areas of Romania up to the banks of the Bug, Stancu points out the secrecy in which the deportation operation was conducted and the fact the deported were completely kept in the dark by the authorities. They are not told anything about where and how far they will go, nor where they would end up. Here are some significant lines in this regard:

At the beginning of the journey, the gypsies learn that they must arrive until the next day close to a city. Confused, they ask where they will go next. To which the gendarme responds:

“I don’t know, Him basha. I really don’t know. You will be told there, in the city, what to do next”. (Stancu 2016, p. 45)

Further along the route, the same kind of dialogue ensues:

“The head of the Roma community asks:

... After we pass the water, we will go a long way to ... up to there?

The gendarme’s cheek went bleachy. At the same time, his voice became coarse:

- You ask me in vain, basha! In vain you ask me. I only know that I have to take you to the port and give you all to others ...”. (Stancu 2016, p. 163)

Such a description of the attitude of the authorities toward the deportees is in full agreement with the instructions issued by the authorities at that time (Romanian Gendarmerie in May 1942): “(...) evacuation will be done separately for every Gipsy tribe and by marching, in the most secret, making not possible to know the final destination. ... The evacuation will be done through a system of pushing Gipsy tribes from one Gendarmerie post to another... In order to keep the secret of the operation, the evacuation order was broken down by Inspectorate, the missions given not in full, each Inspectorate only knowing which neighbouring inspectorate will be delivered gypsies from own Inspectorate...” (Achim 2004, p. 20).

Would the writer have known the contents of that internal order of 1942, which Viorel Achim (2004) references in his work? This is hard to believe, since access to some of these documents belonging to the archives of the Gendarmerie was possible only with special approvals. He would have rather learned about the authorities’ type of behaviour from direct eyewitnesses (be they Roma or former gendarmes). Since it involved the reconstruction of various events from other sources, including rumours or verbal information provided by some eyewitnesses to the events described, such as gendarmes, it follows that his novel is neither a work of pure fiction, nor one of invention.

We can also note in Zaharia Stancu's account the manner of the Romanian authorities, gendarmes in this case, who generally talk in a calm and almost benevolent tone with the gypsies, beyond the opacity resulting from the official instructions, which we mentioned earlier. Of course, some degree of minor corruption in the relations between the gypsies and the gendarmes is present,³ but there are also useful (and benevolent) advices given to some of these gypsies on how to deal with the situation: an officer of the gendarmes advises the chief of the tribe: "(...) The city is full of speculators. Don't trade gold with speculators. They will deceive you. Change it in the bank. And buy as much food as possible. Beyond the river you will have no chance to exchange gold, nor will you find food to buy. Got it?". (Stancu 2016, p. 161)

Such a presentation was even in contradiction with the over-exaggerated public image of the communist period about the gendarmes of the old regime, but also with the more objective and complex image we can derive from archival research. Such recent historical research shows that it was not in full agreement with the facts. Even though favourable attitudes were recorded among some gendarmes when confronted with the hardship of the Roma, many of the gendarmes, starting from their commander, General Vasiliu⁴ to many regional chiefs showed excessive zeal in carrying out the orders. One such county-level chief entered more names of Roma than were originally meant to be deported in his orders, with the justification that "all of them being predisposed to committing crimes at any time, I thought it was time to get rid of all these people refractory of public order and security".

It is worth remembering here the attitude of the writer, who did not deal indifferently with certain nuances from the presentation of the facts. Despite the fact that at times he was poorly informed and at other times biased, this does not change the fact that *Şatra* is (also) a novel of historical reconstruction.

IV. The element of truth in the story ends, however, when it comes to how the deported gypsies lived in the territories across the Dniester. If official documents state that the deported gypsies were housed in villages,

³ The text also mentions how the Gypsies were offering gifts and money to the gendarmes. At a stop on the road the leaders of the tribes [*şatre*] must give three thousand (one thousand for each tribe) in order to stay a day in the city: "The leaders of the tribes advised each other, searched their waistbands [*chimire*] and handed the gendarme the blue papers" (Stancu 2016, p. 95).

⁴ Constantin Z. Vasiliu (nicknamed "Piki"), Romanian general, commander of the Romanian Gendarmerie (1940-1944) and Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Interior until 23 August 1944. After the war, he was judged, degraded and sentenced by the People's Court to death for war crimes and other charges.

Stancu prefers to place them in a desert. They have no obligation to perform any work there and are only rarely controlled by the authorities. We will not find in the novel anything about working in Ukrainian *kolhozes*, nor about the diseases that shattered the *Şatra*'s people due to the terrible living conditions – information that repeatedly results from eyewitness accounts. Stancu's *Şatra* finds winter shelter in some pens, as if especially prepared for wanderers, and only a few deserters upset them during their stay. They face neither forced labour nor contagious diseases (typhus), nor the requisition of their most valuable goods (horses, carts, gold). In the desert where it remains, the tribe is rather decimated by internal conflicts and rivalries. Eventually, the return does not involve forced marches through forests, mud and waters – as it really was – but is also done with the traditional carts, even if fewer in number and even if one of these is drawn by the people themselves, in the absence of horses.

The image of the Gypsy tribe remains as proud and independent as in a Hollywood movie. As one commentator noted, "the gypsies of Zaharia Stancu have nobility, they are dignified in their daily existence, with deviations only in times of distress. The people of the tribe are violent, brutal and harsh, but, with the exception of the Uj – Matahala couple, they respect the moral values" (Craia 1985, p. 147). The writer's attitude toward his characters (and first of all toward the Roma community) is dominated by sympathy. It is noteworthy that the author does not even use the ethnonym 'gypsy' but coins a term that today could be considered as belonging to 'politically correct' language, calling his characters 'brown people'.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study on the documentation process and the attitude of the writer Zaharia Stancu toward the events of 1942-1943 could have been supported much better if the novel's manuscript (or certain documentary notes made prior to its writing) were accessible to the researcher. Unfortunately, such documents are not found in public places (libraries or museums) as one could expect for a representative writer, nor with private holders (although contacted by me, indirectly, through an auction house) who have preferred to remain anonymous and not provide with any information. Let us hope that the future may bring new and more accurate data on this interesting process of literary creation, but also on the sources of information that those living under communism could have used to achieve a correct knowledge of their own history.

What is quite clear, however, is that Zaharia Stancu had a proper source of information on the deportation of the gypsies. It can be assumed

that where he went beyond the limits of reality (e.g. regarding living conditions in the deportation area) he did so consciously, either for literary reasons or in order to avoid complications related to censorship, by making references to the local Ukrainian (Soviet) population, to the presence of Romanian authorities in Soviet territories, etc.

Trying, at the end of this research paper, to assess the (literary but also political) contribution of Zaharia Stancu, we could start from Alexandr Solzhenitsyn's conceptions regarding the importance of truth for the work of art: "But those works of art which have scooped up the truth and presented it to us as a living force – they take hold of us, compel us, and nobody ever, not even in ages to come, will appear to refute them" (Solzhenitsyn 1970). In other words, we could understand that literature cannot exist without telling the whole truth. From this point of view, we must thus recognise that *Şatra*, although providing many truthful aspects about the deportation of the Roma, does not supply – as we have seen – the whole truth. And here we are not referring just to those details about life in the territories beyond the Dniester or to the conditions of the return from Transnistria at the end of the war, but to the more general conclusion that emerges from this story, should we want to find out who bears the responsibility for this suffering. Here the "duplicitous" (as characterised by several critics) Stancu does not disappoint. No culprit is shown to us, or at most "war is to be blamed", as one character says. However, we know that things have not been this way. For everything that happened, decisions were made by people who had power in those times (the heads of those gendarmes, sometimes silent, at other times benevolent), and there were complicities that fed the tragedy. Not even the *Process of the great national betrayal* in 1946 provided a clear statement on this guilt⁵. Zaharia Stancu's novel tries even less to shed light on these issues. Promoting the message that no one is guilty of a serious genocide attempt on the territory of Romania and with the involvement of a significant part of Romanian society, *Şatra* cannot unfortunately represent a valid page of civic education for the new generations. This is because, although he lifted the curtain from a window to our history, Stancu failed to make his Romanian readers really take on this history, with its good and bad parts.

⁵ Even in the official 'up-to-date' version of Romanian History published by the Romanian Academy (vol. IX, coordinated by Dinu C. Giurescu and Florin Sperlea), the story of the deportation of the Roma is presented strictly factually, without looking for the social and cultural causes that have made such a crime possible. Only the responsibility of Marshal Antonescu is mentioned, but the role of racist ideologies and biopolitical research is not highlighted.

His truths – though commendable, as many of them were – stopped halfway. And, given how easy it was to publish the novel *Şatra* at a time when other literary attempts, perhaps less courageous, were under investigation and censored, we might wonder if these partial and well-camouflaged (but not impossible to guess) truths were not issued, as was the case with other ‘political contributions’ from the 1970s, with the discreet permission of the authorities.

Since we have not found in our research any traces of pressure exerted on the writer by the communist censorship, we may conclude that we are dealing with a situation of self-censorship by the author. This seems to be what Zaharia Stancu considered as many other Romanians do this day: that no one has been guilty and so, nobody has to pay for what happened in those turbulent times of war. From this perspective, *Şatra* is not a novel with an educational message that should necessarily be found in the pages of the school textbooks, as a descendant of the writer opted for the replacement of *Descult* with *Şatra* in the compulsory school bibliography. Although it lifts the curtain from a window on Romania’s history, the vision is tributary to the same ethnocentrism devoid of civic responsibility. Such attitudes were also possible because, as one commentator on Romanian history has observed, in the last hundred years “mass crimes during the Second World War and xenophobic ultra-nationalism – from communism had a broad (common) ideological and social basis” (Schmitt 2018, p. 52). This unity and underground solidarity ultimately explains, in my opinion, the ease with which – although it violated some important taboos of the communist propaganda – Zaharia Stancu’s novel nevertheless managed to overcome the barriers of censorship.

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Chapter 13

The Holocaust in the Memory of Peasants from Bogata de Sus, a Village in North-Western Transylvania

Gheorghe CIASCAI¹

“Hell came upon us...”

The Holocaust was an unprecedented event which marked profoundly the humankind. For the contemporary ‘collective memory’, the extermination of the European Jews during the Second World War has a peculiar character which derives from the extreme nature of the crimes systematically committed by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators with the intent to destroy them, along with other ethnic, social, political and ideological groups.

The deportation of Jews from the village of Bogata de Sus (Cluj County, North-West Romania) and their tragic destiny are ineffaceable images and memories for its inhabitants. The small Jewish community in the village, of about 40 people before the Second World War, was almost completely annihilated in the Auschwitz death camp. The Jewish presence, once rather ubiquitous in Bogata de Sus, it can be found now only in the toponymy of the village, the Jewish cemetery. Yet, despite the absence of other physical markers which could evoke the presence of the Jews in this village, their legacy still lingers in the individual memories of the old people who never forgot the deportation of their fellow citizens in the spring of 1944, as well as the return of the few survivors in 1945.

Starting from these general facts, the purpose of this study² is to explore and analyse the way in which the tragedy of the Jewish community in the village is seen through the eyes of the old villagers, the teenagers of 1944-1945. Moreover, this chapter provides an insight into the way these people have portrayed the community in the tragic stories about that time of war told to their children and grandchildren, considering that during the first decade of the communist regime the survivors of the Holocaust left the village for Israel, the United States of America, or Canada.

Keywords: Holocaust; memory; peasants; Bogata de Sus.

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² In memory of my mother, Maria Ciascai, who was born, lived, and passed away in Bogata de Sus and inspired me to write this chapter.

Introduction

The Holocaust is an exceptional event which marked and still marks to this day, to a certain extent, both the individual memory and the “collective memory” of the inhabitants of the village of Bogata de Sus. Bogata de Sus is a Transylvanian village in the county of Cluj, situated in North-Western Romania, which was part of the region of North-Western Transylvania between September 1940 and October 1944. This territory was ceded by the Kingdom of Romania to Hungary through the Vienna Treaty, mediated by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

According to the 1939 official statistics released by the Romanian authorities (Pădurean and Petrican 2004, p. 73), only 35 people (6.2%) out of Bogata de Sus’ population of 561 were Jewish. According to the 1941 Hungarian census (Petrican and Pădurean 2004, p. 73), there were 43 Jews living in Bogata de Sus (6.7% out of a population of 635). This Jewish community disappeared almost entirely in ‘death factory’ of Auschwitz. The data collected by Romanian authorities in 1947 show that out of the 708 inhabitants of the village, 697 were of Romanian nationality, one was Hungarian, and 10 were of other nationalities (Petrican and Pădurean 2004, p. 73). The term ‘other nationalities’ certainly refers to the population with Jewish origins, if we are to combine this data with the one from the 1867-1947 *Şemantisms* [original: *Şemantisme*] of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Gherla, whose records for the year 1947 indicate that there were 11 people of Mosaic faith in the village (Petrican and Pădurean 2004, p. 222).

The traces of this Jewish community in Bogata de Sus – with a history of no less than a century – are now only visible in the Jewish cemetery, the toponymy, or in the memories of the elders. They never forgot the deportation of their Jewish fellow citizens in the spring of 1944 and the return of the last few survivors.

The main goal of this research is to explore, analyse, and present the manner in which the elders of today – the children and teenagers of 1944-1945 – have kept in their personal memories the tragedy of the Jews who had lived in the village of Bogata de Sus previously to deportation. Moreover, the research will showcase the way in which they have chosen to convey the (his)story of this tragedy to their children and grandchildren. It should be mentioned from the start that the few survivors of the Holocaust in Bogata de Sus chose to flee the country in the first decade of the communist regime. Compelled to forget their own tragedy and to repress their painful memories, to face the emptiness and the psychological scars left by the terrible events of the Second World War, to return to life and build a new one, they immigrated to Israel, the United States of America, or

Canada. However, instead of being forgotten, local Jews' traumatic stories have survived through social interaction, penetrating the villagers' collective imagination and remembrance.

From this perspective, two concepts are particularly useful to our undertaking: 'collective memory', which refers to shared representations about the past, and 'individual memory', denoting what people remember. The French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs addressed the issue of how we reconstruct our past in his work on the social construction of memory, first published in 1925. Adopting the Durkheimian argument of the predominance of collective over individual consciousness, Halbwachs formulated the thesis that personal memory can only function within a collective context. In other words, individual memory is 'framed' by collective representations. Being inscribed in the social realm, 'collective memory' gives rise to different modes of behavior in accordance with what has been selectively internalised by individual consciousness. Accordingly, shared narratives about the past transmitted by social agents impact on personal memories, values, and thoughts. The transference of Holocaust memories across generations and their travel "through time and space" (Erl 2011, p. 11) help us understand emotional engagement with trauma of the one who did not directly experience the traumatic events of the Second World War.

In order to reach the objectives of our study, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is dedicated to a factual investigation of the Jewish community in Bogata de Sus and their relationships with the Romanian majority in the village in the period prior to the beginning of the Holocaust in Hungary, including in North-Western Transylvania, and the moment of their deportation to the Dej ghetto. This investigation is based on the villagers' testimonies, testimonies which represent the main basis of the research for this section. The research in this section attempts to present the ways in which these villagers lived and perceived the tragedy of their Jewish neighbours, including an emphasis on certain forms of *ad-hoc* solidarity which occurred in those tragic circumstances. The second section of this chapter, based like the previous one on the testimonies of the villagers, is focused on the return to the village of the survivors of the Holocaust and their gradual exodus from Bogata de Sus, in the context of the instauration of the communist regime in Romania. The last section of this study is dedicated to the investigation of the ways in which the villagers who had not witnessed the Holocaust are aware (or not) of the fact that a Jewish community had lived in Bogata de Sus and the knowledge these generations have about the tragedy. This section will attempt to emphasise the extent to which the current generations of peasants have managed to maintain the

memory of the existence of a Jewish community in their village and the memory of the terrible tragedy of this community 75 years ago.

Some aspects regarding the documentation and the research methodology: this consisted of open interviews with villagers aged minimum 10 years in 1944 (8 people: 5 women, 3 men) and a four-question questionnaire for the other inhabitants. Practically, in the course of the empirical research I engaged with almost 80% of the families who live in the village at the moment. In the spelling of Jewish names in Bogata de Sus, I have used their phonetic transposition as they are pronounced by the villagers. In some cases, I used, in addition to the first name and last name, the nickname these people are called, in order to avoid confusions between those villagers who have the same name.



The village of Bogata de Sus as seen from the Coastă: the centre and the lower side of the village

Source: Photograph taken by the author.

The Jews from Bogata de Sus in the spring of 1944 in the memories of the villagers

Bogata de Sus is a small village, with a current population of only 246 inhabitants. Just before the Second World War, the village had a population of approximately 600 people, making it the type of village where, as they say, everyone knows everyone. Without any exception, all the interviewed villagers, underage at that time and witnesses to the tragedy, remember the seven Jewish families which lived in the village in the spring of 1944. Without any hesitation, stereotyping, or prejudice, with the candour of the children or teenagers they were at that time, the elders remember that all of them (with the exception of Herșu Abraham, a former officer of the Austro-Hungarian army) were farmers, as well as merchants and craftsmen. One of them was the Hebrew teacher. The villagers mentioned the following

families which lived in Bogata de Sus at the moment of the tragedy, from the lower to the upper side of the village: Shafar (Hebrew teacher), Herşcovici, Motălaş, Baroc, Herşu Abraham, Ambruş Abraham, and Mendel Abraham (Interviews with Gheorghe Peşteşan, Maria Mureşan, Maria Prunean, Maria Muntean, Gheorghe Ciunt, Ioan (Nucu) Marchiş, Maria Beldean, Anica Beldean).

Some of them were not very fortunate, others were wealthier; some of them had a lot of children, others had less; some of them were more diligent, others rather idle, similarly to their Romanian fellow citizens. All the villagers who were interviewed especially mentioned Mendel Abraham's family as an example for a peasant household, good farmers, yet also great merchants and artisans. Mendel Abraham's wife was the village tailoress and kept a small shop, and one of the sons was an able carpenter.

On the other hand, the villagers remember that the family of Ambruş Abraham, Mendel Abraham's brother, a farmer like his brother, was as poor as most of the people in the village, a status indicated by their shabby house, not different in any way from one of a poor peasant (Interviews with Gheorghe Peşteşan, Maria Mureşan, Maria Beldean, Anica Beldean). A fabulous episode which indicates the respect of the Romanian villagers toward their Jewish neighbours was evoked by Gheorghe Peşteşan, was the one which he knew about from his grandfather, Ioan Peşteşan, nicknamed Cupa. The father of the aforementioned Abraham brothers, Iankel Abraham, was the one who had managed to convince a big group of villagers from Bogata de Sus to associate, put their small incomes together, and take credits in good conditions in order to buy an estate which was being sold in the outskirts of the village, in the place called Carpeni, by a small landlord at the beginning of the 20th century.

The only aspect which differentiated Jews in the village from the Romanians was religion. All of them remember the particularity of the Shabbat, the other Jewish holidays, and their customs (Interviews with Maria Mureşan, Maria Muntean, Anica Beldean, Maria Beldean, Maria Prunean). Each of them had at least one Jewish classmate in the village school. For example, Maria Muntean remembers that her family was neighbouring Mendel Abraham's family and one of their daughters was her classmate, with whom she was often doing homework or playing with. Maria Beldean still remembers her classmate, Iankel Abraham, the naughty one, the son of Ambruş Abraham, as a pupil who was always punished by the teacher.

As they were children, all of them had to take care of their families' cows, sheep, or geese alongside their Jewish neighbours, and all of them had Jewish friends. Those who had Jewish neighbours remember the good

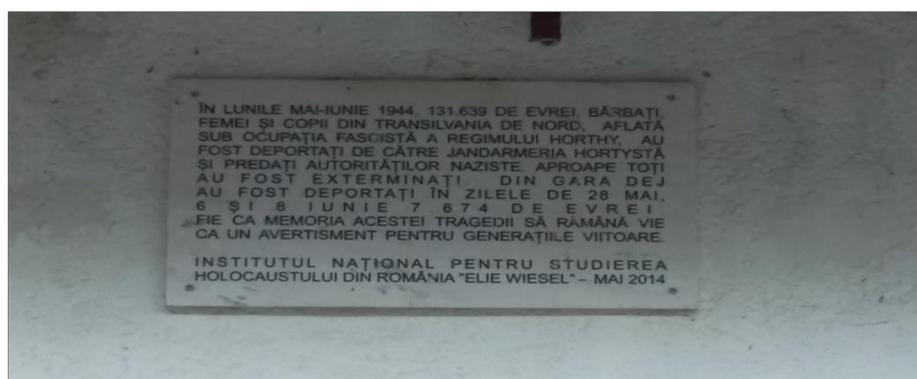
relations between their parents and those families, including the support given with household activities during the Shabbat (Interviews with Maria Mureşan, Maria Muntean, Anica Beldean, Maria Prunean). Maria Muntean remembers how her father, Vasile (Vaslică) Marchiş, one of the most diligent villagers, was often talking to his neighbour, Mendel Abraham, and taking his advice on various matters related to household affairs. Maria Mureşan remembers well the fact that she would often accompany her mother, Florica Ciascai, when she went to light the fire on Shabbat at their neighbours, the Abrahams. Sometimes she took her mother's place in this activity, when she was unavailable for various reasons.

Some of them remembered the fairness of the Jewish people when it came to paying their seasonal workers who worked in agriculture or their good deeds helping the Romanian villagers who were not as fortunate (Interviews with Anica Beldean, Maria Beldean, Gheorghe Ciunt and Ioan (Nucu) Marchiş). One of the villagers who were interviewed, Ioan (Nucu) Marchiş, has still not forgotten today, after more than 75 years, the humanity, the generosity, and the fairness of Mendel Abraham in the time when he was his servant and confesses frankly: "He treated me as if I was his son". His face is flooded with sadness when he says that two days prior to the deportation he was convoked to a session of pre-military instruction of the youth (*Levente* in Hungarian) in a neighbouring village, Suia, and he did not get to say goodbye to Mendel Abraham and his family.

The tragedy in the spring of 1944 was forecast by a symbol that the elders of today, the children of those times, still remember very clearly: the sudden appearance of the yellow star on the clothes of their Jewish fellow villagers. Some of them also remember what one of the Jewish villagers (the wife of Mendel Abraham, the village's tailor, called the "Miss from the shop") said when she was asked about the rule of wearing the star: "Hard times are awaiting us!" (Interview with Maria Mureşan).

The day of the deportation is still fresh in the memory of all those interviewed (interviews with Maria Mureşan, Maria Muntean, Maria Beldean, Maria Prunean, Anica Beldean, Gheorghe Peşteşan, Gheorghe Ciunt, Ioan Marchiş). Everyone remembers it was spring, during the time of ploughing and sowing, and that some of the Jews were taken straight from the field labour. One of the interviewed peasants remembers that Ambruş Abraham was returning from field work when the deportation was taking place, and that he protested, telling the Hungarian authorities "I am only a peasant" (interview with Gheorghe Peşteşan). Someone else remembers that one of the daughters of the Baroc family was not home at the moment of the deportation, as she was on a field near the house, where she was looking after geese. She was taken home and deported alongside

her entire family. The way the Jewish families, children, adults, and elders, with last minute made small bags, or with only the clothes they had been wearing, were brought out of their homes by the Hungarian gendarmes, forced into chariots, and taken away from the village is still fresh in the memory of those interviewed. They also remember the general disturbing atmosphere, similar to that of mourning. Everyone was crying – those deported, the other villagers, their children, watching the misfortune that had befallen their Jewish neighbours (Interviews with Maria Mureşan, Anica Beldean, Maria Muntean, Maria Beldean, Gheorghe Ciunt). Their homes were locked and supervised by the young men undergoing pre-military training (Interview with Ioan Marchiş). The villagers later found out that the deported were imprisoned in unsanitary conditions in the Bungăr forest ghetto near the Dej railway station. The Dej Ghetto was infamous as the biggest open-air ghetto in Europe (Dejeanul 2014), as well as one of the most miserable and unsanitary ghettos in North-Western Transylvania (Vaida 2015). The behaviour of the guards was one of the most inhumane, forbidding the Christian population from helping the interned Jews (Sabău 2017). The interviewees remember that some villagers in Bogata de Sus, especially the wealthier peasants and the ones who had Jewish neighbours, tried to help those who had been deported by bringing them food (Interviews with Maria Mureşan, Maria Muntean, Gheorghe Peşteşan). The women in the village baked a lot of bread for that purpose, but their husbands' attempts of bringing food to their Jewish neighbours were not always successful. In order to convince the guards to give the products to those imprisoned, the old cantor Ioan Noghiu, a former teacher in the village and Hungarian speaker, travelled there (interview with Gheorghe Peşteşan). Some of those who went to the Dej Ghetto with food arrived too late, as all the Jews were deported to Auschwitz between 28 May and 8 June 1944.



*Commemorative plaque unveiled in the Dej train station in May 2014
Source: Photograph taken by the author*

According to the memories of the interviewees, some of those who were saved from deportation were Herș Abraham, a decorated veteran of the Austro-Hungarian army with a war disability, as well as one of his sons, who had a serious mental disability. Moreover, the elder boys of the Shafar, the Herș Abraham, Ambruș Abraham, and Mendel Abraham families were not deported, as they were not in the village at that moment. Some of them were placed in the forced battalions that worked for the Hungarian army and others managed to flee in the woods surrounding the village. Despite all the risks and the Hungarian authorities' threats, the latter were provided with food by the Romanian families and managed to survive until the retreat of the Hungarian administration and the arrival of the Soviet troops in the village (interviews with Maria Prunean, Gheorghe Ciunt, Gheorghe Peșteșan). Gheorghe Ciunt has tears in his eyes when recalling a moment which is still fresh in his memory. He recounts how shortly after the deportation of the Jews from Bogata de Sus, he went ploughing with his father on a field close to a forest. At some point he noticed a young man getting out of the forest and trying to get back into the village. He realised that the young man was one of the sons of the Shafar family, their neighbours. The young Jew noticed he had been seen and recognised by the child who was ploughing with his father and went back into the forest. The child beckoned to his father about what he saw and he replied: "Mind your business, child, you have no idea what you saw!" In the evening, when they got home, the mother told the father about an unexpected guest. At that moment, as Gheorghe Ciunt recalls, his father brought his index finger to his lips, advising her to be discrete, as the child was there. Gheorghe Ciunt explained to me that his parents were trying to protect them and their children by not involving the latter in their actions of helping their Jewish neighbours who were befallen by the tragedy. Other peasants who were interviewed recall the same secrecy of the parents toward their children with regard to the help given to the Jews in the village (Interviews with Maria Muntean, Maria Mureșan, Maria Prunean, Gheorghe Peșteșan, Maria Beldean).

Memories about the return of the Holocaust survivors

Out of all the Jews from Bogata de Sus who were deported to Auschwitz with the trains that left the Dej railway station in May-June of 1944, only one person survived. She was one of the girls of Mendel Abraham's family, Ităla Abraham, who, after being freed from Auschwitz, returned to the village, married a Holocaust survivor from the neighbouring village, Calna, and gave birth to her first child there. She told everyone

about the loss of her family, her community, and the horrors she had witnessed in Auschwitz. Some villagers remember how she told with pain in her voice that “*hell came upon us*” when she was evoking the tragedy her family and community had been through (Interview with Maria Mureșan).

The few young Jewish men who had avoided the deportation to Auschwitz returned as well and tried to start their lives again. No member of the Herșcovici, Motălaș, and Baroc families has survived the Holocaust, as a few elders remember (Interviews with Gheorghe Peșteșan, Maria Mureșan, Maria Prunean). The survivors of the Holocaust took back their former jobs, trying to revive their peasant households, their shops and artisan workshops which were devastated by their persecutors. Ităla Abraham’s husband became the village tailor and things seemed to return to normal, despite the awful tragedy that the Jewish community in Bogata de Sus had gone through. Still, what came afterwards was the opposite of returning to normalcy.

During the first years after the war, after the establishment of communism in Romania, the survivors gradually left the village and moved to the nearby towns, Dej, Cluj, or Turda. Subsequently, a great percentage of them emigrated to Israel, the United States, or Canada. Toward the end of the 1970s, a visit made by Ităla Abraham and her family to the villagers of Bogata de Sus was a great source of joy and emotion. The entire village welcomed their former fellow villager who had become an American citizen. Although more than twenty years had passed since their emigration, one of the old Jews in Bogata de Sus asked Ităla Abraham’s husband with candour “Has the corn grown well this year in the States, mister Weiss?” Although so many years had passed since he had left, Mr. Weiss was still considered one of them, a farmer who had to be up to date with the most important crop in their village. Three years ago, in 2017, the descendants of Ităla Abraham visited the village and told those whom they met that their mother, the last Bogata de Sus survivor of Auschwitz, had passed away (interview with Maria Prunean).

The post-war generations of Bogata de Sus and the Holocaust

The memories of the tragedy the Jewish community of Bogata de Sus went through are embedded in the collective memory of those people contemporary with the Holocaust, and some of these memories were shared with children and grandchildren. These memories have been randomly shared throughout the generations, with respect to the psychological features, the subjectivism, the narrative talent, and the good will of those who witnessed the Jewish community’s tragedy in the village. The reception

and the preservation of these sad memories were clearly dependent on the level of curiosity, on the culture, and on the extent to which the successors of those who witnessed the tragedy showed interest in this topic, which has been rather kept secret in the official and institutionalised memory.

75 years after the deportation and murder of the Jews in North-Western Transylvania, including those from Bogata de Sus, at Auschwitz, the common knowledge of post-war generations about the genocide of their Jewish fellow villagers is differentiated by age. Given that by the end of the 1950s there were no Jews still living in the village, the generations who matured or were born after that moment only have scarce memories of the Jewish community in Bogata de Sus and the tragedy it went through. In order to assess the level of knowledge on the matter, I used a questionnaire distributed to 68 subjects aged over 18, all working in agriculture and representing 70% of the families who live in Bogata de Sus at this time and almost 30% of the entire population. Out of the 68 people who answered the questionnaire, 41 are women and 27 are men. 17 people were born between 1936 and 1940, 26 were born between 1941 and 1950, 9 between 1951 and 1960, 8 between 1961 and 1970, 5 between 1971 and 1980, and 3 after 1981. The distribution by age segments of the respondents to the questionnaire confirms the tendency toward aging of the population of the present-day Romanian village, a tendency that is verified for Bogata de Sus as well.

The questionnaire was very concise and, as mentioned above, consisted of four simple and clear questions: the first question was “Do you know that Jewish people have lived in Bogata de Sus?”; the second “Do you know how many Jews and Jewish families have lived in Bogata de Sus?”; the third “When and under what circumstances did the Jews leave the village?”; and the fourth “Do you know places in the village which carry Jewish names?”. Some of the respondents insisted on expressing additional comments and opinions regarding their answers, and some of the more relevant opinions were recorded.

The results of the survey showed that 9 subjects, approximately 13% of all the respondents, did not know about the Jewish community in their village. An overwhelming majority of those who responded negatively to this question was born in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Those who answered affirmatively knew about the community either due to their age – those who were children in the first post-war years, when Jews still lived in the village – or from their parents and grandparents, in the case of those born after the 1950s.

When asked about the number of Jews and Jewish families who lived in the village, 66% gave positive answers. Those born toward the end

of the 1930s and during the 1940s remember the names of those who lived in the village, as well as the part of it they lived in. One of them, Viorel Noghiu, born toward the end of the 1940s and one of the respondents to the questionnaire, remembers from his early childhood that he went for the first time alone to try on a pair of trousers made by Mr. Weiss, the husband of Ităla Abraham, the only survivor of Auschwitz, native from the village. Another one, Veronica Mircea, born in 1947, clearly remembers Ităla Abraham's first-born child, Angelica, born in Bogata de Sus, as she was Angelica's babysitter for a short period of time. Another respondent, Eugenia Căpâlnaș, born in 1939, showed me a copy of the Holy Bible that her father-in-law, Vasile Căpâlnaș, had received in 1968 in Israel, as a present from one of the three surviving sons of Mendel Abraham, Bartholomew (Beruș) Abraham. The others, with a few exceptions, know about two or three names of Jews who lived in Bogata de Sus and mention they have heard these names from parents and/or grandparents. An exception in this second group of respondents that had positive responses is Vasile (Siu) Toderean, born in 1954, who has relatively recently returned to live in the village, after his retirement. Vasile Toderean was able to list the Jewish families that had lived in the village, even mentioning the houses in which they had resided, in similar fashion to the other eight old peasants who were interviewed and who were contemporary with the Holocaust. The explanation for this quasi-exhaustive description of the Jewish community in the village comes from the seemingly endless talks Vasile had with his father, Teodor Toderean, about the recent history of the village and its inhabitants. His father never forgot to mention in his stories about the Jewish community in Bogata de Sus the interethnic harmony that was ruling over the village and also the mutual respect of the Romanian majority and the Jewish people living in the village. The conduct of the Mendel Abraham family was, in Teodor Toderean's opinion, a very good depiction of the mutual respect mentioned earlier; the Mendel Abrahams were living next to the village's Orthodox church (Greek Catholic church at that time), and they were not undertaking any household chores on Sunday morning, so that they would not insult the Christians at the Sunday morning service.

Regarding the third question, the key-question of the survey, "How and why did the Jews leave the village?", 33% answered by saying they are not familiar with the circumstances in which they left the village. The overwhelming majority of those who answered negatively were born after the beginning of the 1960s. Among those who answered affirmatively, all of them placed their departure in the context of deportation/the Holocaust ("the mocking of Jews") and the migration of the survivors in the first post-war decade. Almost all of those who answered positively to this question,

regardless of the generation they were born in, mentioned that they had only learned of the tragic fate of the Jews in Bogata de Sus from their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Many of them, including Florica Mureşan, born in 1946, and Maria (Măriuţa) Mureşan, born in 1953, reported that their parents had tears in their eyes and a broken heart when telling the frightening stories of the Jews in the village. Another respondent, Ioan (Iuănaş) Moldovan, born in 1943, mentioned that oftentimes his mother would talk of the inhumane manner in which the Jews were deported from the village, regardless of their age or their health condition, and also of how his grandfather, David Moldovan, who neighbored a family of Jews, the Ambruş Abraham family, had brought food to the Dej Ghetto on multiple occasions. Moreover, Ioan (Iuănaş) Moldovan remembers his father saying that the Jews from Bogata de Sus were deported during the spring ploughing. Another person, Raveca Noghiu, born in 1939, vaguely remembers that they were the neighbours of the Baroc family when they were deported, and also that her father, Ioan (Iuănuc) Marchiş, who got along very well with the Baroc family, took over the administration of their house and went more than once to bring food to the Dej Ghetto. She also remembers that none of the members of the Baroc family survived Auschwitz, although one of Baroc's brothers who managed to survive had lived for a few years in the Barocs' house after the war. Lucian Noghiu, born in 1969, son of Raveca Noghiu, remembers that his grandfather, Ioan (Iuănuc) Marchiş, told him of when he brought food to his Jewish neighbours, even on the day when they were to be embarked on the train to Auschwitz. Other people, Augustin (Gusti) Mureşan, born in 1944, Ana (Ica) Mureşan, born in 1946, and Valerica Sechei, born in 1949, remember their parents were telling stories of how, between the moments of the deportation of the Jews and the arrival of Soviet troops in the village, many people left food on their window sills for the young Jewish people (and also for the young Romanian people who had refused to join the Hungarian army) who had taken refuge in the forests around the village. The latter were sneaking into the village at night and they supplied themselves with the food left by the peasants. Sometimes, some of the peasants took the greater risk of carrying the food, or even sheep, by themselves into the woods for the fugitive Jewish and Romanian young people there. Somebody from the 1970s generation, Constantin (Costică) Mureşan, mentioned that an uncle of his, Augustin Codorean, one of the village carpenters, told him that one of the Jewish Holocaust survivors, a carpenter himself, the one from whom he had learned the craft, had gifted his toolbox to him when he left the village in the 1950s.

In the case of the village's toponymy (places in the village or outside the built-up areas which have been given Jewish names), most of those interviewed, 53 persons or 79% of the respondents, mentioned at least one place which has a Jewish name.



*Tombstone in the Jewish cemetery in Bogata de Sus
Source: Photograph taken by the author.*

With two exceptions, those who answered affirmatively mentioned the Jewish cemetery and Baroc's knoll, part of the main road that is used as a sleigh path during winter, a place known by every child in the village. The overwhelming majority of those who mentioned the Jewish cemetery in their answer explained their knowledge of the place by the proximity of the cemetery to the village school, which all respondents to the questionnaire graduated from. The past and present poor maintenance of the cemetery might be the reason why some of the respondents had no knowledge of it. One of the respondents to the questionnaire, Ana (Anicuța) Mureșan, born in 1943, who lives near the cemetery, in a house that used to belong to the

Herșu Abraham family, said that the state of the cemetery depended and still depends on the level of involvement of Jewish associations from around the world in its maintenance. Thanks to those associations' support, the cemetery was fenced, and a metallic gate was built at the end of the 1980s. She also mentioned the fact that both her father-in-law, Teodor Mureșan, and her husband, Pompei Mureșan, took over the regular maintenance of the cemetery, up until their deaths. Based on a life-long friendship with Moritz Abraham, one of the Jews who survived the Holocaust, Teodor (Toderaș) Prunean, husband of Maria Prunean (one of the eight people who were interviewed) took care of the cemetery for a good stretch of time. Gheorghe Prunean, born in 1950, and David Prunean, born in 1961 (mayor of the Vad commune, of which Bogata de Sus is part since 1968), sons of Teodor Prunean and respondents to the questionnaire, both mentioned their father's long lasting friendship with the surviving wealthy Jew and their father's involvement in the cemetery's maintenance.



Bogata de Sus: Baroc's knoll; the house in front, on the left, was built on the place where the Baroc family house used to stand.

Source: Photograph taken by the author.

Baroc's knoll, which is a portion of the main village alley that goes uphill from the former house of the Baroc family to the centre of the village, is a place filled with magic for all of those villagers who grew up in Bogata de Sus. In wintertime, this portion of the main road becomes the most important ad-hoc sledge slope and it is most likely that any child's sledge has been tested on this hill. It is likely that many of the children born from the 1940s up to present times in Bogata de Sus have asked their parents or their grandparents who this Baroc, whose name is taken by the most famous knoll in the village, might have been. And it is just as likely that their

parents or grandparents answered them that, once upon a time, there used to be a family called Baroc that found its end in the Auschwitz inferno.

Conclusions

Out of the Jewish population of Bogata de Sus, blossoming at the outbreak of the Second World War and representing 7% of population of the village at that time, now only the Jewish cemetery (slightly neglected), a few names in the village's toponymy, and the memories of a few old villagers have remained. Among these memories, the most vivid one is the catastrophe of the Holocaust which befell the Jewish community in the spring of 1944. The elders remember that then, during the time of ploughing and sowing, some of the most diligent villagers, kind, hardworking, and polite people – the Jews and their families – were humiliated, deported, and killed in a way impossible to imagine. There has been a great gap in the village ever since, and almost a form of amnesia, that only the memories of the elders are able to fill. And this amnesia tends to be thrown into oblivion, whether we are talking about the Jewish community's existence in the area or that it fell victim to the Holocaust. When the last witnesses of the tragedy of the Holocaust among the villagers will have perished, it will become possible to erase the horrific events that happened 75 years ago from the collective memory of the village. The fact that the offspring of that generation of peasants, their children and part of their grandsons, have a more or less superficial knowledge of the events does not guarantee their remembrance. Based on the traces of the Jewish presence in the area, institutional steps toward the preservation of collective memory could be taken, with the help of local authorities, to avoid forgetting. In similar fashion, a monograph could be written that would affirm the Jewish contribution to the history of the village and ensure that their tragedy is not forgotten. It is worth mentioning the fact that, although meritorious, the monograph of Vad (Petrican and Pădurean 2004), where Bogata de Sus is included since 1968, provides, due to a lack of either knowledge or attention, only limited information regarding the Jewish tragedy in the commune. Although the study notes fairly accurately the Jewish presence in the seven villages of the commune since the early 19th century, with Bogata de Sus being the largest community in all the seven villages of Vad, surprisingly, the book gives only very limited consideration to the Holocaust and the gruesome trials Jews experienced. This is a rather roaring silence that can still be interrupted by the voices and confessions of the elders.

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Chapter 14

Remembering the Roma Deportations in Post-Communist Romania: The Difficult Path to a Shared Past

Petre-Georgian MATEI¹

During the Second World War, Romanian authorities deported besides Jews also about 25,000 Roma, half of whom died in Transnistria between 1942 and 1944. Little was known about their fate. However, things have started to change lately, as their deportations have become very important to the Roma identity discourse revolving around persecution and the Holocaust. The present chapter aims to investigate how the perceptions about Roma and the Holocaust evolved in Romania after the fall of the communist regime. The chapter is divided into several sub-sections: while in the first part we will briefly discuss why the Roma deportations received little attention before 1989, we will focus in the second part on how these deportations were perceived after 1989, especially by the Roma themselves. This period of 30 years is further divided into three segments, each with its own specificities: a) the early 1990s; b) 1997-2003; c) 2003-present, capturing the growing interest of Roma in the Holocaust.

Keywords: Roma; Holocaust; Transnistria; memory; commemoration; institutionalisation.

Introduction

Anti-Semitic legislation and violence preceded Romania's entry into the war as an ally of Nazi Germany. In 1941, about 45,000-60,000 Romanian Jews were killed in Bessarabia and Bukovina by Romanian and German troops, other Romanian Jews were deported to Transnistria (where 105,000-120,000 died), 115,000-180,000 Ukrainian Jews were killed in Transnistria, and around 132,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz from Hungarian-ruled Northern Transylvania. The Romanian authorities deported also about 25,000 Roma, half of whom died in Transnistria (Friling et al. 2004, p. 382). Little was known about the fate of those Roma. Things have changed only recently. From a relatively unknown episode, their

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deportations have acquired in the last 15 years an extraordinary importance for articulating the Roma identity discourse. Consequently, from a people previously considered as ahistorical, Roma have started to be considered as having a well-defined history, dominated by persecutions, slavery, and the Holocaust. Once outside history, the Roma have arrived at its very centre! They commemorate the Holocaust, have their own places and times of memory, and the deportations of Romanian Roma to Transnistria have become part of the Holocaust narrative.

As we find this rapid evolution highly interesting, we will try to address how the perceptions about Roma and the Holocaust evolved over time. The present chapter is divided into several sub-sections. In the first part we will try to briefly present some reasons for which the Roma deportations received little attention during the communist regime and then we will try to capture the ways in which the deportations of the Roma to Transnistria were perceived both by Roma and mainstream society after 1989.

I. 'Forgetting' before 1989?

There are several reasons why the Roma deportations remained unknown until recently in Romania. Some have to do with the wartime period, while others can be explained by later developments (especially during communism).

Some problems arose due to the specificities of the Roma deportations. Firstly, in the Roma case, there was no legislation similar to the anti-Semitic one (which affected all Jews, even those who were not deported). Except for those deported, most Roma kept their citizenship rights, served in the army, etc. While life-saving for most of the Roma living at the time, this could not however satisfactorily contribute to the creation of a memory of persecution shared by many. Secondly, unlike Jews, whose deportations were mainly carried out according to geographical criteria (as Jews were deported especially from Bessarabia and Bucovina), which from the memory-making perspective did not pose difficulties, in the case of the Roma, their deportation was enacted, at least declaratively, according to criteria related to social and public order concerns (Matei 2019). All nomadic Roma and those sedentary Roma with criminal records or without regular forms of employment were considered dangerous and hence deportable. In fact, what mattered more was not proven criminality, but the suspicion stemming from a long process of criminalisation of Roma by the law enforcement agencies (Matei 2018). However, this contributed to a certain victim-blaming (occurring also among the undeported Roma) or

even self-blaming (among Roma survivors). Thirdly, it was difficult to make use of relevant and accessible *lieux de mémoire* as the Romanian authorities deported the Roma extremely quickly. There were neither concentration camps in Romania where the Roma would have stayed long enough, nor sites of mass executions or mass graves. Moreover, the Roma were not deported inside Romania, but to some isolated, rural, and makeshift locations (kolkhozes and huts) located in a peripheral territory such as Transnistria. After the war, Transnistria re-joined the Soviet Union and became once more inaccessible. From this perspective, the situation of the Roma in Romania is different from that of Roma in other countries, such as Poland (Kapralski 2004), Belarus (Bartash 2017), Ukraine (Kotljarchuk 2016; Tyaglyy 2015), West Germany, etc. The latter had access to the sites where the massacres took place, to common graves, or even to the respective camps, and could thus commemorate (initially informally, in the form of religious rituals, such as lighting candles or erecting crosses, in a restricted, family circle, then eventually officially). All these things were not possible for the Roma in Romania.

Other difficulties were due to the ideological mnemonic narrative imposed by the communist regime. The newly communised Eastern European countries adopted the Soviet-inspired narrative, according to which the responsibility for the wartime persecutions belonged mainly to Nazi Germany, which was accused of imposing an occupation (or quasi-occupation) of these states. Similarly, the domestic culprits were described as representing merely a minority (the fascist elites, traitors, marginal elements) that was not representative. The extent of discrimination and persecution of Jews and Roma was minimised and distorted, and they were presented as victims from their own national ranks (Kelso 2013). The result was that the nation was redeemed. Accordingly, more attention was received by those cases where blame could be imputed to others and guilt externalised. For example, the Romanian historiography dealt with the fate of the Jews in Northern Transylvania, occupied by Hungary between 1940 and 1944, but shied away from discussing that of the Jews deported to the Romanian-run camps in Transnistria between 1941 and 1944. If in the case of Transylvania the wrongdoing could be easily assigned to the Germans and Hungarians, in the case of Transnistria this was difficult. Therefore, the story of what had happened to the Jewish and Roma deportees in Transnistria became taboo. There was also a tendency in Romanian historiography to talk about the so-called Romanian exceptionalism (allegedly there was no Holocaust in the country, thanks to Antonescu, who was presented as a protector of Jews, etc.). These projections of historians,

with their silences, were disseminated through public education, strongly controlled by the state (Kelso 2014).

There were however considerable differences between Jews and Roma. The former had more room for making their message known. They were formally recognised as a nationality and could benefit from an institutional framework: within the remit of their own Federation of Jewish Communities, they could commemorate (although rather the pogroms in Bucharest and Iași). Moreover, even if muted in Romania, Jewish survivors stood better chances to leave Romania for Israel or other countries and publish their memoirs or studies on the Holocaust. In addition, by becoming Israeli or 'Western' citizens, they became entitled to receive compensation from West Germany as victims of the Holocaust. This created expectations, prompting the surviving Jews in communist Romania to put pressure on Jewish community leaders to become involved. There was also a niche for the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Northern Transylvania.

From this point of view, the situation of the Roma deportation was more problematic. The Romanian Roma had the misfortune of being deported only by Romanians and exclusively to Transnistria. As it would have been difficult to externalise the guilt, the Romanian historiography simply avoided the subject. Moreover, the Roma could not challenge this narrative, since there was no institutional framework allowing Roma to commemorate the Holocaust. Shortly after the war, the process of organising the Roma was brought to an end. Having been established already in 1934, the last Roma Association was dismantled in January 1949. Once again, according to the Soviet model, the Roma were not acknowledged as an ethnic minority but seen rather as a social category (Achim 2002). Consequently, they did not enjoy certain rights (be they educational, cultural, or political). Unable to formally organise themselves, they could not formally commemorate their deportations either. Moreover, unlike Jews, most Roma survivors were illiterate (and thus unable to write their memoirs, articles, or books on the deportations), they came from different groups (often endogamous), the criteria invoked to deport them had been allegedly motivated by public order concerns, all these making up difficulties in devising a meta-narrative. Furthermore, West Germany started only late (in the 1980s) to pay compensation to the Roma survivors, and those in Romania were not yet eligible. This means that, unlike in the case of the Jews, this stimulus was also absent during communism. At the time, there were efforts made by some Roma leaders (especially Ion Cioabă) to obtain compensation from West Germany, but these did not reflect a significant movement among the Roma, but rather an interest of the Romanian secret police (*Securitate*) to obtain the compensations on behalf

of the Roma. Their tactic was to blame West Germany in order to access the money (Matei 2020).

In conclusion, communist Romania did not offer the necessary conditions for the development of a social memory around the deportation of the Roma. Although there continued to be Roma survivors who obviously remembered those deportations, their memories remained confined to the family realm or eventually to the margins of the traditional communities of former nomads (who had all been deported). They did not become established as a form of public memory.

II. 'Remembering' after 1989?

In the following part, we will outline the ways in which the Roma deportations to Transnistria were perceived both by Roma and mainstream society after 1989. Consequently, we divide this period of 30 years into three segments, each with its own specificities:

- 1) early 1990s, when Roma activists showed little interest in the Holocaust;
- 2) 1997-2003 marks the emergence of this interest, but this is expressed punctually and randomly, as the institutional framework was still absent;
- 3) 2003-present: the Holocaust turned into an essential component of the Roma identity discourse as the institutional framework became available thanks to: a) the "Final Report" produced by the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, officially accepted by Romania (translating into institutionalisation as the Roma were mentioned among the victims of the Holocaust); and b) the increasing concerns of European and international institutions for diminishing hostility toward Roma after 2004 and 2007, when several Eastern European states with millions of Roma became part of the EU. Policies were needed to dismantle the persistent anti-Roma resentment, and one of these entailed placing greater emphasis on the history of the Roma, with a focus on persecutions, culminating with the memory of the Holocaust.

II.1. 1990-1997

The Roma deportations began to acquire importance only after the fall of communism and their formal recognition as an ethnic minority. However, by the end of the 1990s, interest on both sides (Romanian or Roma) was superficial. The reasons for this had to do both with the mainstream society and with the Roma.

As to the mainstream society, there was a historiographical refusal to deal with the Holocaust (and even less with the Roma). To begin with, the

national historiographies in Eastern European states (Romania included), fresh out of communism, paid attention to their own people's victimisation during the communist regime. Comparatively little attention was paid to the Holocaust (of others, be they Jews or Roma), with its uncomfortable truths and complicities, as victims had suffered also at the hands of the majority groups in the respective countries. Initially, Ion Antonescu was rehabilitated and glorified as a hero who had fought against the USSR to recover Bessarabia and Bukovina. Pogroms against Jews, ethnic cleansing in the summer of 1941 and the deportations to Transnistria of Jews, but later, in 1942, also of Roma were generally ignored or distorted (Shafir 2002; Friling et al. 2004 pp. 349-380). At times, they were seen as defensive measures, justified by the actions of the Jews and the Roma (allegedly communist traitors or threats to public order, respectively). There was back then no public debate on the Roma during the Second World War. The Romanian media and hence public opinion did not seem aware or concerned about these deportations. The Holocaust (and the Roma) had not yet become part of the national curriculum.

As to the Roma themselves, the necessary institutional framework that would allow them an assertive discourse on slavery or the Holocaust had not yet been created in the 1990s. Similarly, there was neither any serious interest in the Eastern European Roma on behalf of the European Union (consequently no funds or strategies for Roma integration), nor definitions of the Holocaust (which were first mentioned in Government Ordinance 31/2002) or the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania to be formally assumed by the state (with all the resulting institutionalisation of Holocaust research and education, the creation of the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (INSHR-EW), etc.). There were yet no institutions for the protection of minorities, such as the later National Centre for Combating Discrimination (CNCD), let alone institutions dedicated to the Roma or even run by Roma, such as the National Agency for Roma (ANR) or the National Centre for Roma Culture (CNCR). The Roma elites in Romania had neither models to emulate (of Jews in Romania or of the international Roma movement), nor the ability or interest to articulate their identity discourse around the Holocaust. This happened only later and had to do with the enlargement of the EU, which in the early 1990s was still far away. All this becomes evident if we compare how both the elites' discourses and their impact evolved in the following years.

For most of the 1990s, there remained a significant gap between Roma survivors, Roma ethnic entrepreneurs, and the Roma people as a whole.

The survivors' memories remained, to a large extent, confined to the limits of their families and communities. Many of them were illiterate and belonged to endogamous groups. Their experiences in Transnistria did not make it into the public sphere. There were no interviews with them, let alone oral history or documentary interviews about the 'forgotten Holocaust'. If this lack of interest on behalf of the Romanian media was not necessarily a surprise, we might have had other expectations regarding the Roma media. However, until the late 1990s, there were only very few random mentions of the deportations in the Roma press. Neither was there any interest from the Roma elites (intellectuals, organisations, or the press) to identify and interview the survivors. The first oral history interviews carried out in the 1990s with Roma survivors were conducted by non-Roma intellectuals (such as Radu Ioanid and Michelle Kelso). The Roma themselves adopted this approach only later, after the publication of the "Final Report" and Romania's entry into the EU.

As for the Roma elites, their interest in recent history was limited. They did not see it yet as a powerful tool for ethnic mobilisation. Moreover, the first commemorations practiced by the Roma organisations in the 1990s were integrative, aiming rather to show their closeness to the Romanians they depended on. They celebrated days and symbols such as the National Day of Romania (1 December 1918) and the Day of the Revolution (22 December 1989). For example, on such occasions, leaders of the main Roma organisations in Bucharest were laying flowers and wreaths at the Cemetery of the Heroes of the Revolution. It was only in the late 1990s that they started to 'discover' some other days, more specific to the Roma, but even then the issue was Roma slavery, or better put its manumission, not the Holocaust (let alone centred on Auschwitz). Back then, the Roma activists had not yet developed a coherent and consistent discourse regarding the Holocaust.

The few references the Roma activists made to the deportations were not meant to accuse Romania or even less the Romanian people, different from the radical approaches of more recent Roma activists who already talk about a 'perpetual Holocaust of Roma'. The state they usually held accountable for allegedly imposing their deportation was Germany, not Romania. In a way, this reflected the older concerns of the Roma activists from the 1980s, used by the *Securitate* to obtain compensations from West Germany (Matei 2020). This was especially the case of Ion Cioabă (1935-1997), a traditional Roma leader (*Kalderari*) and survivor of the deportations to Transnistria. Ion Cioabă would continue to accuse Germany after the fall of communism. On 8 September 1992, Ion Cioabă declared himself king of the Gypsies and, at the respective press conference, he

affirmed that in Romania the Roma were not discriminated against. Moreover, he also exonerated Ion Antonescu, by declaring that the Roma deportation to Transnistria had saved the Roma from being deported and killed by the Nazis (Remmel 2005, pp. 75-80, 92). On numerous other occasions, Cioabă claimed that Germany was responsible for the deportations and hence should pay compensation. This rhetoric became quite visible in the context of the German-Romanian intergovernmental agreement of 1992, which allowed for the repatriation of numerous economic migrants from Romania, mainly Roma (Achim 1992).

This was not the only narrative. Apart from Cioabă (who was more visible), there were more modern Roma leaders, such as Vasile Ionescu (leader of the “Aven Amentza” organisation), who were aware of the political potential of invoking deportations and persecution. For example, following the events in Bucharest in June 1990, when the authorities appealed to miners to suppress the anti-governmental movement, some measures were taken also against the Roma, under the pretext of eradicating the illicit trade. On 22 June 1990, the Democratic Union of Roma in Romania issued a statement that drew attention to the violence against Roma in several neighbourhoods: “This pogrom resurrects the times we thought bygone, those of the legionary-fascist dictatorship. [...] We recall that Romania was the only country in Europe in which the Gypsies were slaves, the only country in the Balkans where, in 1942, they were deported.” (UDRR 1990, p. 2). This was an interestingly new way of drawing attention to present abuses by establishing parallels with the past (slavery and the Holocaust, while focusing on the reversed / negative exceptionalism of Romania in relation to the Roma). The past could be resemantized and used politically by Roma activists. This potential was however rarely made use of in the 1990s.

The impact of these discourses (either of Roma survivors or activists) on the rest of the Roma should not be overstated. Roma NGOs were not concerned about the Holocaust, did not try to familiarise their members or collaborators with this theme, did not commemorate it, let alone intended to exert any influence on the rest of the Roma or the mainstream society. Should they have tried, they would not have stood good chances: all they had at this time were just a few Roma newspapers with very little impact.

II.2. Between 1997/8-2003/2004

Things started to change in the period 1997-2003/2004, which was marked both by more consistent efforts aimed at European integration and

the Holocaust scandal leading to the creation of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania. As efforts were made for Romania to become part of the EU, it became necessary to adopt certain measures and strategies aimed at the protection of minorities and the integration of the Roma. New institutions were created and consolidated. Better financial support possibilities became available. All of these contributed to the emergence of a larger room for manoeuvre for the Roma in terms of the use of the past, the Holocaust included. For example, in 1998, a PHARE program was created to help the Romanian Government develop a national strategy for the improvement of the Roma situation by 2000 (Matei 2016, p. 70). The so-called Office for Roma was created within the Department for the Protection of National Minorities. In the following years, Romania signed several PHARE memoranda and received from the EU substantial non-reimbursable funds for the Roma worth millions of euros (Matei 2016, pp. 71, 75, 83, 88-89, 92-94, 97, 101). In addition, Romania was permanently monitored by European institutions, also on the treatment of Roma, and the results were published in the form of Periodic Reports on the progress made by Romania for accession to the European Union. In addition, it mattered also that in April 1998, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) ordered the start of an important educational programme that stimulated the emergence of a Roma intellectual class by offering reserved places at several universities for Roma high school graduates (Sarău 2012, p. 62). In March 2002, the Government adopted also the Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002 regarding the prohibition of organisations and symbols with a fascist, racist, or xenophobic character, and the promotion of the cult of persons guilty of committing crimes against peace and humanity. The ordinance played an important role in eliminating the cult of Ion Antonescu and contributed to raising awareness regarding the Holocaust. Soon the statues of Antonescu were taken down, and the streets bearing his name were renamed (Matei 2016, pp. 90-95).

In the same context of the bid for EU membership, scholars started paying more attention to the Holocaust and the Roma (Kelso 2014). Toward the end of the 1990s, more substantial studies appeared both on the Holocaust and on the deportation of the Roma (Achim 1998; Ioanid 1998; Kelso 1999; Bancoş 2000). Likewise, a massive collection of documents on interwar Roma organisations and the Second World War deportations of the Roma to Transnistria was published in 2001 by Lucian Nastasă and Andrea Varga. However, in this initial phase, such studies had only a limited reception, confined to the few specialists concerned with the history of the Roma and the Holocaust. Although some Romanian officials started talking

about the treatment of the Jews, things were still different with regard to the Roma deportations.

Another important factor during this period was the emergence of the first compensation programmes for Roma survivors, offered mainly by the Germans. Granted in the form of so-called humanitarian aid or compensations for forced labour, they represented large sums of money for Romanian Roma in the 1990s and early 2000s: 1000 German marks or 7500 euro from the “Memory Responsibility and Future” Foundation (EVZ) and Swiss Banks via International Organisation for Migration. Interest from survivors and their families grew, putting pressure on Roma activists who, at times, served as intermediaries for these compensations. For example, on 20 August 1998, a protocol was signed between the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Roma Convention on humanitarian aid to some Roma victims of persecutions in Romania (Achim 2002, p. 77). Roma NGOs started to become involved and to talk more frequently about the Holocaust. These compensations for the Roma survivors did not come however as a result of a Romanian Roma lobby. They only benefited from the favourable international context. The same applies for the Government Ordinance no 105/30 August 1999 (future Law 189/2000) regarding the granting of rights to the persons persecuted for ethnic reasons by the regimes established in Romania from September 1940 to March 1945. Although eventually the Roma survivors of deportations to Transnistria also benefitted from its provisions, one can hardly document any effort on behalf of Roma activists at work in this case. In fact, during this period, the Roma activists limited themselves to claiming only moral compensations from the Romanian authorities, while requesting material compensations from the German authorities. Against this background, certain things started to change not only in terms of the content of the discourse, but also in terms of the possibilities available for conveying these discourses. The activists became more assertive and interested in using the past for identity construction and made attempts to identify relevant *lieux de mémoire*. The main Roma organisations tried to develop a long-term strategy for combatting discrimination. On 5 February 1998, the newly established Convention for the Cooperation of the Roma Associations in Romania addressed President Emil Constantinescu to examine the possibility of launching a campaign to combat the forms of racial intolerance and exclusion toward the Roma and to use his influence to improve the socio-political situation of the Roma. In this context, they also asked that the Romanian government accepts its responsibility both for the Roma deportations to Transnistria and, surprisingly, for the forced sedentarisation

of the nomadic Roma during the communist period (*Asul de Treflă* 1998a, pp. 4-5).

In the context of ongoing discussions regarding the first offers of German compensation for Romanian Roma, one can notice the new interest in the Holocaust already on 29 April 1998, when leaders of several Roma organisations invoked the deportations to Transnistria and expressed several requests to the Romanian state, such as public apologies as a form of moral compensation, and to the German state, both public apologies and material compensations for the Holocaust survivors and their descendants (*Asul de Treflă* 1998b, p. 7). The Roma press started publishing articles with details both about those compensations and the recent history of the Roma, including the deportations. Some articles had very clear titles, such as “We want moral and financial compensation for the Bug [River]!” (*Asul de Treflă* 1999, p. 4). Simultaneously, at some events, the leaders of Roma organisations in Romania were pictured dressed in prisoners’ uniforms (such as Vasile Ionescu, who appeared in an outfit reminiscent of the similar gesture made by the prominent Sinto activist from West Germany Romani Rose in the 1980s) (Rromathan 1999-2000, pp. 107-114). During the same period, some Roma organisations (first “Aven Amentza”, led by the same Vasile Ionescu) started publishing the first collections of documents about the deportations.

Although these demonstrate a greater interest in the Holocaust, the few materials published by the Roma activists in this period were usually quite short, taking the form of newspaper interviews, letters written by survivors, resumes of their applications for compensation, or translations of some general studies on Roma deportation (Cernăianu 1998, pp. 6-7; Lupu 2000, p. 26; Roman 2001, pp. 10-11). All of these did not yet represent sustained efforts to create, let alone successfully disseminate, a coherent historical narrative. Moreover, the real impact of the Roma NGOs on the Roma communities at the time should not be overstated. They were not yet influential. The young Roma coming to universities became a human resource the Roma NGOs were interested in recruiting their collaborators from, but otherwise the capacity of the Roma NGOs to become known and influential, let alone to set the agenda, was low.

Another limitation was due to the lack of institutionalised Holocaust commemoration, as there were no specific days set yet. It was not until 1997 that the Roma from Romania identified a day to commemorate, but this was 20 February 1856 and it had to do with slavery and manumission, not with the Holocaust. Therefore, in the period 1998-2003, references to deportations were made randomly, depending on certain opportunities (usually in the context of compensations). For example, the more recent and

cosmopolitan day of 8 April (in memory of the first Roma International Congress held in London in 1971) started to be commemorated in Romania only later, in 2002, at the initiative of some NGOs. Since 2002 and 2003, 8 April has also been used to commemorate the Holocaust of the Roma. In 2003, in Sibiu, in the context of the expected German compensations for forced labour, about 150 participants under the leadership of Florin Cioabă, a self-titled Roma king, threw flowers in the Cibin River in memory of the victims of deportations and asked the German state to compensate the Roma survivors. In Alba Iulia, about 200 people participated in a march organised by the Democratic Union of Roma and similarly threw flowers in the Ampoi river in memory of the Roma victims. Similar events were organised in other localities (Matei 2016, p. 106). The identification of some days and their commemorations were a good start. However, as these efforts were still nascent, they could not yet give rise to a visible association of the Roma with the Holocaust in the eyes of both the mainstream society and Roma communities.

Regarding the public education system, the Holocaust continued to be insufficiently covered. In the alternative textbooks available, information about the Holocaust varied greatly, which affected the coherence of the discourse. On the whole, the tendency was to minimise the Holocaust and to avoid responsibility. Regarding the Roma, their deportations received even less attention (Waldman 2010; Kelso 2013).

II.3. 2003/2004-present

Starting with 2003/2004, the perception of the Roma deportations evolved, both in terms of discourse content and promotion possibilities. If initially only a few Roma activists had shown some preoccupation with Transnistria (addressing rather the local context), without having a notable impact either on Roma communities or on the mainstream society, during the process of EU enlargement things changed considerably. The Roma ethnic entrepreneurs started to present these deportations as the most important and relevant moment of their history, according to which everything needed to be reconsidered.

Several factors contributed to this. By far the most important was Romania's integration into the EU, which created an institutional framework favourable to the recognition of the Holocaust and of the Roma in particular. For analytical purposes, we distinguish between an international level (the integration of Romania and other Eastern European states into the EU) and a domestic level (International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania and the Holocaust institutionalisation in Romania,

starting with 2003/2004). Although analysed here strictly internally, in reality the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania was just another result of Romania's aspiration to integrate into international structures such as NATO and EU, whereby the existing Holocaust denial endangered the sought-for integration. The main merit of this International Commission on the Holocaust was to have legitimised a narrative previously rejected by many in Romania, namely that there had been a Romanian episode of the Holocaust that the Romanian authorities were responsible for.

The EU is both part of the problem and of the solution. After the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, tens of millions of (poorer) Eastern Europeans, among which millions of (even poorer) Roma became European citizens who could freely move within the EU. One effect of this was the spread of prejudice and hostility toward Roma (part of the problem) and its reverse was the effort of a complex European bureaucratic apparatus to identify solutions at the European level. Tools were needed to dismantle these prejudices, and one of these entailed placing greater emphasis on an educational and moral approach to the history of the Roma, with a focus on persecution culminating with the Holocaust. An example is the European Parliament (EP) resolution of 31 January 2008 on a European strategy on the Roma, which stated that the Roma were still discriminated against and urged the European Commission to support programmes for improving Roma access to education, jobs, housing, and health services. The EP asked for an evaluation of the extent to which the countries that joined the EU fulfilled their commitments to improving the situation of the Roma. Moreover, the EP emphasised that "the Romani Holocaust (Porajmos) deserves full recognition commensurate with the gravity of Nazi crimes designed to physically eliminate the Roma of Europe as well as the Jews and other targeted groups. [...] Condemns utterly and without equivocation all forms of racism and discrimination faced by the Roma and others regarded as 'Gypsies'" (EP 2008). Other international and European institutions started to show a growing interest in the Holocaust and subsequently also in the Roma genocide. Examples of such institutions include United Nations (UN), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), etc.

Although this effort to find solutions is largely based on the reification of the Roma, this is not just a non-Roma initiative from above. The EU's interest in solving a problem offers room for manoeuvre, a niche that the transnational Roma elites already established at a European level can benefit from and contribute to. What occurs in this framework is a

mutually beneficial interaction. As Roma belong to different groups with various languages, dialects, confessions, and identities, and have no majority in certain places where they could be homogenised by their elites with the help of institutions such as the Church, army, educational system, etc., the modern Roma elites are well aware of the difficulty of carrying out a traditional nation-building project. Consequently, as their national discourse cannot possibly make reference to a state (given that the Roma do not have a majority anywhere), Roma elites started instead to refer to the European Union. What was first an impediment (being dispersed in many states) could be discursively turned into an advantage, as those states are now part of the EU which, in turn, is ideally represented as a community of equal nations.

To sum up, the Europeanisation of the Roma Holocaust discourse can be explained by certain pragmatism: it is hoped that it will serve, on the one hand, to effectively dismantle prejudice and hostility toward Roma and, on the other, to strengthen the Roma identity discourse. Both the European project and the Roma elites' national ego allow for the possibility to imagine Roma not as a peripheral, poor, illiterate social category, without historical or cultural achievements (as traditionally portrayed), but, on the contrary, as a Roma nation situated in the very centre of history (represented by the Holocaust). For the time being, the Roma elites are particularly preoccupied with the moral and educational aspects of this discourse (persecution and the Holocaust, with a focus on Auschwitz that can create a certain identity coherence among the European Roma) and less with the different genocidal experiences (such as that in Transnistria) that, in contrast, would risk leading to a loss of relevance.

In the following, we will try to capture the evolution of the Roma deportations starting with the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania and continuing with the EU integration, based on two examples: 1) Holocaust recognition and education and 2) Holocaust commemoration.

At the beginning of the 2000s, both Roma elites and Roma communities more broadly were increasingly interested in the Holocaust. While the elites' interest was mainly stimulated by the activity of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (2003-2004), the Roma communities' interest was sparked especially by the compensations offered to the Holocaust survivors by the EVZ Foundation and Swiss Banks, amounting to 7500 euro for forced labour (Kelso 2008). Compared to the late 1990s, when only the Roma press paid some attention to the subject of Roma deportations and compensations, later, in the early 2000s, in the context of the activities of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania and of discussions revolving around the Holocaust in Romania, the

mainstream media started to pay increasing attention to the Roma deportations to Transnistria (Curierul Național 2004; Ziarul de Iași 2004, etc.).

In the long run, the Holocaust scandal of 2003 was very important as it led to the creation of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania and to the institutionalisation of the Holocaust in Romania. On 12 June 2003, in Bucharest, the Romanian Government approved the collaboration between the National Archives and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), but it also issued a surprising statement that the Holocaust had not occurred in Romania during the Second World War. In the following days, the statement was intensely publicised and criticised, drawing harsh reactions from the international community. Romania was accused of Holocaust denial. On 16 June, Romania's ambassador to Israel was notified of the concern with which Israel regarded this statement, and the Yad Vashem Institute stated that Antonescu's government was directly responsible for killing Jews. On 17 June, the Federation of the Jewish Communities of Romania (FCER) asked the government to officially repudiate the earlier statement regarding the Holocaust, mentioning the deportations carried out by the Romanian authorities to Transnistria, the pogroms that took place in Romania in 1940-1941, and the anti-Semitic legislation. The leaders of the Roma associations reacted similarly. Finally, on 17 June 2003, faced with numerous criticisms, the Government abjured its statement of 12 June and accepted "the responsibility of the Romanian state 60 years ago for the victims of the Holocaust" (Matei 2016, p. 108).

However, things did not stop there, as a month later President Ion Iliescu gave an interview to the newspaper "Haaretz" where he basically argued that the Holocaust against the Jews was not unique and that the Romanians could not be accused of the Holocaust (Davidovitz 2003). This new statement provoked another wave of accusations against the Romanian authorities. Eventually, the damage control solution to which the Romanian state resorted was that on 22 October 2003, the President of Romania announced the establishment of the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, chaired by Elie Wiesel, himself a Holocaust survivor born in Romania, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and former Chair of the American Commission on the Holocaust (Kelso 2014). Consisting of historians and researchers from several countries (Romania, Germany, USA, Israel, and France), the commission worked for one year. Among its members were also the historian Viorel Achim (the author of numerous studies on the Roma) and Vasile Ionescu (representative of the Romanian civil society and the president of the "Aven Amentza" Centre). The International Commission presented its "Final Report" on 11 November 2004, in Bucharest. The report showed that the Holocaust in Romania was

made possible as a result of anti-Semitism with deep roots in the political and cultural history of the country and that the Romanian authorities were responsible for the death of a large number of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews (between 280,000 and 380,000) and the deportation of about 25,000 Roma, of whom about 11,000 died in Transnistria between 1942 and 1944 (Kelso 2014). The Commission submitted also a set of recommendations, including the establishment of a National Holocaust Remembrance Day on 9 October (the beginning of the deportation of the Jews from Romanian Bukovina), the creation of a Holocaust memorial and museum, the establishment of an institution dedicated to Holocaust education and research (the future INSHR-EW), the setting up of a working group meant to analyse, correct, and write the Holocaust curriculum, Holocaust education at the university level, and the preparation of programmes for professional groups and associations. President Iliescu said that the Romanian state accepted its responsibility for the atrocities committed in Romania during the war. The report was published and had a chapter on the deportation of the Roma.

As the now officially assumed “Final Report” stated that Roma were also among the victims of the Holocaust in Romania, this helped strengthen the Roma movement and its Holocaust-based identity discourse. The Roma organisations considered the “Final Report” as a starting point. A good example is the explicit inclusion of the Roma in the definition of the Holocaust. Thus, in May 2005, the Senate passed a draft law on the approval of Government Ordinance no. 31/2002 regarding Holocaust denial. Sanctions were provided for those who publicly denied the Holocaust or promoted the cult of persons guilty of committing crimes against peace and humanity. However, according to the text voted by the Senate, the Holocaust meant strictly “the systematic state-sponsored persecution and annihilation of European Jews by Nazi Germany, as well as by its allies and collaborators from 1933 to 1945” This definition omitted the Roma deported to Transnistria, which dissatisfied the Roma activists. On 19 October 2005, President Traian Băsescu was therefore sent an open letter requesting the inclusion of the Roma in the definition of the Holocaust. Its signatories invoked the “Final Report” and argued that this omission would exclude the Roma from any discussion of the Holocaust and consequently affect the impact of Holocaust education. Initiated by Florin Manole, Ciprian Necula, and Michelle Kelso, the campaign received considerable support (over 2,000 signatures from various personalities in the country and abroad). As a result of these reactions from the civil society, on 25 October 2005 the President of Romania refused to promulgate the draft law in the voted form and sent it back to Parliament for review, requesting that the definition of the Holocaust included the Roma. Following the President’s

refusal, the Senate Legal Committee admitted, on 14 February 2006, that part of the Roma population was also subjected to oppression and annihilation, being victims of the Holocaust (Matei 2016, pp. 138, 142). Following numerous discussions and postponements, a draft law was debated in the Senate. Although the representative of the Jewish Community of Romania, MP Aurel Vainer, supported the inclusion of the Roma in the law, claiming it did not offer Roma material rights but an additional protection against possible expressions or manifestations of a fascist, racist, or xenophobic character, on 8 March 2006 the members of the Legal Commission delayed the decision to include the Roma in the law and requested an additional opinion from some specialists (historians from the Romanian Academy).

Another significant political gesture occurred on 22 October 2007, when President Traian Băsescu decorated three Roma survivors of the deportations to Transnistria (Dumitru Trancă, Traian Grancea, and Ion Minuțescu), who were knighted with the National Order “Faithful Service” (Kelso 2014). Their decoration was accompanied by the first official apology issued by the highest representative of the Romanian state directly to the Roma victims of the Holocaust. The president declared that by decorating the three survivors he meant to honour the memory of the approximately 25,000 Roma deported during the war. He also spoke about the current situation of Roma as the most discriminated minority at the European level and, very importantly, he pleaded that the Romanian education system should teach children both about the Holocaust and Roma slavery:

“We have a duty to talk about all this. We must tell our children that six decades ago, children like them were sent by Romania to die of hunger and cold. We must tell Romanian mothers that the Romanian state killed Roma mothers through slavery and misery. We must remember that Roma men fighting for their homeland were removed from the army to be sent between the Dniester and the Bug [rivers]. The education in Romania has to bring the Holocaust to the attention of the new generations, just as it has a duty to talk about the era of Roma slavery or the crimes of communism. Both Romanians and other Europeans must be reminded of their past humiliations, as well as their present stigma. Today, Roma are the largest discriminated minority on the European continent. [...] The tragedy of the Holocaust is now part of our collective memory. We have a duty to manage this memory. But we also have a duty to build a future. Both are our political responsibility. Forgive us, brothers and sisters, for what it was, and we will build the future of Romania beautifully together!” (Presidential Administration 2007)

This event received significant attention from the Romanian and international media. Beyond the formal act of decoration, the apologies and, above all, the request to include the persecution of the Roma in the Romanian educational system gave hope to the Roma activists, who asked the government to do more in order to reduce the discrimination of the Roma:

“Rights campaigners said the plea might help Romania to deal with its past. About two million Roma live in Romania, many of whom struggle with prejudice, poverty and illiteracy. [...] Roma campaigners said Romania should do more to teach youth about the Holocaust. ‘The plight of the Roma during the Holocaust should be written about in Romanian school history textbooks. [...] The Roma are generally ignored. Authorities should do more to combat discrimination’.” (Reuters 2007).

The “Final Report” also prompted other forms of institutionalisation, such as the Holocaust Remembrance Day and Memorial, the INSHR-EW, Holocaust education, etc. In one form or another, the Roma strove to find their place and, later, against the background of the EU accession, they were able to update their agenda and improve their range of action. In the following, we will try to briefly capture this evolution, addressing two aspects: Holocaust education and the Holocaust commemoration calendar used recently by Roma.

Roma and Holocaust Education

As there was constant international pressure on Romania to deal with its past and acknowledge its own participation in the Holocaust, MEN decided that both the school curricula and textbooks were to be adjusted according to the conclusions of the “Final Report”. Despite the institutional framework available after 1998/1999, but especially after the “Final Report”, the degree of information provided by textbooks on the subject of the Holocaust differed however considerably (Bărbulescu 2015). Consequently, history teachers were confronted with different, contradictory information provided by alternative textbooks. There have been efforts to remedy this situation as MEN resorted basically to two complementary approaches: 1) elective classes for the subject History and 2) trainings with history teachers.

In 2005, an elective course on the “History of Romanian Jewry and the Holocaust” was introduced in high schools, including also some information on the persecution of the Roma. This was followed by other high school elective courses, such as: the “History of Communism”, “History of the National Minorities in Romania”, etc. Comparatively, more

information on Roma history was offered by “History of the National Minorities in Romania”, which was released in December 2008. This course covered all the 19 officially recognised national minorities in Romania and had been put together by experts from MEN together with representatives of the minority organisations. The Roma contributors were Vasile Burtea, Delia Grigore, Petre Petcuț, Ion Sandu, Florin Manole, Mariana Sandu, and Gheorghe Sarău (Matei 2016, p. 174).

As to the trainings with history teachers, things went better for the subject of Jewish persecutions in the beginning. Both human resources and institutional framework were more easily available. Trainings could be offered by Yad Vashem and the “Goldstein Goren” Centre for Hebrew Studies at the University of Bucharest, which were predominantly interested in the fate of the Jews. However, it was through the same “Goldstein Goren” Centre that the first trainings on the Roma deportations were already available in 2005. Their initiator was the US sociologist Michelle Kelso. By 2010, she had already trained over 600 history and civic education teachers. Additionally, Kelso produced a documentary film (“Hidden Sorrows: The Persecution of Romanian Gypsies During World War II”) that would be screened to the teachers, followed by discussions (Kelso 2013). Institutionalisation had its effect here as well, in the sense that INSHR-EW, established in 2005, started to constantly offer trainings (also on Roma) to history teachers, on a larger scale, either within the remit of their annual summer schools, or by organising events in different locations (Bacău, Bucharest, etc.), both alone or in collaboration with various domestic partners (Roma and non-Roma: the “*Împreună*” Agency, The Centre for Legal Resources, etc.) or international (USHMM, Yahad in Unum, etc.). Over the years, thousands of history teachers attended such trainings.

Even more interesting is the recent involvement of the Roma actors, who have become more assertive in the educational field. While in the early 2000s the Roma confined themselves to Romani language teaching and to the so-called educational *romanipen* (where the focus on history was rather scant), things changed recently, as their interest in history (persecution, slavery, and the Holocaust) grew. Efforts have been made to shift to mainstream education. One example is that of the Roma Agency “*Împreună*” (Together), which initiated a series of projects with the financial support of the EVZ Foundation in 2016. In partnership with MEN and INSHR-EW, “*Împreună*” trained hundreds of history teachers from all over Romania on Roma history. Not only was their course on Roma History and the Holocaust accredited by MEN, but they also developed an educational kit which is to become a textbook. Furthermore, in 2017, “*Împreună*” managed to convince the MEN to introduce some elements of

Roma history (slavery and the Holocaust of Roma and Jews) as mandatory topics in the History curriculum for the 8th grade (MEN 2017).

Another interesting feature that was recently made possible due to Romania's EU accession is the intention to create a European narrative or at least develop educational resources about the Roma during the Holocaust. There are already several European projects in this direction. Efforts are made to provide the same information in different languages. Below are some examples of three such initiatives:

(1) *The Factsheets on Roma History* (2008), available in English, German, French, Swedish, Romani, Albanian, Serbian, and Romanian, is the outcome of the Romani Project at the University of Graz, in cooperation with the Council of Europe project "Education of Roma children in Europe" (University of Graz and Council of Europe 2008).

(2) *The Fate of the European Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust*, available in English, German, French, Croatian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovenian, Polish, Romanian, and two Roma dialects: Kalderari and Romungro. This is more of an Austrian approach to the topic. While it relies heavily on the Nazi experience, which the main author, Gerhard Baumgartner, is familiar with, the project suffers especially when it comes to the treatment suffered by the Roma at the hands of non-German perpetrators. A good example is the situation of Roma in Romania and Transnistria, where there are numerous mistakes based on outdated literature from the early 1970s (Verein Erinnern).

(3) *The Forgotten Genocide. The Fate of the Sinti and Roma*. Once again, the same information is available in different languages: Dutch, English, German, Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, Croatian, and Czech. Unlike the Austrian project, this has a rather polycentric approach, as historians from different countries were invited to document the fate of 1-2 Roma children from each country. To date, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Poland, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Hungary have been covered. The language is simple, delivered in short sentences, adequate for children: "The genocide of Sinti and Roma during the Nazi period is not widely known. Throughout Europe they were arrested, deported and murdered. Many were forced to do hard labour in camps and ghettos. Hundreds of thousands of Sinti and Roma died. Over half of the victims were younger than 14. Here, nine children speak on behalf of the murdered masses" (Nationaal Comité 4 en 5 mei and Anne Frank Foundation 2018).

Another example of internationalisation is provided by the exhibitions dedicated to the Roma deportations. Benefitting from European funding, they adopt transnational approaches and travel in different states. Out of the many projects of this type, one example we briefly present here is

that of the German project *Remember to Resist*, supported by EVZ and *Europe for Citizens*. Its idea was to bring together Roma and non-Roma students from several European countries to Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine, where they could meet and interview Roma survivors and Ukrainian witnesses. An outcome of the project was the launch of bilingual exhibitions (Romanian-German and Russian-Ukrainian) that were displayed in Berlin, Bucharest, Cluj, Odessa, usually around the already consecrated days (e.g. 27 January 2017 in Cluj and 2 August 2017 in Bucharest) (Das Bildungswerk für Friedensarbeit e.V. 2017).

Roma Holocaust Commemoration Calendar

There has been an increasing institutionalisation and internationalisation of those days with the potential to become relevant for Roma. As a result, there is now a Roma commemorative calendar. This has as a result not only formal recognition, but also the possibility to disseminate messages and to better articulate their own identity discourse. While the beginning was slow and unconvincing (for most of the 1990s there was no interest in identifying and commemorating specific Roma days), the effective process started in 1997 (when 20 February 1856 was commemorated for the first time), continued with the adoption of 8 April 1971, and accelerated abruptly since the mid-2000s, with an amazingly rapid connection to the Holocaust symbolism, be it in a Romanian (9 October 1941), international (27 January 1945), or specifically Roma (16 May and 2 August 1944) context. In the following, we will briefly discuss two remembrance days, namely 27 January and 2 August, as they better capture both the institutionalisation and the internationalisation of the Holocaust memory for Roma.

As the liberation day of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, 27 January 1945 was already being observed in some countries when, on 1 November 2005, the UN General Assembly designated it as an annual International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The UN resolution 60/7 dealt both with Holocaust remembrance and Holocaust education, as it urged every member state of the UN “to develop educational programmes that will inculcate future generations with the lessons of the Holocaust in order to help prevent future acts of genocide” and condemned “without reserve all manifestations of religious intolerance, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief, wherever they occur”(UN 2005). While in the beginning the Romanian Roma activists commemorated this day only sporadically, a few years later (especially since 2011-2012), things have changed considerably. Roma activists (such

as Luminița Cioabă) started organising events and launching documentaries and books on this occasion. Adrian Furtună, a Roma sociologist based in Bucharest, proceeded in a similar manner. On 27 January 2014, at the INSHR-EW, he launched his book *Holocaustul romilor și povestea lui adevărată. Deportarea romilor în Transnistria: mărturii, studii, documente* (The Holocaust of the Roma and its True Story. The Deportation of the Roma to Transnistria: Testimonies, Studies, Documents). Similarly, on 27 January 2015, Dorin Cioabă, a self-titled Roma king from Sibiu, organised an event where he publicly announced that he would start an action against Germany for the so-called Ghetto-Renten. In 2016, on the same occasion, CNCR launched its docudrama *În numele Statului. Holocaustul romilor* (In the Name of the State. The Roma Holocaust).

However, 2 August 1944 is an even more interesting and promising remembrance day. While keeping the Auschwitz symbolism intact, it has the merit of referring strictly to the Roma. On 2 August 1944, 2,897 Sinti and Roma detained in the so-called *Zigeunerlager* in Birkenau were gassed and cremated to make room for the Jews deported from Hungary. This day had long been commemorated by Western and Central European Sinti and Roma who had been deported to Auschwitz.

Despite the fact that the Romanian Roma had not been deported to Auschwitz, the benefits of associating themselves with such a strong symbol as Auschwitz far surpassed any possible doubts about it. In Romania, 2 August 1944 was commemorated for the first time in 2009, through a series of events organised in Bucharest and Sibiu by the Roma Party and the Christian Centre of the Roma, under the aegis of the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF). On this occasion, in Sibiu, after a moment of silence in memory of the Roma victims of the Holocaust, a book about the deportations of the Roma and a documentary film on the same topic, both authored by Luminița Cioabă, were presented (Gazeta de Sud 2009).

Later, things changed dramatically both internationally, through an increasingly intense participation of the Romanian Roma in the events organised at Auschwitz-Birkenau, as well as in Romania, where elaborate events were organised, especially after European Parliament resolution of 15 April 2015 on anti-Gypsyism in Europe and EU recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide during World War II (EP 2015).

Already in August 2010, representatives of the important organisation Romani CRISS from Bucharest went to Auschwitz, where they participated in the commemoration events. Interviewed by Radio France Internationale (RFI) RFI, Mariana Sandu explained what that day meant to her: “A lot and I’m telling you this because we’re in Auschwitz now. We, the whole Romani CRISS team, managed with great efforts to get here, as

we felt like we were obliged to do it for our own soul. We are in Auschwitz right now because we will commemorate the day of August 2, 1944, the day when nearly four thousand Roma were gassed” (Ghițulete 2010). On 24 January 2013, shortly before the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, some internationally relevant Roma activists (such as Nicolae Gheorghe from Romania) launched the petition “Adoption by the European Parliament of a resolution on the recognition of the Holocaust of Roma”. They basically argued that, in the context of increasing racism and anti-Roma violence, the International Holocaust Remembrance Day of all victims of the Holocaust (27 January) was not enough for the Roma. Therefore, they continued, it would be necessary that the European Parliament recognise the specificity of the Roma Holocaust and proclaim 2 August as a European Day of Remembrance for Roma Victims of the Holocaust. Their request was pragmatically argued, by claiming that Roma Holocaust recognition would contribute not only to preserving the memory of past victims, but also to the empowerment of the Roma, while delegitimising contemporary racism:

“Considering the current situation in Europe in which racism against Roma is increasing and a large number of Roma continue to be victims of persecution, isolated in slums and ghettos [...]; it is imperious that the European Parliament send a political message to the European population by recognizing the Holocaust of Roma / Samudaripen and proclaim 2 August, European Day of Remembrance for Roma Victims of the Holocaust, in order to preserve the memory of the victims. This kind of political decision will simultaneously reinforce the message of peace and stability and confirm the solidarity of our continent of free and equal European citizens” (“Adoption by the European Parliament of a resolution on the recognition of the Holocaust of Roma” / 27 January 2013).

The events organised at Auschwitz-Birkenau became more elaborate each year. In 2013, the workshops organised on this occasion contained different panels, but the focus was on the significance of the commemoration for the present. Some titles of such workshops are useful to illustrate this: “Nazi policy towards the Roma and modern forms of commemoration”; “The Significance of the Roma genocide for young people in today’s Europe”; “No Hate Speech Movement Action for 2nd August”; “ternYpe campaigning against antigypsyism”; “Education against antigypsyism”; “Holocaust Education – sharing experiences from Jewish youth organisations”; “Evergreen dilemma: How to deal with extreme-right media?”; “Samudaripen’s Remembrance through Insurrection’s Celebration”, “Advocacy for 2 August Movement” etc. (Ternype 2013). In

fact, the event in Auschwitz, called “Dik I Na Bistar – Look and do not forget” was placed under the high patronage of the European Parliament and was intended to attract young Roma. More than 450 Roma participants from 15 countries were present, 80 of them from Romania. The event was the result of international cooperation, with organisations from several states involved in its design. In Romania, the organisations involved were the Ruhama Foundation from Oradea and the National Agency for Roma (ANR) (Bihon 2013).

2014 marked the commemoration of 70 years since the liquidation of the *Zigeunerlager*. Consequently, the event at Auschwitz was even larger, occurring under the patronage of the President of the European Parliament (Martin Schulz) and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Thorbjørn Jagland). About one thousand young people from 25 countries participated, out of whom 100 were from Romania, selected by ANR in partnership with Pro Europe Roma Party (PRPE). According to ANR, the commemoration had a double objective: knowledge of the past to avoid present discrimination. Moreover, ANR was well aware of the use of the European perspective: “With a high symbolic load, this action contributes to the formation of the historical collective memory, to the awareness of and respect for human rights, regardless of ethnicity, race, gender or religion. [...] We have a duty to cultivate the memory and knowledge of the Holocaust among the Roma through education and research, to prevent the intolerance and racism in the future. A European approach is essential in order to gain a better understanding of the Holocaust as a European phenomenon, so that the vital link between Europe’s past and present can be continued” (ANR 2014).

Finally, a decision of considerable importance in this context was the European Parliament resolution of 15 April 2015, which contained the same ideas, such as the need to research and teach the Roma genocide in schools, but also to commemorate it in order to combat the current discrimination and to offer dignity to the Roma. As a result, the European Parliament “recognises solemnly, therefore, the historical fact of the genocide of Roma that took place during World War II; Calls on the Member States to officially recognise this genocide and other forms of persecution of Roma such as deportation and internment that took place during World War II; Declares that a European day should be dedicated to commemorating the victims of the genocide of the Roma during World War II and that this day should be called the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day” (EP 2015).

August 2 became more visible, as it started to be commemorated every year also in Romania. This resolution of the European Parliament legitimised and boosted the importance of this commemoration day also for

the Romanian authorities (such as the Presidency, the Government, etc.), which started to send messages, recognising and thus reinforcing its importance. A first example is the message transmitted by Prime Minister Victor Ponta in 2015, who invited all Romanian citizens to observe a minute of silence to honour the memory of victims killed in the camps of Auschwitz, Transnistria, and Bug. Such reactions, coming from the highest political level, attracted even more media attention to such events. Practically unknown only a few years prior, in 2016 the 2nd of August enjoyed unheard-of attention in Romania. Elaborate commemoration events took place at the Holocaust Memorial in Bucharest, in the presence of numerous guests, senior Romanian and foreign officials, the media, Roma survivors and activists. Moreover, for the first time, the 30th Honour Guard Regiment “Mihai Viteazul”, the most important guard unit of the Romanian Army, gave the honour.

The support of the most senior European officials was constant and predictably emphasised the impact that Holocaust recognition and commemoration should have on decreasing the current discrimination against Roma. On 1 August 2018, the former Vice-President of the EU Commission Frans Timmermans stated the following: “The Nazis and their collaborators killed about 500,000 Roma all over Europe. [...] The dehumanization of the Roma and other minorities was the first step in committing those hate crimes. [...] Seven decades later, the Roma and Sinti population still face hatred, violence, discrimination and racism. [...] It is the duty of all EU Member States to ensure effective policies that allow the recall of historical atrocities, the protection and preservation of historical sites, as well as the promotion of education and research in this area.” (European Commission 2018)

A few months later, in November 2018, Daniel Vasile, the Roma MP in the Romanian Parliament, invoked the European precedent and initiated a legislative project calling for the establishment in Romania of the “Memorial Day of the Roma Holocaust – Samudaripen” on 2 August. According to this draft, “annually, on the occasion of the commemoration, cultural activities, symposia, round tables and actions with a specific theme, dedicated to this day, are to be organised. The Ministry of Culture, the authorities of the central and local public administration, provide specialised support for organising and conducting events on this occasion” (Grigore 2018).

Comparatively, the days relevant for the deportation of the Roma in the Romanian context (such as 25 May 1942, the date of the police census determining the Roma who were to be deported; 1 June 1942 or 15 August 1942 – the start and the end dates of the deportation of 11,441 nomadic

Roma; 12 September 1942 – the beginning of the deportation of 13,176 sedentary Roma, etc.), receive little attention. The explanation for their non-observance is not simply their ignorance, but the fact that, at present, the commemoration of the Auschwitz-centred narrative and the resources available for this are more important for the present identity needs as they are currently defined.

Impact

All these recent changes contributed to improving the level of knowledge regarding the Roma deportations. An increasing number of members of the mainstream society are becoming aware that the Roma were also part of the Holocaust. This evolution is proven by six opinion polls conducted in Romania between May 2007 and November 2019. Asked what the Holocaust means, most respondents tended to answer the extermination of Jews (at the hands of the Germans). Without insisting here on the obvious tendency (Jewish centrality and guilt externalisation), what seems to be more relevant is that recently more people consider that the term also includes the Roma. For example, while in May 2007 only 2% responded that the Holocaust meant also the persecution of Roma and in November 2010, the number had increased to 5%, in the following polls things improved constantly: there were already 13% of the respondents in 2013, 18% in June 2015, 36% in 2017, and, finally, the most recent opinion poll from November 2019 showed that 49% of the respondents associated the Holocaust in Romania with the Roma deportations to Transnistria (TOTEM 2010; CNCD&IRES 2013; TNS 2015; KANTAR-TNS 2017; KANTAR-TNS 2019).

Such results are impressive. However, we believe that the real explanation for this is not so much the Holocaust education in schools (still in its initial phase), but rather the already formalised and repetitive commemoration process. As days like 27 January, 20 February, 8 April, 2 August, 9 October, etc., have been commemorated by activists and reflected by the media, more recently also with the help of Romanian and European senior officials, the association of Roma with the Holocaust has become better known to the general public.

Comparatively, it is yet more difficult to quantify the extent to which the discourse and practices of the Roma elites have influenced the rest of the Roma. Most likely there is already a similar increase in knowledge of the Holocaust among Roma, even if the Roma activists still declare themselves discontented. In October 2018, the Roma sociologist Gelu Dumnică (also director of the Agency “*Împreună*”, which runs several educational projects

on the Roma Holocaust) was asked by RFI about the perception of the Holocaust in the collective memory of the Roma. His answer was: “For us, the Holocaust is more of a speech of the elites. At the community level, if you go and tell them about the Holocaust, they look at you strangely. [...] If you tell them for the first time that Antonescu killed Roma, they look at you strangely” (Clej 2018). To a certain extent he was right. There is still a certain gap between the Roma activists’ and intellectuals’ expectations about how the past should be understood and used, and the simple Roma from communities for whom the meanings ascribed by elites continue to be irrelevant.

Nonetheless, if we compare the rapid evolution over the last two decades, there are no reasons for panic, no matter how alarming this rhetoric of disappearance and loss might sound. Just a few decades ago, only few people (Roma included) knew anything about the deportations and the trend is certainly an upward one. Never before in their history had the Roma (ethnic entrepreneurs) stood better chances to explore and make use of what they consider to be the relevant past for articulating their identity.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the memory-making mechanisms in Romania with regard to the Roma deportations during the Second World War and the extent to which Roma were able to make use of them in order to forge common perceptions of the past or a shared group identity. From a relatively unknown episode, their deportations have acquired in the last 15 years an extraordinary importance for articulating the Roma identity discourse. There were basically three different periods that can be distinguished in post-communist Romania, each with its own specificities: 1) the early 1990s, when Roma activists showed little interest in the Holocaust; 2) 1997-2003, when this interest emerged but was expressed rather randomly, as the institutional framework was still absent; 3) since 2003: the Holocaust turned into an essential component of the Roma identity discourse as the institutional framework became available thanks to: a) the “Final Report” produced by the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, officially assumed by Romania and b) the increasing concerns of European and international institutions for diminishing hostility toward Roma after 2004 and 2007, when several Eastern European states with millions of Roma became part of the EU.

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Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS–UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0811, within PNCDI III.

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