

the problem of relationship between the two different religious groups of *popovtsi* and *bezpopovtsi* whose boundaries are disappearing through mixed marriages. The same pressure of modernization is revealed in family and calendar rituals.

The book ends with a concluding chapter (p. 253–271), a substantial bibliography (p. 273–308) and an Appendix of photographs taken during field research. In the concluding chapter the author tries to generalize data, displaying it through tables and graphs contrasting in quality and ethnography with previous chapters. This is also one of the major shortcomings of the book. Ethnographic details are so abundant that they suffocate the analysis. Another major gap is the extremely large time differences, historical, social and cultural between the three groups selected for comparison. Also, the book needed a chapter dedicated to Dobruja itself, showing the way in which the history of this corner of south east Europe is linked to the fate of its all inhabitants.

Stelu Șerban

Martor. The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropological Review, vol. 17, 2012, Bucharest, 240 p.

The volume is a special issue on everyday life in the Communist era, with its echoes in the present: public memory, personal remembrances, oblivion. On the one hand, *Martor* is amongst the few top journals in the field of social anthropology/ethnology that appear in Romania. On the other hand, the evolution of the journal interweaves with the development of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant as an institution. The name of this museum is inappropriate, because it collects items of peasant art that belong to various ethnic groups who live in Romania. And this is indeed an unforgivable mistake. The museum is not about the Romanian Peasant, but about the peasants *in* Romania. Notwithstanding, someone could excuse this error, as the history of the museum has known dramatic changes. The Museum was settled by the beginning of 20th century as a result of the endeavour of Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș who gathered private collections of peasant art, coming from eminent Romanians. The building of the museum was erected then and was opened in the presence of King Carol I, who contributed to the first expenses of construction. After the Communist party came into power, the museum still remained in function, albeit as a museum of “popular art”, but in 1952 the Communist leaders took the decision to move the collections in another place and hosting here two museums about the “history of the Romanian Communist Party”. In 1990 the museum came back to its original conception and resettled as “Romanian Peasant Museum”. In addition, the museum became one of the most radical voices of anti-Communism. Still, ironically, the artefacts once exhibited about the Romanian Communist Party stayed in the same building until the late 2000s³⁶.

The final point, at the end of 1989, after more than 50 years of a totalitarian regime, has been celebrated through several symbolic events. All these envisaged to break with the former rule. However, the legitimacy of the changes brought by 1989 was still contested then. In 2013, after the elapsing of more than 20 years, we are able to have a more balanced view of what happened in the revolution. The creation of the National Council for the Study of the *Securitate* Archives in 1999,

³⁶ Seminal analysis of the institutional lifespan of Peasant Museum could be found in the articles: Simina Bădică, “National Museums in Romania”, in Peter Aronsson & Gabriella Elgenius (eds), *Building National Museums in Europe 1750–2010. Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28–30 April 2011*, EuNaMus Report No 1, Published by Linköping University Electronic Press, pp.713–731, (http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en), and Gabriela Cristea and Simina Radu-Bucurenci, “Raising the Cross. Exorcising Romania’s Communist Past in Museums, Memorials and Monuments”, in Oksana Sarkisova and Peter Apor (eds.), *Past for the Eyes. East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989*, CEU Press, Budapest, 2007, pp. 273–303.

then of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania, in 2006, as well as of the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania, also appointed in 2006, were the institutional benchmarks for attempting the effective break from the Communist past.

Is it really needed to analyze and „condemn”, in this *terre-à-terre* prosaic life, those 50 years of totalitarian communist regime? This significant question has never ceased to be asked within the public space in Romania. Therefore, the topic of the first issue of the *Yearbook of Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania* is „Why the communism must be condemned?”³⁷. Moreover, the report of the Presidential Commission comes to the conclusion of „the need to review, repudiate and condemn the communist regime”³⁸. Nevertheless, besides a running over of crimes, horrors and repressions of the Communist regime, facts that are found only some years after 1990 or exhumed from archives, more or less public, we failed in finding any answer there. Moreover, the legitimacy of the „condemnation of Communism” has been challenged not by former exponents of the regime, but by current important authors in Romania, involved in various research areas of social and human sciences³⁹.

This large detour in the introduction of the review aims to shed light on the dilemma that the editors of this issue, Maria Mateoni and Mihai Gheorghiu, both of them researchers at the Peasant Museum, had to cope with. Should the articles in the volume to concentrate on the stances of anti-communist struggle, or by widening the theoretical perspective the contributors would bring into light topics less radical, but theoretically meaningful, like everyday life? The editors seem to have chosen this latter side. They open the volume with a study on *Theories and Methods of Studying Everyday Life. Everyday Life during Communism* (pp. 7–18). The authors’ aim is to work out the theoretical frame of the volume by focusing on the concept of everyday life. At the very beginning the authors outline the exceptional place that everyday life had in the Communist years: “Characterised by fear, subversion, domination, salvation and submission, but also alignment and social and economic success, Communist everyday life must be examined closely if we are to discover the miraculous or merely the wretched humanity of the man subjected to this historical experiment” (p. 7). In this view, the everyday life in Communism looks like an Antic tragedy, Sophocle’s *Antigona* for instance. The everyday life concept that suits the best to this assumption is the theory of Michel de Certeau. Against other thinkers like Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu, “De Certeau identifies... a movement of micro-resistance which in turn leads to micro-liberty, mobilising the insurmountable, hidden resources of ordinary people” (p. 10). Further, the concept of everyday life is applied to the ordinary world of Socialism as the Czeslaw Milosz concept of “captive mind” is remembered: dissimulation substitutes open resistance, informal practices and strategies spread as reaction to the “scarcity of goods” in the late period of the Communist era (Marta Lampland, Katherine Verdery, Caroline Humphrey, Janos Kornai, Pavel Câmpeanu). In their article, Mateoni and Gheorghiu confuse a bit the reader. The references cover a wide range of works from Sophocles to philosophy, sociology, political science, and social anthropology. Furthermore, the image of a “metaphysical communism” that introduces the article hardly has any occurrence with the practices and strategies of everyday life, while the references to the concepts of communism legacy, memory, oblivion are thoroughly missing.

The article that opens the volume oscillated between “metaphysical communism” and everyday life. The following article, Mihai Gheorghiu’s *Surviving communism. Escape from underground* (pp. 19–38), aims at deepening the analysis of “metaphysical communism”. It is an attempt “to provide a phenomenological description of the conscience’s particular quest to free itself from servitude”. Gheorghiu focuses on the mass adherence to Ceaușescu’s regime and even gives it a name, “Ceaușescuism”. However, in the late years Ceaușescu betrayed the expectations of the people, which brought to an end their “voluntary servitude”. This hidden world as well as the impulses to “escape

³⁷ *Anuarul Institutului de investigare a crimelor comunismului din România*, vol.1, Polirom, Iași, 2006.

³⁸ *Comisia prezidențială pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România. Raport final*, București, 2006 (www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf).

³⁹ Vasile Enu, Costi Rogojanu, Ciprian Șiulea, Ovidiu Țichindeal (coord.), *Iluzia anticomunistă. Lecturi critice ale raportului Tismăneanu*, Cartier, Chișinău, 2008.

from the underground” are analysed with references to La Boétie or Hegel, to Nikolai Berdyaev, Martin Heidegger, Fr. Hayek, Isaiah Berlin, or to the diaries of Fyodor Dostoevski. Gheorghiu’s article is far from any analysis of everyday life.

Much closer to the volume topic are the next articles. Claudia-Florentina Dobre, *Repression and Resistance. Women Remembering their Daily Life in Romanian Communist Prisons* (pp. 39–50), brings into light the paths of subverting oppression in Communist female prisons. The authors start from an ‘ordinary’ definition of resistance: „it privileges individuals’ capacity to resist power relations, to subvert dominant representations, and to assume risks; in other words their ability to exercise what Anglophone scholars define as agency” (p. 39), and step by step raises questions about how this resistance was possible in the captive situation. In other words, in non-totalitarian societies liberation from prison means to find outside the benefits of civil rights and freedom. But what meant this escape in Communist societies, where all these were missing, and society looked like a bigger prison? Dobre illustrates this dilemma with interviews she took from women who had lived in Jilava and Mislea prisons (pp. 41–45). The interviews let see the way former prisoners fought against the repression of their femininity (p. 48).

Maria Mateoni is the author of the next article, *Public and Private in Communist Romania: The Retrospective of a Dynamic Dichotomy Twenty Years after the Demise of the Communist Regime* (pp. 51–69). The title is somehow misleading; once because the distinction private – public life simply withered in the Communist era, and thereafter because the article actually deals with the land collectivization in Romania. In addition, the article says nothing about the period after 1990 as it is announced in the title. It relies on Mateoni’s fieldwork in several villages of Vrancea, Sibiu, and Hateg areas in Romania and describes the peasants’ resistance to collectivization. As a broader frame of analysis it mentions James C. Scott’s theory of failing the state schemes to improve human condition⁴⁰. The reference to James C. Scott works is innovative, at least in the realm of Romania’s social sciences. Still, the analysis in the article does not follow the core concepts of Scott’s theory, not even that of “social resistance”. In addition, works of anthropologists who did extensive field researches in the same areas and on exactly the same topics are not even remembered⁴¹.

The article *Studium post negotium. La première génération d’étudiants de Bessarabie (République de Moldavie) en Roumanie (1990–1991): redéfinitions identitaires, stratégies de survie, tentatives de profit* (pp. 69–80) tackles a topic, on the one hand exotic for the social sciences in Romania, on the other hand, overwhelmed by personal feelings. Petru Negură tells in that article about the lifespan of Bessarabia / Republic of Moldova students who immediately after 1990 came in Romania (in Bucharest, but also in Iasi) for graduating. The sentimental expectations about the “fraternity” of all Romanians fall rapidly down, as such students became aware about differences and enclosed themselves in small groups (p. 71). The alternative strategy was to practice black marketeering, adapting to the resources and cultural patterns of black economy widespread then in Romania, but also as a way to build up a non-conformist identity (p. 78). Though the article bases only on eight in depth interviews with former Bessarabian students (p. 70), the cited literature accurately frames the topic.

Two other articles take into account the case of the German minority in Romania after 1945. Under the title *Les relations interethniques pendant la période 1945–1990 à Alțâna (département de Sibiu). Etude de cas* (pp. 81–100), Ana Pascu’s article seems to be rather a field research report as the bibliography she cites is very short, five titles only. Still, the methodology of the research is stimulating. The family history is seen as a privileged site of collective memory (p. 83–84). Although the remembrances do not go further than three generations back, the memory of interwar social order

⁴⁰ James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have Failed*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998.

⁴¹ See for instance, Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian villagers. Three Centuries of Political and Ethnic Change*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983; Steven Sampson, *National integration through socialist planning*, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1984; David Kideckel, *The solitude of collectivism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1993.

of the village is fresh. The German were the wealthiest dwellers in the village and owned the central households around the Lutheran church. The Romanians were second-ranking, while the Gypsy houses were isolated over a small river. The deportation of the Germans in 1945 shocked the village. Many Gypsies and Romanians of the poorest sort moved then in the houses of deported Germans. Events like land collectivization and massive migration of the Germans after 1990, ruined thoroughly the local order. Still this image is kept in the collective memory, notices Pascu.

Laura Jerca's article, *The Beginnings of the Repression against the German Minority in Romania: A Case Study of Transylvanian Saxon Communities, 1945–1949* (pp. 101–115), is finer and more analytic. Jerca relies on archival sources she found in the Romanian National Archives and on an accurate bibliography. It records the circumstances of 1945, when the Germans in Transylvania were accused to have collaborated with Nazis and deported. The land reform of the same year hit them too. As being upper – middle class peasants, they had larger surfaces of land that were diminished by state expropriation. The authorities purposely acted in order to weaken and even to destroy the group solidarity of Germans. The author explains: "The objective of the communist regime was to eliminate the homesteads of the Saxon peasantry and deprive them of their livelihood, thereby forcing their move to cities in search of work – often to entirely different regions of the country. In this way, the unity and solidarity of the German communities of Transylvania and Banat would have been destroyed. The Evangelical Church lent strong support to the community, but was unable to stop the devastation of the rural world of the Transylvanian Saxons by the Communist regime" (p. 114).

Everyday Propaganda. Images from the Archive of the Romanian Peasant Museum (pp. 115–156) deserves interest. The photos collected by Simina Bădică are of use, but the total lack of additional comments and interpretation hinders their understanding. The next four articles place indeed the topic of everyday life in an accurate frame, as they use reliable field data. Adriana Speteanu's article, *The Restructuring of Free Time in 1980s Communist Romania. The Case of the 23rd August Works* (pp. 157–172), starts from E.P. Thompson's idea that the social time became "ideological" around 1790, because of the Industrial Revolution that subordinated time to the capitalist production. The Communist regimes did nothing more than to convey to the state this ideological speculation of the time. Thus, the Communist state became the absolute owner of the social time: "a bureaucracy posing as a revolutionary actor that governs it, manipulates it, and restructures it" (p. 158). Speteanu works out this idea with references to anthropologists of Socialism and post-Socialism (Steven Sampson, Katherine Verdery, Gerald Creed, Chris Hann). In addition, she quotes historians and sociologists. The main premise of the analysis is therefore interdisciplinary and multilayered: "Time in late communist Romania was of a paradoxical nature: while apparently static at a macro level, it was unpredictable on an individual level in the sense that it modified the plans and perceptions of ordinary people. For the Party, time was conceptualized as flowing to an undefined chronological moment, as the grand project of achieving, through socio-economic engineering, the ideal of a Communist reality gradually became more and more distant" (p. 161). Speteanu illustrates this premise with excerpts of interviews she made in the years 2004–2010 with former workers of the 23 August factory in Bucharest.

In the next article, *The World through the TV Screen. Everyday Life under Communism on the Western Romanian Border* (pp. 173–188), Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković discusses a matter that truly influenced everyday life in the later years of Communism in Romania. This was the drastic limitation of the broadcasting at the single TV channel to only two hours each day. The people answered especially in border areas by handmaking TV antennas in order to catch the broadcastings from neighbour countries. This way, for instance in south Romania, the Bulgarian TV channel became very popular, as well as Yugoslav TV channels were in the southwest or Hungarian ones in the west. In southwest Romania, Banat region, this influence could be noticed from the fact that ethnic Romanians wanted to learn Serbian. Sorescu-Marinković pays attention to the nostalgia with which the Banat Romanians record even today that Yugoslav period. Still the data basis the author relies on is limited to ten interviews only, held in 2010 in Timișoara. In addition, it is difficult to believe that this proficiency in Serbian was due only to watching the Yugoslav TV channels. It is well known that the Banat region was an area of intense exchange of goods in the informal economy.

Sanda Golopenția contributes to the volume with her comments on *Daily lives in Bucharest 1946–1950* (pp. 189–205). These are remembrances called by reading the files of the *Securitate* service concerning her father, the distinguished sociologist Anton Golopenția. Though backed up later, after 1990, the memory is very fresh and filled with calm melancholy. It strongly contrasts with the cruel fate of Anton Golopenția: he was arrested and died in prison after a short while.

Zoltán Rostás is the author of the following article, *The Parallel Bucharest of the 1980s. The Memoirs of a Memoirs' Keeper* (pp. 207–218). The author went over the underground world of the late period of communism in Romania. In the 1980s he had the brilliant idea to take interviews with the surviving sociologists who in the interwar period had participated to the activities of the Sociological School of Bucharest. After 1990 Rostás transformed this formidable archive of oral history in his PhD work, published in 2001, but also in a full range of research programs that decisively changed the academic establishment of sociology in Romania. However, the article in this volume is rather a recalling of his earlier work to take interviews. Amongst the nine references of bibliography, eight are to his own books. The story revolves around known matters in the Communist Romania, collectivization, demolition of the old areas of the cities, food shortage, as these are reflected in the interviews held by Rostás in the 1980s.

The last articles that close the volume are even less analytical. Mirel Bănică, *The Relevance of Memory and the Role of the Witness. A Case Study* (pp. 219–229), remembers the compulsory work in agriculture during the 1980s in Romania, while Mirela Florian in her article *Autoportrait d'un héros* (pp. 231–240) finds a way to use the interview she took to Neculai Burlui, an anti-Communist fighter from Vrancea. Bănică's article brings evidence about a situation that was indeed more important in everyday life than in the economy, but it contains only impressions and souvenirs from the author's childhood, and the bibliographical references are poor (two titles only).

This special issue of *Martor* gathers ideas, premises, arguments that are indicative of the legacy of Communism in Romania. On the one hand, this is beneficial as any attempt to close this legacy inside one uniform explanatory perspective actually has political and ideological purposes. To 'condemn communism' is a fake and aims actually to brainwashing the collective memory. On the other hand, this collection of essays has an incoherence that could be excused only because today the confrontation with the Communist past in Romania is more a healing experience than a critical analysis. From this latter point of view the volume's editors could have done more. In the absence of some key concepts which would have been illuminating for the life experiences and data that are here invoked, it is disappointing to find that many facts the articles relies on come from intermediate sources. The authors collected through field research the *memories* of the everyday life in the Communist time, but not the facts as such⁴². The volume raises therefore more subjects and issues than it can explain without the needed theoretical perspective.

Stelu Șerban

⁴² An exception is the article of Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković (see p. 174–179).