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## SURVIVORS OF HOLOCAUST AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FROM ORADEA

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**Abstract:** *The element of novelty brought by this paper is to valorify a number of 8 questionnaires with Jews that either were deported or their family members were deported, from Oradea. Together with an introduction in the topic of the history of Jews from Romania and Hungary from the years 1945-1953 and an analysis of the existent bibliography in this field of research, these are the contributions brought by this paper. The questionnaires, the original part of this paper, reveal the uncertainty, scarcity of material resources, the illnesses and the political pressure that the Jewish community from Oradea had to bear after their return from Holocaust.*

**Keywords:** *Jews, history, Holocaust, postwar, community, communism*

### **1) General considerations concerning the History of the Jews from Romania and Hungary during the years 1945-1953**

We find the theme “History of the Jews in Romania and Hungary (1945 – 1953) in the Romanian and Hungarian historiographies” a topical issue, a topic whose reinterpretation is required. The communist history held the role or even the existence of minorities and their peculiarities unnoticed. The Jewish community continued to exist during communism, as well, and the Jews were trying to keep their traditions and aspirations (an example being their massive emigration to Israel, as illustrated the Rabbi of Romania, Moses Rosen in his book *Primejdii, încercări, miracole*).

This does not mean that the communist Romanian state did not attempt to assimilate minorities, to lead a policy of levelling the differences and particularisms. However, the state failed to destroy the Jewish community, although the emigration has reduced this community to merely a few thousand today.

Transylvania is a unique space in which all ethnic communities make their presence felt. The Jewish Community of Oradea had been well represented in the interwar period, by comparison to what happened in other cities. The ghettoization experience to which many Jews from Oradea had been submitted under the Hungarian rule of Horthy caused many to emigrate; nevertheless, the remaining small Jewish community still conducts a series of activities in Oradea.

This community has played an important role in the modernization and development of the city on the Criș River. Researching the history of this community in a difficult period that were the years 1945 - 1953, period during which many tend to say that it was basically extinct, I was able to find printed works that confirm the existence of the

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community, including a considerable amount of archived documents. I think I was able to reveal the problems faced by the community during those years, its attempts to integrate within the Romanian nation, or to conceal itself by choosing the path of emigration. That confirms that the rich ethnic diversity of the Transylvanian space could disappear suddenly by a stroke of the pen (see the Teheran and Yalta Agreements).

The theme that I chose to research was approached in the spirit of the nowadays European historiography. I found more than 100 works (volumes of documents, memoirs and special papers) relating to the Jews during the years 1945-1953 in Romania and Hungary. Further research is needed on the Jewish history from 1945 - 1953, including on the base of the material found in the archives. There is sufficient archival material, especially in the local archives, that have remained unexplored on the situation of the Jews in Romania and Hungary in the first years after the war. It would be desirable for these sources to be integrated into scientific circulation.

The theme of our paper lead us to try to make an in-depth comparative research on the history of the Jews in Romania and Hungary, to look into these Romanian-Hungarian Jews in the period after 1945 in the broader context of the communist space, separated from the West by the Iron Curtain. The public space had very little to offer to the minority, and the minority's possibilities to manifest their own culture were not to the liking of the authorities. The minority member was accepted to join the communist society precisely by dropping their own specificity, their ethnic features, by integrating into the cultural and the public space of the new Romanian communist society.

Of course, there is always a private sphere, less exposed to the public, a sphere where the traditions, religion and culture were perpetuated. Such a framework was the family and the relations with the community members whose particularities were not in plain viwe, but somewhat hidden. Important is the fact that such inter-community relations existed. Within the family, the community specific culture was carried on in many cases based on traditions.

Despite criticism against the communist regime concerning the forced integration of the ethnic communities in Romania, the majority culture tended to accept Jews by giving them a chance to integrate into a new society, after several centuries of them having been regarded with suspicion or having congregated into a *separatum corpus* in the Hungarian and Romanian spaces. Insufficient knowledge about the Jewish community, the envy arisen about the Jewish congregation because of their strong entrepreneurial spirit led to the emergence of many prejudices and stereotypes concerning the image of the Jew in the mental of our community, as it is shown by Andrei Oișteanu in his work *Imaginea evreului în cultura română (The image of the Jew in the Romanian culture)*. After the war, the Jews' need to integrate, to be regarded as a constituent part of the Romanian people, and not to be regarded as intruders, especially after the genocide of the Holocaust that rendered them heavily injured physically and morally, was visible both in Romania, and Hungary. The Jews tried to integrate into the newly created communist society, with many of them, in the beginning, truly believing in communism. In 1945, they perceived communism as the only force who could oppose fascism, racism and xenophobia. Soon, however, they realized that the new system was not a democratic system and their vast majority chose emigration. After the war, there were remaining in Romania around 420 000 Jews, as it is shown by Liviu Rotman. Of these, nearly all emigrated during the communist period.

Our research aimed at the critical assessment of the scientific publications that have studied the history of Jews in Romania and Hungary during the years 1945 to 1953.

This is how we made an inventory of the historiography of the problem that demonstrates that in these years the Jews can be regarded as a distinct ethnic group and it demonstrates that we can speak of a history of the Jews. In the first years after the war, things tended to return to normal and the Jews tried to rebuild their lives. Not all Jews were communists, there were Jewish organizations that did not integrate into the communist landscape and were therefore abolished. There were Jews who were victims of the communist regime, being detained in prison or in hard labour at the construction of the Danube - Black Sea canal. The number of communist Jewish was not as great as it was said later on, especially as a share of the total population. As I noted above, it is not difficult to see why some have chosen communism – it had saved them from death, and many were those who perceived it that way. We should not ignore the fact that at the time it was a large-scale trend in the Jewish world, the Zionism, who advocated for Jewish immigration to Israel. A great wave of Jews immigrated in those years, legally or illegally to Palestine (from 1948 Israel).

This paper tries to explain the relation between the Jews and the communism and condition of the Jew under communism. We hope that the following pages will prove that the Jews are a particular ethnic group, sharing valuable ancient traditions, and that they were not the ones who brought communism, but they accommodated to or cooperated with it at the most, while keeping hope that they would be thus contributing to the establishment of an ideal egalitarian society, or will facilitate their immigration to the “land of Israel”.

## **2). Sources and documentation used in the research of *History of the Jews from Romania and Hungary 1945 – 1953 in the Romanian and Hungarian Historiographies***

The **Documentary Sources of Our Research** section aims at presenting the sources we used, mainly published bibliography (collections of documents, published memoirs, general works and special works). In addition to these, of great value proved to be the data provided by several questionnaires completed and implemented by the author to the Jewish Community of Oradea, where eight Jewish Holocaust survivors were interviewed regarding their situation at the end of the world war.

We used several published collections of documents. Important are the ones coordinated by Ioan Scurtu. The first one, *România – Viața politică în documente 1945* (Scurtu, 1994), capture from the documents published in the epoch the overall situation of the country in 1945 when the country was seeking to punish the war criminals and the collaborators with the Nazi regime. The second volume of Ioan Scurtu, *România – Viața politică în documente – 1947* (Scurtu, 1994), outlines the general situation of Romania in 1947, when after removing the monarchy the communization process is completed. Another work that we have studied is that of Mihai Pelin (editor), *Cartea Albă a Securității* (Pelin, 1997), which includes documents that tell the story of the legal and illegal immigration to Israel, the Zionist organizations activism and the overall situation of the Jews of this period. Nicolae Baciú, in his work *lucrarea Agonia României 1944-1948. Dosarele secrete acuză* (Baciú, 1997), illustrates the situation of Romania in the international context in 1939 – 1953, showing how Romania was betrayed by its allies, how the opponents of the communists - the Liberals and the Peasants' Party members - were falsely accused of fascism. Dumitru Hîncu, in his work *Un licăr în beznă. Acțiuni necunoscute ale diplomației române* (Hîncu, 1997), brings to the scientific debate original documents showing how Romanian diplomats serving in the West had been trying to protect the Romanian Jews during the Holocaust, highlighting the good intentions of these

diplomats, and also their inability to save a considerable number of Romanian Jews from death. A very important work is the collection of documents published by Daniela Bleoancă, Nicolae Alexandru Nicolescu, Cristina Păiușan, Dumitru Preda, *România – Israel. 50 de ani de relații diplomatice* (Bleoancă & Nicolescu & Păiușan & Preda, 2000). This volume puts us in direct relation with the evolution of diplomatic relations between Romania and Israel during the period in which we are interested (1945-1953). Through the documents, we can analyse the liaison of the Romanian Legation to Israel with the authorities in Bucharest, the Israeli diplomatic relations with the authorities in Bucharest and with the Romanian diplomats in Israel. The Hungarian collection of documents revealed several important documented evidences as to the fate of the Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust and after the war. For the period of the Holocaust we analysed the first and second Jewish Law passed in Hungary. For the postwar period we analysed documents which attempted to determine the number of deaths during forced labour in Hungarian settlements, the number of deportees buried at the periphery of their village in the County of Şopron, etc. Finally, we note the collection of documents of Mihnea Dobrinu, Dorin Dobrinu, Armand Goșu, *Istoria comunismului din România. Documente. Perioada Gheorghiu Dej (1945-1965)* (Dobrinu & Dobrinu & Goșu, 2009).

An important category of works, presenting experiences directly from the “source”, based on facts spent in a particular historical conjuncture, local or international, are the memoirs. Of course, they may have a dose of subjectivity due to exceptional moments lived by the author, be it happy or troubling ones. Completed with details provided by other sources of information: original archival documents, special papers written by specialist historians, oral history data, etc. – the memoirs contribute to deepening the historical truth, giving its understanding a private note. Such memoirs were those written by Moses Rosen, Chief Rabbi of Romania during the communist period, *Primejdii, încercări, miracole. Povestea vieții șef – rabinului Dr. Moses Rosen* (Rosen, 1991); another work was that of Mrs Teresa Mozes, *Decalog însângerat* (Mozeș, 1995), in fact her memoirs of the Holocaust when he was deported; the work of Carol Buium Beniamini, *Un sionist în vremea lui Antonescu și după aceea* (Buium Beniamini, 1999), where he is describing his activity as a Zionist, member of the Hașomer Hazair movement. Șlomo Șitnovitzer’s work, *Documentul autentic sau amintiri din închisorile comuniste din România* (Șitnovitzer, 2003), describes the year spent by the author as a Zionist prisoner of the prisons Jilava Malmaison, Pitești, Caransebes, Rahova. In his book *Speranțe în întuneric. Memorii* (Saxone, 2004), Valentin Saxone describes the oppressions that he had to live under during communism, being deprived of his right to exercise his profession and the period of detention he suffered in communist prisons.

The list of general work list is not exhaustive, though they exist in abundance both in Romania and in Hungary. They provide a regional and national perspective on the Jewish history in Romania and Hungary in the period 1945-1953 and outline a general framework of these countries where communism was imposed.

Our attention was drawn to the special works written in Romanian, Hungarian or international languages like English or French. Romanian, Hungarian and Jewish authors we have outlined a considerable list of works. Here are but a few of them: Paul Lendvai, Kovács András, Victor Karádi, George Hodos, Tamás Stark, Arieh Kochavi, Bernard Wasserstein, Harry Kuller, Raphael Patai, Ladislau Gyemant, Stephen Roth, Antonio Faur, Ranki Vera, Theodor Wexler, Fejtő Ferencz, Kende Peter, Liviu Rotman, Andrei Oișteanu, Matei Cazacu, Lya Benjamin, Radu Florian, Victor Neumann, Carol Iancu, Radu Ioanid, Ablonczy Balázs, Árpád von Klimó, Kádár Gábor și Vágy Zoltan, Daniel

Lowy, Molnár Judit, Jean Ancel, Maria Ghitta, Kocsis Karoly, Randolph Braham, Corneliu Crăciun, Haraszi György, Michael Shafir, Gido Attila, etc.

Among the most important works on the history of Jews in Romania and Hungary in the period 1945-1953, drafted by expert historians, sociologists, political scientists, law specialists, we will focus on those that we consider important for our research.

Thus, in *The Jews in Soviet Satellites*, the authors Peter Meyer, Bernard Weinryb, Eugene Duschinski, Nikolas Sylvain (Meyer & Weinryb & Duschinski & Sylvain, 1953) addresses the issue of property restitution for the Jews in Hungary and Romania. This was only partially returned after many difficulties. In his book *Anti-semitism without Jews. Communist Eastern Europe*, Paul Lendvai (Lendvai, 1971) makes a description of the Jews in the communist space, showing that also the Jews were victims of the communism, part of the interwar elites being deported. The author notes that in Romania the Jews supported the installation of communism, the most representative Jewish who was part of the communist elite was Ana Pauker. Viktor Karady, *Antisémitisme et stratégies d'intégration. Juifs et non- Juifs dans la Hongrie contemporaine* (Karady, 1993: 239-264), paints the picture of the Hungarian society after the war, trying to outline the prospects of integration available to the Jews in the new society. Communism meant for the Jews the beginning of a new era, while for the Hungarians it was the setting of a totalitarian regime. Raphael Patai, author of the book *The Jews of Hungary. History, culture, psychology* (Patai, 1996: 596-659), shows that while the Jews saw salvation in the arrival of the Red Army, the Hungarians saw defeat. According to the author, anti-Semitism was perpetuated in Hungary during the communist period. Theodore Wexler in the study "Procesele sioniștilor" published in the volume *Anii 1954-1960. Fluxurile și refluxurile stalinismului* (Wexler, 2000), describes the situation in Romania in 1952-1953 when the Romanian communists decide to solve the Zionists problem once and for all. By 1959, around 250 of Zionists would be arrested and interrogated. Another work is that of Fejtő Ferenc, *Magyarság, zsidóság* (Fejtő, 2000) where he shows that in the postwar Hungary the Jewish condition was not disadvantageous, while the bourgeois condition was. The Jews returned from deportation were most interested in de-fascisation and democratization. The Jews, believes author, were more educated than the Hungarian proletarians, who were preparing to occupy leadership positions, fact that helped them.

Harry Kuller, in *Evreii în România anilor 1944- 1949* (Kuller, 2002), points out that not all Jews were attracted to communism. Some opted for the new regime in order to be in some sort of shelter. The Communist Party was particularly interested to obtain the adhesion of the "Jewish street". A study by Viktor Karady, *The Jews of Europe in the Modern Era. A Socio-historical outline* (Karady, 2004: 1-452), describes a broader sociological perspective the situation of the Jews in the space of the communist state. The author believes that the Jewish property was too little returned. Liviu Rotman in his *Evreii din România în perioada comunistă: 1944- 1965* (Rotman, 2004) draws a picture of the situation of Jews in Romania during the communist era, capturing two events of major importance for the Jews in the communist space: the Slansky trial in Czechoslovakia and the "white gown affair" in the USSR. Ladislau Gyemant in *Evreii din Transilvania* (Gyemant, 2004) tells the story of the Jews in Romanian territory since ancient times to the contemporary era. The Jews try after WWII to rebuild their institutions and at the same time, they created a vast network of Zionist institutions. In June 1945, the Jews founded the Jewish Democratic Committee to substitute other Jewish organizations. Harry Kuller shows in his article *Evreii în anii tranziției spre comunism (1944-1948)* (Kuller, 2004) that in Romania, after the war, the Jews oscillated between integration and emmigration. A



study by Dr. Victor Neumann, *Evreii în anii regimului comunist* (Neumann, 2004: 174-180), describes the condition of the Jews under communism by analysing the entire Jewish community. The author shows that Jews continued to aspire to immigrate to Israel during the communist period, and rejected communist egalitarianism. Radu Ioanid in his *Răscumpărarea evreilor: Istoria acordurilor secrete dintre România și Israel* (Ioanid, 2005) describes the emigration movement of Jews to the Holy Land. The author captures the important role played by Moses Rosen in the emigration and the continuity of the Jewish community in Romania.

Kádár Gábor și Vági Zoltán in their research *The Economic Annihilation of the Hungarian Jews, 1944-1945* (Kádár & Vági, 2006: 77-87) stresses that not only Hungarian fascists supported the anti-Jewish laws in Hungary but many Hungarians who wanted to seize Jewish property were advocating for such laws. On the other hand, the deportation of Hungarian Jews lasted 8-9 months, so it was impossible for Hungarian state to incorporate their wealth. The authors' conclusion is that the local authorities indulged in looting the Jewish population. In the article by Liviu Rotman, *Spațiul paralel – un pericol pentru puterea comunistă* (Rotman, 2006), it is shown that in Romania anti-Semitism was a phenomenon often encountered. At the same time the author explains that the communist regime in Romania tried to assimilate the Jews, but they never understood them. Professor Ladislau Gyemant (Gyemant, 2011: 50) makes a study of the Jewish Community in Alba Iulia in the years 1940 to 1950. The Jewish community here tried to regroup after the war by restoring community structures, but they gradually found themselves surrendered to communism. These are but some issues raised by the special published works on the history of the Jews in Romania and Hungary in the period 1945-1953.

The volumes concerning the history of minorities in Romania and in Europe edited under the auspices of the Institute for Euroregional Studies from Oradea bring an important contribution concerning the situation of minorities in Europe in past and present. Mircea Brie, Ioan Horga, Sorin Șipoș edited in 2011 the volume *Ethnicity, confession and intercultural dialogue at the European Union Eastern Border* (Brie&Horga&Șipoș, 2011), and Mircea Brie, Sorin Șipoș, Ioan Horga edited in 2011 the volume *Ethno- Confessional Realities in the Romanian Area. Historical Perspectives (XVIII- XX Centuries)*. (Brie & Șipoș &Horga, 2011). Mircea Brie in the article *Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Dialogue in the European Border Space*, talks about an ideologic crisis of European countries, the continent being at the crossroads: „ The old forms of social- political and economic life are redefined. Even relations between people and communities resettle on new organization and relational forms”.(Brie, 2011:12) The problem of integrating minorities is a problem of all Europe, with a focus on Central and Eastern Europe where there are the most pronounced clivages, considers Mircea Brie. Ioan Horga in the article *Ethnicity, religion and intercultural education in the curricula of European Studies* considers that “the fight for religious and ethnic diversity and intercultural dialogue is both justified and morally necessary”. (Horga, 2011: 19) The author consider that the subject of multicultural/ intercultural is approached in EU Studies curricula in the Chapters *Europeanization and cultural diversity* that integrates “local, national, and regional culture to the European identity” and in the chapter *European dialogue with other geo-cultural spaces* at several universities from Europe. Anca Oltean in the article *Aspects from the life of Romanian and Hungarian Jews during the years 1945-1953* points out that the Jews from these regions had to face a lot of discriminations, oscillating between integration in the societies from Romania and Hungary and emigration, emphasizing that they were rather victims of communists then

beneficiary losing a great part of their former properties after deportation and during the communist rule, being deprived by their rights as being forced to lose their property before they emigrated to Israel. (Oltean, 2011: 171). An important aspect is brought forward by Antonio Faur who in the paper *Considerații referitoare la „filierele“ de trecere clandestină a evreilor din Ungaria în România (mai-august 1944)* (Faur, 2011), writes about the illegal crossing the border of Jews from Hungary to Romania especially from the border from Bihor county, underlying the fact that there were a few Romanians who helped the Jews from death. Even if there were cases when Romanian authorities required money from the Jews, their life was, in consequence, saved. In his book *Un deceniu din existența evreilor bihoreni (1942-1952)* (Faur, 2012), Antonio Faur takes an interview to Varodi Iudith, survivor of Holocaust. Mrs. Varodi mentions in her interview that the Jews were a hardworking people who were sharing friendly relations with other communities. She was deported to Auschwitz- Birkenau where they were put to hard labor. After deportation, she settled in Timisoara where she graduated a textile school and then she worked in this domain. These are only a few sources who are mentioning the condition of Jews in postwar years.

### **3). Data of oral history gathered from questionnaires applied to the Jewish Community of Oradea**

We were able to question some Holocaust survivors on the issue of postwar life; they were either deported or escaped arrest being hidden by humanitarians; they were natives of NW Transylvania.

The questionnaire that I constructed took into account several classic works written by scholars which were based on investigations conducted by questionnaires. Gidó Attila and Sólyom Zsuzsa, in the study *The surviving Jewish Inhabitants of Cluj, Carei and Oradea. The survey of World Jewish Congress in 1946<sup>1</sup>*, draws a picture through questionnaires analysis of the Jewish society during the war and in the months following liberation. The authors describe the situation in Romania in the interwar period by indicating that many Romanian Jews were deprived of citizenship both in 1924 and during the rule of Octavian Goga in 1938, making a comparison with Hungary, where the second anti-Jewish law brought restrictions in that the foreign Jews could not obtain citizenship in any way. Based on questionnaires, the authors add to this picture a description of the situation in Cluj, Carei and Oradea during the Hungarian administration. Thus, in the first months of occupation Transylvania was organized by a military administration, and then replaced with a civil one. First steps were taken against Jews by banning Jewish publications, sports clubs and non-religious associations. Since 1940 insults, evictions, arrests and expulsions of Jews became frequent.

The authors assigned a separate chapter the existing anti-Jewish legislation in Northern Transylvania under Hungarian occupation. Such anti- Jewish first law (Law XV-1938) reduced the number of Jewish scholars or freelancers to 20% of the total number of the Jewish citizens.

A second anti- Jewish law dated May 5, 1939, during the government of Count Teleki Pál, considered Jews those who were members of the religious Jewish community, and if one parent or two grandparents were Jewish. The 20% ratio of Jewish intellectuals

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<sup>1</sup> Gido Attila, Solyom Zsuzsa, *The surviving Jewish inhabitants of Cluj, Carei and Oradea. The survey of World Jewish Congress in 1946*, Cluj-Napoca, ISPMN Working Papers, nr. 35/2010, <http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/uploads/35%20pt%20web%20final.pdf>, accessed in February 2011.



or freelancers was limited to 6%. The Act introduced several anti-Jewish measures, among them being the *numerus clausus* law that limited the number of Jewish students to 6%. The limit of 6% Jews has been brought in the professional areas of the lawyers, engineers and doctors, for the Chamber of Mass-Media and the Actors Guild. The law limited the right of the Jews to acquire agricultural and forestry properties and made possible the expropriation of Jewish property. Many lost their jobs and even more Jewish shops were closed. In practice, the number of Jewish closed stores and expropriated goods was much larger than the number admitted by the law.

The third anti – Jewish Law (Law no. XV/1941) and its provisions were applied also to the Northern Transylvania. The law forbade marriage between Jews and non-Jews and imposed penalties for Jews who had sexual relations with non-Hebrew women.

Another anti – Jewish Law was Law XV/1942 setting out that the Jews had lost their right to buy property.

Based on questionnaires prepared by the World Jewish Congress in 1946, the authors provide information about the forced labour. Established by several decrees, the forced labour came into force on 1 July 1939 and it remained valid until April 1941. The Jews who did forced labour were exempt of military service. Those who did forced labour could not bear arms. But the Jews had to do hard physical labour, had to endure cruel and inhuman treatment, including inadequate food rations.

The questionnaires provide information about the deportation that began after March 19, 1944. In late March 1944, the Germans arrived in Northern Transylvania, and on April 5, the Jews were forced to wear a yellow star as a mark of their origin. Jewish property was blocked. First, the authorities seized the children and the elderly people together with the young people who were not recruited for forced labour. There were ghettos in the cities of Cluj, Gherla, Dej, Șimleul Silvaniei, Satu Mare, Baia Mare, Bistrița – Năsăud, Oradea, Târgu Mureș, Reghin, Sfântu Gheorghe. Most deportees were sent to the concentration camps in Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, Grossrosen, Günskirchen, Mathausen, Neungamme or Ravensbrück.

In 1946, 7, 200 Jews were still living in Northern Transylvania, of which 200 Jews in Bihor, 1,500 in Cluj, 800 in Maramureș, 700 in Satu Mare, 650 in Someș County, 500 in Sălaj and Năsăud.

The authors listed the themes and issues tackled by the related questionnaires.

Thus the respondents were asked about their legal and financial status and atrocities suffered. They were asked to write about the consequences of the provisions and amendments relating to marriage. The questionnaires consisted of questions about what happened under the Hungarian administration. The respondents were able to clarify on any injury suffered, to report material losses suffered from private enterprises expropriation, restrictions on business, confiscated objects, living conditions, income. In addition to these data, the questionnaires asked questions about deportation, requiring the date, place and concentration camps.

Robert Eaglestone in his book *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Eaglestone, 2004) notes a statement by Maurice Blanchot (Eaglestone, 2004: 15) who writes that the Holocaust survivors are not read as usual books. Elie Wiesel (Eaglestone, 2004: 15) considers that a new type of literature was invented with the Holocaust, that of oral testimony that reports personal experiences. The Holocaust experience involves subjective stories from the survivors.

On a much smaller scale, we interviewed some members of the Jewish Community of Oradea who were survivors of the Holocaust, or they had close relatives who died in Holocaust. The questionnaire requested data on:

1. Name and surname:
2. Date of birth:
3. Place of birth:
4. Place of residence:
5. Occupation:
6. Nationality:
7. Were you deported during Holocaust?
8. How were the Jews received upon their return from deportation? How were you personally received?
9. When you returned were you able to take your properties back (mobile and immobile)? If yes, to what extent?
10. Were you part of the life of the Jewish Community in 1945-1953 and to what extent?
11. Did you receive any aid designated specifically to the Jews in 1945-1953?
12. Were you a member of a Jewish organization after the war? Can you name the organization?
13. You are not thinking of immigrating to Israel or in other countries of the free world?
14. Were you a member of the Communist Party? What was the reason for you joining the Party? Did you truly believe in the ideals of the egalitarianism?
15. Did you have any relatives in other countries? To what extent were you able to maintain the connection?
16. Were you able to speak freely about emigration in 1945-1953?
17. Did you have any connections to the Zionist movement? Did you know about the existence of Zionist organizations?
18. What were the reasons for which some Jews emigrated to Israel (political persecutions, etc.)?
19. How do you motivate that you did not emigrate?

Thus, **Hommonai Maria**, born 30 XI 1947 in Oradea, is Jewish and currently retired. She filled in the questionnaires on behalf of her dead parents Schwartz Iosif și Schwartz Ileana (born Krausz) who were deported – the father to forced labour in Russia and the mother in the camps of Auschwitz - Birkenau. When asked how they were received upon their return the daughter Hommonai Maria said: “I know nothing about the reaction of official bodies, I know only about neighbours or relatives who had returned sooner or by different circumstances escaped deportation. They were received with friendship and feelings of remorse.” Their property suffered greatly during the time they were deported, “Father found his house, where I currently domicile with my family, but it was ravaged terribly and acted as a stable for the Soviet troops that ruled the city, my father’s house was shelter for horses. Mother, upon her return from Sweden, where she had arrived after her release by the Danish Red Cross, found his personal belongings with a family friend, who told her that they had been able to take possession of her property after she had been taken to the Ghetto in Oradea.” Between 1945-1953, Schwartz Iosif and Schwartz Ileana did not attend to the Jewish community life, did not received any aid for

Jews, were not members of Zionist organizations after the war, did not emigrate because they were at a second marriage and were physically and emotionally exhausted after deportation. They were not member of the Party and did not have relatives abroad. Schwartz Iosif and Schwartz Ileana had no links with the Zionist movement. Hommonai Maria, their daughter, believes that Jews who immigrated to Israel wanted that history be not repeated. Her parents did not emigrate because “they lack the power and the strength required to start a new path in life, they were concerned with restoring normal life as they had previously known ante their deportation.”

**Braun Vioara** was born on 30.09.1926 in Marghita. She is now retired. A Holocaust survivor, she was deported with her parents and two brothers who died in Auschwitz. When asked how they were received upon their return from the Holocaust, Braun Vioara said, “Differently. Some with curiosity, with hidden enmity, with distrust, with sympathy, etc.. I came home in September 1945 when a Jewish community of survivors was formed of those who had already arrived at home and from whom she received aid.” She failed to recover their property, stated that she found the house empty, attended the Jewish community life from 1945 - 1953 with live performances with the youth. She was a member of the Democratic Grouping of Jews in Marghita, had no thoughts to migrate. She believed in the ideals of communism and in the desire that the things she went through will not be repeated. She had an older brother who emigrated to the U.S., he returned later to see her and she visited him. She had no links to the Zionist movement. Among the reasons the Jews had to emigrate to Israel she lists distrust, uncertainty and “the hope that they will be treated as equal citizens in their own country”. She did not emigrate because she birthed two children and she was ill.

**B. Zs.** was born in Oradea, 20.04.1944. She is retired and of Hungarian origins. She speaks on the behalf of her Jewish acquaintances who were deported. On where she was involved she notes: “I was a refugee in Arad (Romania). My friends were happy about the return of those who escaped deportation. Our former maid of offered housing, she dressed, disinfected, and fed those who needed help.” She only heard of the loss of properties, of the Jewish buildings. She did not attend the Jewish community life during 1945-1953, did not receive aid and she was not a member of any Jewish organization after the war. She had a brother who emigrated, but it was too late for her. She was not a member of the Party, had relatives in Israel with whom she kept in touch. In her opinion, it was not possible to talk openly about emigration, and she had no ties to the Zionist movement. In her opinion, the reasons why some Hebrew emigrated to Israel were: “They believe in their own country, where they could be Jewish without persecution.” Her motivation for not migrating lays in the fact that she was loyal to the state that offered a peaceful life for herself and her child.

**Steier Elisabeta** was born at 24.10. 1917 Boiu (Bihor), then she lived in Oradea. She is retired and of Jewish origins. She mentions that after 23 August 1944 they were liberated. She partially managed to recover her properties. In the period 1945-1953 she performed volunteer work for the Jewish community, benefitted from aids (clothing), was not a member of the Jewish organizations after the war, did not think to emigrate to Israel or to other countries of the free world. He was a member of the Party and, like other supporters, she believed in the ideals of egalitarianism. She had relatives abroad with whom she kept in touch by mail and visits. Her husband had ties with the Zionist movement. The reason that some Hebrew emigrated to Israel was political persecution. She did not emigrate because of medical reasons.

**Bone Gabriela** was born on 28 March 1928, in Târgu Mures and lived in Oradea. She was deported during the Holocaust, she is now retired and of Jewish descent. When asked how they were received upon their return from the Holocaust, she reports: "From deportation – I was at the Bergen Belsen Camp - I arrived home in Targu Mures, Goga Street 18 - we were received by the Jewish Community with much warmth, we were admitted in a hospital, I got clothes, a room equipped with everything necessary". Their properties had been nationalized and through trials they have been largely recovered. During 1945-1953, she was a member of the Jewish Community in Târgu Mures and Reghin, she received aids. He was a member of a Jewish organization after the war, (Ha)somer Hațair. She had no thoughts to migrate because she got married. She was a member of the Party and thought it would be better during communism. She had not relatives abroad and remembers that she could talk openly about emigration in the years 1945-1953. She had no links with the Zionist movement. She regarded emigration to Israel as an ideal emerged after the Holocaust for the Jews to have a country to defend and a place with no room for another Auschwitz. She did not emigrate because she got married.

**Kincses Ecaterina** was born on 11.05.1940 in Cluj-Napoca and then lived in Oradea. She is retired and a Jew The grandmother's name was Diamantstein Yolanda and she was deported. Ecaterina and her mother escaped deportation because his mother was married to a German ethnic. However, during the Holocaust they stayed in the hide. Her mother's brother was also deported, Diamantstein Ivan. He and grandmother were deported to Auschwitz. Except her Uncle Ivan, no one of the family ever returned from deportation. She had only movable property. After liberation she was able to recover some of them. She does not remember her parents to be involved with the Jewish Community immediately after the war. They received aids, but very little. In the years 1945 - 1953 they received aid in the form of clothing and cans. She was not a member of any Jewish organizations after the war. There did not think to emigrate to Israel, her mother was annoyed that other Jews were considering emigrating. Mrs. Kincses believed in communist ideals. She motivates that mother, father and stepfather believed in communist ideals. "My mother wept at Stalin's death and did not know how it will be after his death." In the period 1945-1953 they had no relatives abroad. In 1978 an aunt emigrated and they managed to keep in touch by phone and packages. The packages arrived in a terrible state, loosened, ripped open, discarded. Parents, mother and stepfather did not want to emigrate. Her family had no connection with the Zionist movement. She believes that some Jews chose to emigrate because of political persecution, believes Mrs. Kincses. She says that she did not emigrate because "I cannot imagine life elsewhere. In Israel there are problems with the Arabs."

**Varadi Judith** was born on 09.01.1926 in Cluj-Napoca, then she lived in Oradea. She is retired and of Jewish descent. Deported during the Holocaust, she makes a note of the places she was in: "Between 1944, May 3, in the ghetto in Dej, Auschwitz camps C, B, .... Buchenwald Commando "Taucha", the Death March up to 5-6 May 1945 upon my return nursing hospitals - repatriation in March 1946." When asked how they were received upon their return Judith says, "Left alone in life, I personally never got back to the town from which I was deported, but to Timișoara where I used to have an uncle from my mother's side – he died in the Holocaust, along with my brother. In a short time I was hired and started getting a qualification". The house where she had lived before the Holocaust was demolished. She attended the Jewish Community life after returning to Oradea in 1948 and was a paying member of the Community together with her husband. Not a recipient of any aid, she was not a member of any Jewish organizations after the war, did not think to emigrate to Israel or elsewhere. She was a member of the Party and

believed in the ideals of egalitarianism. They had relatives abroad with whom she corresponded and kept in touch. During the communist period migrate was very difficult, she believes, “emigration waiver campaigns were strong then in time no one could migrate, then after many years of waiting for an answer to their application the vast majority were denied, and then a new possibility appeared after 1970”. She had no links with the Zionist movement. In her opinion, the Jews emigrated because they were not promoted at work and they heard the calling from Israel.

She did not emigrate because the Holocaust left her sick and because when she returned she found no physical and mental resources to start a new life in another country.

**Somogyi Livia** filled in the questionnaire on behalf of deceased father, Somogyi László, born in 1892 in Beiuș, a pharmacist who later lived in Oradea. When asked how the Jews were received upon their return from Somogyi Livia says that she returned with the hope that he would find her family and she would take back the buildings they used to own. Unfortunately, no property was returned Somogyi László participated in religious festivals and led the synagogue community choir. He received no aid specifically designed for Jews and he was not a member of any Jewish organizations after the war, did not think to immigrate to Israel, arguing that he was too old to start everything from zero. They had relatives abroad, exchanging letters. He was a member of the Party, believing in the communist ideals. According to Somogyi Livia they could not talk openly about emigration because you risked losing your job. They had no ties with the Zionist movement. Some Jews emigrated to Israel to “be Jews in their country and to have an easier life.”

Analysing the published bibliography for the purpose of elaborating this study it turns out that we have a massive amount of literature dedicated to the Jewish phenomenon after World War II, published in Romania and in Hungary. Written by Romanian and Hungarian historians, some even of Jewish descent, the published bibliography reveals a string of particularities of the evolution of the Jewish community during the communist period in Central Europe.

Sources of oral history allows us to bring out new interpretations and understanding of a community fighting to overcome the tragedies of the Holocaust, adapting to new political and economic realities of the region, but also fighting to preserve their identity.

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