

The Inadequacy of Communist Memory: Censorship, Captivity and Confiscation

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Abstract:

The present study recommends itself as an endeavor focusing upon Ricœur's assertions regarding three approaches towards the uses and abuses of memory: *the hindered memory – the manipulated memory – the abusively commended memory*. These three particular attributes, defining the memory of communism, are reinvested with specific inflections which are already found within the division of concepts – *censorship, captivity and confiscation*.

The focus of this study is upon of *communist memory*, which stands in need of being examined by recourse to the above-mentioned analytic approach, which consists in *looking beyond its defensive wall*. We will certainly not avoid *the triple occurrence of the letter "C"*: *captivity*, with reference to *captive [thought]* (C. Milosz); *censorship [of memory/recollection]* (Revel) or *confiscation [of a particular, personal destiny]*.

Our novel contribution, with an acutely subjective-affective tone, can be seen most clearly in the last registry of our research, where it analyzes, clarifies and resonates, with a Ricœurian – Freudian mixture, the fragile balance of *too much vs. too little memory*, by establishing an appropriate frame for the reception of *passive experiences* in relation to the *active exercise of memory*.

Keywords: Memory of Communism, Recollections of Communism, Censorship, Captivity, Confiscation

Introductory Notes about the Inadequacy of Communist Memory

Placing to the fore of our initial analysis, not by chance, certain assertions put forward by Pierre Nora and Paul Ricœur (2001), and considering them to be essential guidelines for the present study, we intend to emphasize the essential veridicality of the statement: *the correct use of memory legitimates the imperative of moral duty*.

If Pierre Nova denounces the era of commemoration with its obsession with festivity and the strangeness of often – ignored dark corners of memory, which in fact affirm its *over-filling*, by maintaining

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that the memorial mode overtakes the historical mode, and suggests other uses – arbitrary, unpredictable, bulimic – for the past (Nora, 2001: 113–114), one can affirm that *the memory- moment, or the synchronicity bare reality – memorial consignment represents a solid alloy (and not just an affective one) which individualizes an epoch.*

In Ricœur’s opinion, the act of recall demands a triple responsibility from the part of (imperatively accented) memory: memory’s duty is to see that justice is done; memory pays its dues and draws up a balance sheet of the inheritance; moral duty states that priority has to be given to victims.

In fact, this type of approach pleads for the consolidation of a memory already undermined by fragility – which, assaulted by *too much memory on one side and too little memory on the other*, generates an imbalance reinvigorated by the dual perspectives of repetitive compulsion and submittance to the travails of recollection.

As certitude, the proofs in memory’s archive are altered by the intervention of the ideological, which is used to effect manipulations within the distortion of reality, validating, no matter what the cost, the system of power and integrating the everyday world into symbolic systems.

An adept of such interpretations, the analytical pattern already established in the present study will appeal to certain particular inflections in order to prove the assertion that the memory of communism has to be re- valued by banking upon the *penetrating capacity of a look beyond its defensive wall*, without avoiding in this sense the three potential valences of *the letter C: captivity (with a reference to captive [thought] – C. Milosz), censorship [of memory/recollection (Revel)] or confiscation [of particular, personal destiny]*.

We should note a triple approach validated from the start by our initial draft: in Pierre Nora’s acceptance, this study does not aim to prioritize its connection to the symbolic economy (even though this would represent a fertile direction) of memory (within the correspondence of re-inhumations, via C. Verdery – L. Boia); the already-traced directing line is based upon the Revel – Milosz conceptual confluence, banking upon the operant filter of political philosophy, a focus exclusively dependent upon the persistence of a *critical exceedent*, seen as an alternative solution for any deficiency which Ricœur mentioned when theorizing the *too much and too little memory*; the *active exercise of memory* implies [especially here] an *absolutely familial other*, coupled to the formulation launched by Tzvetan Todorov (1999) and advocating a preference for *the good* rather

than *the true*, illustrating the theory of exemplary values which *turns memory into a project*.

Censorship and the Captivity of Memory

From the position of an anti-communist intellectual (in the line of Raymond Aron, Alain Besançon, Stéphane Courtois, André Glucksmann or François Furet), Jean-François Revel assumes the mission of exposing the falsified *game between politics and history*, a [game] in which he finds, in a critically – informing way, both *the left's parade* placed inside the “empyrean of intentions” (parade – an action with double function – both to avoid a direct hit and to show off ornaments in order to attract attention) and its *prevarication* (a tendency to reload old propaganda sophisms) or *retaliation* (a reaction confirming the irreversible character of communism, with the possibility of its being overthrown).

Warning about the *reversibility of communism* (in its double quality – *sociological reversibility* – *strategic reversibility*) Revel reveals the interference of opposed tendencies: on the one hand, the new rallying to the old; and on the other, its obsession with identifying the new where there is nothing to be seen except the old reloaded in a new form: in other words, *even if the form is new, the background stays identical*.

The reversibility of communism extracts its substance from *irreversibility* seen as an integral trait of socialism, banking upon structurally-ideological discrepancies (and not just degrees) between its own political system and fluctuations – successes or failures, ascensions or falls, evolutions and revolutions/involutions – tracing the dynamics of a political occurrence as recorded by other types of political systems (Revel, 1995: 404).

Preoccupied by the pseudo- rationality of *totalitarian sophistries*, with no immunity to/from the effects of *ideological perfidiousness*, Revel notes that, being placed in a position of impossibility of accommodating reality, communism *cannot belong to this world*, thus accepting those defining properties already traced: *a hiatus of history, an evolutionary syncopation, a product of erroneous thinking, an intellectual invention with no historical determinism, a serious accident, a systematic delirium, a practical failure* (Revel, 1995).

Viewed in this light, the memory of communism is labeled as censorship – discriminated, both on *the fundamental* basis of results obtained by courting Marxist – Leninist ideologies, and through *the form* of perpetuating political mores and using Stalinist-Leninist procedures as ordinary currency (Revel, 2002).

Denouncing the persistent refusal to equivocate Nazism and communism (despite system similarities, similar ways of acting and the pathetically-practiced anti-individual politics characteristic of both first-rate communist societies and their satellite branches – the latter ones faithfully mimicking their prototypes) Revel *condemns past communists' right to forget*, but also *blames the present communists' past*, while disapproving of ideological cosmeticizing formulations labeled as unfortunate, unhappy, ultimately failed additions, impossible to bring back to attention except by a technique of *persevering scrutiny focused beyond communism's defense wall*. This endeavor accepts a strictly analytical orientation centering upon *communist amnesia*, insisting upon reappraisal and indication of the correctly established sense of the syntagm “*memory debt*” – an operation finished, in fact, by transcending the univocal sense of the syntagm “*memory of/ recollection of*”.

In the same accusatory note of resuscitated “communist hypotheses”, Romanian *intelligentsia* (Patapievi, 2014: 48–49) offers the pressing need to expose political theories already cloistered between *captivity* and *denial* fanaticisms as an argument for overtaking, at any price, the philosophical asymmetry established between fascism/Nazism and communism, by admitting that *theses which already define an uncontested reality cannot be avoided*: fascism has socialist structural features, and communism accepts fascist inflexions, a contamination demanding a transfer of that legitimate repulsion one might feel against fascism, to communism too; selective memory blocks acknowledge, on one side, that communism is oriented towards modernity, while on the other side denying fascism this quality – a morally repugnant, factually impossible-to-maintain assertion; communism preserves a positive prejudgment, phagocytously drawing nourishment from the moral impossibility of accepting its own facts. These dysfunctions, saturated by *the inadequacy of communist recollection* i.e., [*a mind- turning idea* (Pleșu, Patapievi, Liiceanu, 2014)] divide European memory and sensitivity, preserving them in/through disassociation.

In a similar vision, Czesław Miłosz (2008) places such an insufficiency within the realm of *the natural*, thus proving that the targeted attribute can be applied to any known world. The Eastern citizen thinks in ready-made sociologically- historical patterns/clichés – an observation which, based upon the analogy between Islamic Ketman and Western European 20th century (Miłosz, 2008: 98–99), Ketman [in this sense we refer to the implications/ramifications of the Ketman category, in its instance as social custom, or way of practicing auto- actualization ion of the self, compared to “anything else”], allows us to examine the concept

of *captive thinking*, with its status of acrobatic procedure invested with varied contextual significances; auctorial play, automated reflex, way of identifying – by means of decreased vigilance – with an imposed role, continuous masking, inner self-control, blockage-obstacle, total control and ideological conditioning.

The Active Exercise of Memory: Destiny Forfeiture

Under the sign of particular/ personal destiny appreciated as both *active memory exercise and direct grip recollection*, the volume dedicated to *The History of a Confiscated Destiny. Viorel Baciu, unknown martyr* [the volume belongs to Miorița Baciu Got, with a foreword by Vladimir Tismăneanu, Curtea Veche Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013], configures – within a structural analysis model launched by/ in the present study – a complete parity between the concept of *inadequate memory* and the term *forfeiture*, seen here as synonymous to *imperfect knowledge*.

In the insert belonging to the aforementioned book we state – as a recourse to the memory/recollection of a destiny – Viorel Baciu – that, in a Ricœurian sense, projecting a phenomenological blueprint upon memory will always start from the premise that the act of recollection constitutes an actual process of memory occurrence, with all the perceived recharging of the *mnēmē* – recollection as affectation, an Aristotelian way of presenting the being in multiple ways by using descriptive – narrative techniques. Referencing the recollection – memory relationship, Ricœur again, this time connected to Edward Casey's opinions, states that simple recollection is a neutral, objective, detached, impersonal process of *displaying presence- in -absence*.

In T. Todorov's offered note, memory cannot be identified with elementary accumulations of brute information, but is an interaction medium for both *the semantic side* and *the personal perspective*, in a vivified connection which becomes an intimate, inter-connected predisposition.

If *literal recollection* preserves the intransitive unicity of the being/event, *exemplary memory* is able to establish a possible analogy between the integrated elements of a series, a way of producing therapeutic effects or even of triggering and maintaining curiosity as a preamble to knowledge.

Now is the time for an imperatively – necessary note: the category of the *absolutely- familial other* empowers the personal imprint and enables it to respond to that immediate-order memory which searches for *the good* rather than *the true*, in the sense in which the latter *cannot be confiscated* by any assaulting formulation: “thoughts and many

attempts [...] reflections torn from the depths of the being”, about what “totally represents just the Truth”.

In fact, *the confiscated profile* becomes a pretext for counterbalancing *counter*-qualities found in the category of *ethical Ketman* (2008: 94–98). It extracts its philosophy from the *Ethics of the New Faith* (communist “*biblistm*”) based upon the rudimentary principle stating that *all good things must serve the principles of the revolution*. The false and perfidious morality of building *the new man* by a model of education demands a new type of ascetic endeavor, which in turn prepares (by *counter*-formatting) the *tool – the individual*, dedicated to a single cause, tolerant, obedient, snug.

If the ethical ideal of the *New Belief* preserves puritanical principles and if the individual benefits from some concessions (being let out of his cell for political meetings and for work), *the new man* practices denunciation as a basic virtue, banks upon fear, insistently cultivates and abuses it, and reconfirms his negative qualities, focused upon self – knowledge, omnipresence and vigilance. Such *counter- landmarks* recharge a one-track portrait, simulating relaxation and arrogantly flaunting carelessness, sometimes expressing compassion or fury, inside a changed-direction ethical system which has been repositioned from improving one’s own destiny towards a politics of the war of all against all.

True to the slogan “general good is a poison” the chemical formulation of the *ethical Ketman* conveys the feeling that an ethics of loyalty towards the many represents the weak side, a deficiency *counter*- attacked by offensive cruelty, and the intensified revolutionary spirit to the disadvantage of the intellectual spirit, ensuring and guaranteeing equality: *the ethical Ketman* = a vigorous category with a surprise – element status and *the availability to accept anything and manifest itself towards anyone, at any time and in any way*.

Diametrically opposed to such an artificial construct, the *confiscation* of a mortified destiny, under the permanent surveillance of the *ethical Ketman* (see the letters, notes, speeches of Greek Catholic priest and professor Viorel Baciu, testimonies of people who knew him, the surveillance files – CNSAS) recommend meditation upon themes such as *reflexivity*, seen as an auspicious way of capturing memory in its declarative phase, by belonging to a community of destinies, a way of rethinking history and denying the hard demands of the political. The vertical model of resisting any pressures by which the “inverted historical blueprint” operates (the *counter* – arguments of communism) confirms the sermon – language, the liturgical ensign of “making

history/the history” as a deciding, convincing, absolutely Christian gesture of resisting/forgiving.

The Need for a (Continuous) Look beyond Communism’s Defensive Wall

In the analytically – theoretical score offered by A. Besançon (1999), *communist amnesia and Nazi memory are reciprocally exasperating when the right to recollection has enough arguments (realities) in order to condemn them both*. In fact, it’s the endeavor to perpetuate a reflex opposing physical and moral crime and elude the message (*memory*) of distant, indirectly lived, objects which is at stake here: obviously noted in weakened Western antibodies confronted by virulent communist ideology.

Maintaining and arguing the look beyond communism’s defense wall, the report of the Commission for the European Parliament and the Council (Bruxelles, 22.12.2010, COM (2010) 783), explicitly referring to the recollection of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe invites reconciliation through sharing, tolerance and spiritual solidarity, as a moral reparation institutionally mediated by the E.U. This initiative reveals a certain impact of personal- imprint memory impact (each member state has its own approach towards this type of problem) of exaggeratedly transparent popularization (how promoted can a tragic memory be? our underlining) and of approachability (a recourse to the perspective of a factually – global look upon the methods used by member states when dealing with problems engendered by the crimes of totalitarian regimes).

Thus, European reports corroborated with national ones reassess either the lingering, obstructed pact of change and of confronting the past at any price, or the decision not to open Pandora’s box, deepening in this sense both ambiguity and non – determination (Gallinat, 2009: 183–199) and/or tolerating a disorienting, confused, enigmatically – hermetic reality.

In Habermas and A. Michnik’s (1994) political-philosophical interpretation, reconciliation with the past constrains political morality to initiate an image/ projection of moral society in which recollection imposes a common approach upon both memory and forgetting, as public social activities mediating individual experiences through collective ones¹.

¹ See in this sense, Cristian Tileagă, *Analiza discursului și reconcilierea cu trecutul recent. Studii de psihologie socială discursivă (Discourse Analysis and the Reconciliation with the Recent Past. Studies of Social Discursive Psychology)*, Oradea, Primus Publishing House, 2012; J. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*,

From the same perspective, the *Prague Declaration about the European moral conscience and communism* (June 3rd, 2008) states that European unity is only feasible with the contribution of all parties involved in historical reconciliation and an acceptance of the fact that Nazism and communism have a common inheritance and possess substantial similarities. The declaration focuses upon communist ideology and its labyrinthine conscience, offering a pan-European, objective way of judging both Nazi and communist regimes. If we insist upon a neutral approach when judging totalitarian regimes, then the initiative will necessarily particularize the role of European conscience – that of impartial and detached judge of communism’s crimes, certifying the need for an equally dosed insight: *crimes committed in the name of communism must be considered crimes against humanity and treated in the same way as Nazi crimes were in the Nuremberg courts.*

In the *martyrion* of totalitarian atrocity crime victims, the date of August 23rd (with capital letters!) is redefined, and imbued with the significance of equidistant moment for a correct retrospection of history, in order to allow us to observe (judge) the past in an impartial way (January 27th commemorates the Holocaust victims) even if their respective commemorative importance is clearly unbalanced.

In Place of Conclusions: from Inadequacy to a Well-Dosed Recollection of Communism

Under the incidence of a triple symbology of *the letter C* – *communism = censorship – captivity – confiscation*, the present study identifies and deciphers in these terms both the technique of chronically spoiled memory and the practice of maintaining an illusion (of Furetian origins) as a constitutive – restitution way of understanding and evaluating communist history.

When analyzing memory and amnesia, Alain Besançon appeals to the parallels between the public nature of Nazism and that of communism, overtaking the political perspective, and subordinates/subsumes memory (with an interest in any insert deferring to confiscated memory) to the mobilizing tendency of religious conscience.

Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002; K. Murakami, *Positioning in Accounting for Redemption and Reconciliation*, in “Culture & Psychology”, no. 13, 2007; V. Tismăneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*, Princeton University Press, 1998 or D. Middleton, S. D. Brown, *Issues in the Socio-Cultural Study of Memory: Making Memory Matter*, in J. Valsiner, A. Rosa (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociocultural Psychology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Transgressing the frame of *inadequacy of communist memory*, Alain Besançon sanctions under the sign of Christian amnesic appraisals of communism, a pious endeavor, extracted either from the soil of sin and evil (as a constant presence, more or less well –dosed, fueled and maintained by the Christian principle stating that the answer to sin should be repentance – forgiveness – forgetting or overtaking) or by an easily – obtainable forgiveness, just by acknowledging the mistake and publicly confessing – repentance acts.

Censorship – captivity – confiscation do not act independently, but cannot function separately either; they are able to work within a direct relation and strict determination, annihilating any analytic capacity of communist memory, in the absence of critical reactions and profiler formulations which are seen as normal inside moral – intellectual conscience.

As a conclusion, we consider that an inquisitive look passes beyond communism's defensive walls and manages to dismount and combat the negative, poisonous exceptionality of totalitarian systems, despite the glaciation period maintained by their long – lived status of self – reclaiming amnesty regimes. With the absolutely essential appending of a warning note stating that the look has to be persevering, perceiving, prudent and resolute.

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