

Babeș-Bolyai University

Cape Town University

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Workshop: *POST-COMMUNISM, POST-APARTHEID:*

*TRUTH, RECONCILIATION AND THEIR PLURAL NORMS*

9-12 September 2009

### **PARTICIPANTS:**

Ciprian MIHALI, PhD, Senior Lecturer, project manager (UBB, RO)

Philippe-Joseph SALAZAR, Distinguished Professor, project manager (UCT, SA)

Ruvimbo GOREDEMA, Masters candidate, research team member (UCT)

Emilian CIOC, PhD, researcher, *young researcher* in the project (UBB)

Laura ILINESCU, PhD candidate, research team member (UBB)

Lorin GHIMAN, PhD candidate, research team member (UBB)

Ștefan MAFTEI, assistant, guest (UBB)

Adrian COSTACHE, PhD, assistant, guest (UBB)

Ana Enache, PhD candidate, guest (UBB)

### **GENERAL PRESENTATION**

The workshop *Post-communism, Post-apartheid: Truth, Reconciliation and their Plural Norms* held at Babes-Bolyai in Cluj-Napoca represented the second common meeting with the attendance of Romanian and South-African researchers accordingly to the Realization plan scheduling the scientific activities in the research project *Rhetorics of social justice and deliberative perception of the rule of law in post apartheid South-Africa and post communist Romania*. The first common workshop was held in Cape Town in July 2009.

In the first part of the workshop organizers projected the South-African movie *Forgiveness* realized by Ian Gabriel in 2004. Movie projection, open to the public, was

followed by open discussions concerning artistic, historical and theoretical aspects. The goal was especially to address the issue of forgiveness as a highly singularized moral and political strategy meant to construct and ensure national reconciliation. In the same time, participants discussed the artistic possibilities exploited in order to illustrate and signify the experience of forgiveness at a personal level.

The second part of the workshop was dedicated to the public presentation of researchers involved or invited in the project. Among the issues addressed by these interventions we can quote politically and socially constructed truth, morals claims, reconciliation, apartheid and communist features of injustice, reconciliation as a basis for a new and more just society to be built after the fall of apartheid or communist regimes.

Organizers invited South-Africans guests to visit the *Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance* in Sighet (North Transylvania) with the aim of letting them see the communist repression places and practices, and also the post-communist fashion of exhibiting and displaying its institutionalized memory. While being in Cape Town for the workshop in July, Romanian researchers were also invited to visit Robben Island in a similar intention of helping them see for themselves how injustice was experienced for much of the black population in South Africa, and it helped explain at some extent why South Africa is the nation that it is today.

Presentations delivered in this context constitute elements of a work in progress. They are partial results of the research carried out in the framework of the project by the various participants.

We present hereafter a presentation of the workshop, summarizing participants' interventions and discussions.

### **REPORTS ON THE INTERVENTIONS:**

Philippe-Joseph SALAZAR

#### **Title of the intervention:**

*Perpetrators, amnesty and forgiveness in South-Africa*

#### **Report on the intervention:**

Professor Salazar made a historical presentation meant to introduce the Romanian audience to structural elements and key events of the recent South-African political, social and juridical experiences. The structure, the function and the work of the *Truth and Reconciliation Committee* were synthetically depicted on the subject of its constitutive grounds and its achievements; a series of statistics were evoked as an illustration. The foremost intention of this intervention was that of addressing the topic of reconciliation considered to be a distinguishing characteristic for the South-African post-apartheid politics. Notions such as perpetrators, forgiveness, amnesty were furthermore explained by the speaker. Professor Salazar was also the one to suggest in July the projection of the South-African movie *Forgiveness* as a possible basis for a comparative approach of apartheid and communist injustice related experiences, and of post-apartheid and post-communist collective memory and perceptions of what is right, both involved in the decision making process concerning the construction of the new reconciled nation, in one case, and of democracy in the other. The concept of a *non judicial justice* was formulated in order to account for the South-Africa specific manner of dealing with transition from a state racism regime to a democratic reconstruction of nation and society.

Emilian CIOC

#### **Title of the intervention:**

*Critical notes on the political use of Forgiveness in relation with Justice*

#### **Report on the intervention:**

The concept of forgiveness should be first of all, the intervention argued, described and investigated in a way that could to some extent be said genealogical. One would be then brought to take into consideration the theological dimension sealing the concept and the related plural practices and traditions. Lack of clear description of the heterogeneous significance of the concept and its emergence horizons would mean to increase the concept's ambiguity and vulnerability.

A series of Jacques Derrida's writings allow for a careful analysis of these levels joined together in the notion of forgiveness. *Faith and knowledge* and *Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* are such writings which, among other things, introduce and elaborate the

concept of “mondialatinisation” (“mondialatinization”, “globalatinisation”). By way of this “concept” he forges, the French philosopher reflects on the globalization of Christian and Latin paradigms, concepts and practices, forgiveness included. That is to say \_\_\_ one should take into consideration the limits – and the violence – inseparable from this “export” of Christian-Latin schemes applied to non European political, religious, juridical experiences. Even more fundamentally, referring to forgiveness constitutively he introduces a complete heteronomy in relation to political calculation.

We then tried to argue that – which is Derrida’s position also – it would be more accurate and definitively more cautious to refer to amnesty rather than forgiveness when it comes to politics and law. This means that amnesty is a political and juridical procedure serving strategic and tactic interest (national reconciliation) while forgiveness calls to a totally different dimension, to an impossible possibility.

For the post-communist Romanian regimes, reconciliation – the political leaders claimed and the public largely followed – meant finding the truth by unmasking the crimes of communism or even its criminal inherent nature. The post-communist Romanian regimes hesitated between amnesty and condemnation as a solution to the reconciliation social issue. The solution was finally a virtual and ambiguous one ignoring the social claim for justice and serving political-electoral purposes: the formal condemnation of a political regime. Not amnesty, not forgiveness, but a kind of unpronounced withdrawal of the case.

Furthermore, the public discourse tried to endorse the idea that finding the truth is dangerous to society in terms of its cohesion, of its unity. According to this position, a certain maturity of the society was needed in order to manage the truth, the whole truth.

This directs us to take into account the post-communist perception of justice. Communist programmatic definition of justice insisted on its egalitarian dimension. In this perspective, social justice without equality is simply impossible. The fall of communism was in the same time the social and political devaluation of the very idea of equality. The new liberal imperatives related to market economy and individual economical initiative founded on concurrence has seemed to deprive equality of any legitimacy. One could than easily see why, to some extent, the idea of social justice shared the same destiny. The true name of justice is from now on inequality, in the sense of economic difference. Justice has in this new context only one possible meaning: jurisdiction, the right as stated in court. Nevertheless, public perception started very early to be aware of the insufficiency of this kind of justice. Unfairness, injustice, inequity started to resurface in the critical public discourse this time not in relation with the unjust recent past, but with the deceiving present. The exclusively judicial sense of justice came under suspicion. Suspicion on present accompanies the concern for the future. And this calls for a renewed critical reflection: on past, on justice and on the present.

Ștefan MAFTEI

**Title of the intervention:**

*Truth with Forgiveness? – "The Testimonies of Suffering.  
A history that one doesn't learn about at school"*

**Report on the intervention:**

The intervention focused on the well-known Romanian TV documentary “The Testimonies of Suffering” (*Memorialul durerii*), created by the TV producer Lucia Hossu Longin during 1991-2007. The documentary accurately registers countless statements of victims (and sometimes even of the perpetrators) of Romanian Communist regime from 1946 to 1989.

The purpose of the intervention was to analyze statements from the interviews taken to victims of the Romanian Communist regime which addressed, in various forms, the issue of “forgiveness” or the explicit desire of the victims for the “truth-finding”, considering that the subject of the “rediscovery” through the remembering of the victims’ sufferings is always related to matters such as “truth-finding”, “seeking justice” or even with the possibility of achieving reconciliation between the victims and the perpetrators.

The post-apartheid South Africa offers to contemporary Romanians an interesting model of political reconciliation from the traumas and sufferings of the totalitarian rule. South African reconciliation was based on the idea that there can be no truth without the possibility of forgiveness, although “forgiveness” is a very special concept and it should not be confused with “blank amnesty”. The initial architect of what has been named “South African reconciliation” has been Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a world-renowned celebrity, owner of the Nobel Peace Prize, which he received in 1984 for his exemplary struggle against the oppression of the apartheid regime. The TRC process and the TRC itself (*Truth and Reconciliation Commission*) was, probably, his greatest achievement as a spiritual leader of his country.

The process of “remembering”, “truth-finding” and “justice-seeking”, as participatory strategies of dealing with the traumas of the past, have always been enacted during post-traumatic periods related to states where different political regimes have practiced various forms of segregation and oppression which have been politically, racially or ethnically motivated. That is why, in the end, our analysis considered that the South-African and the Romanian political situations are compatible.

Ruvimbo GOREDEMA

**Title of the intervention:**

*Notions of Justice for Women in Post Apartheid South Africa*

**Report on the intervention:**

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995 functioned as a historic bridge that meant to bring healing from the torments of the past to a new democratic dispensation. Offered on the plate by the new government was reconciliation, understanding, re-dignifying and the unifying of a divided nation. This process was meant

for both victims and perpetrators to come to an understanding in order to build a better South Africa. This paper seeks to explore the limitations and challenges faced in the new South Africa after this historical process particularly for women who were actively involved in the struggle as fighters and how their authority and life experience has changed in the new South Africa both in positive and negative ways. Through the telling of ‘truth’ whether social truths or personal truths the community was meant to be healed, bringing to the forefront the notion of *Ubuntu* a concept that aimed for communion of the society, where the off loading of an individual's burden ultimately was the off loading of a burden on the rest of the community. From the report of the TRC many women contributed to this process as victims who sought to redress the past. Yet, the injustices still occur regardless of the fact that the TRC was a process that aimed to minimise the continued oppression of victims. This paper aims to explore these injustices which are interpreted mainly as social economic injustices and a lack of policy reformation particularly for women who during apartheid had to struggle against racial, sexual, and economic oppression and are currently still victims of the same prejudices. Further more this paper will also argue that some women who are in authority engender the same practices of discrimination even though they are now in a position of authority.

Lorin GHIMAN

**Title of the intervention:**

*The (post)communist condition: theoretical foundation vs. belief*

**Report on the intervention:**

The last year saw two editorial appearances that may look at least surprising in the context of the Romanian paradigm of understanding (Romanian) communism. Both “*Iluzia Anticomunismului*” (The Anti-Communist Illusion) (Cartier, Chișinău, 2008) and “*Genealogii ale postcomunismului*” (Genealogies of Post-Communism) (Idea, Cluj, 2009) make us clear that the field of the different interpretations of the communism still is one of the most important domains used to confront and validate much deeper theoretical perspectives.

Leaving aside the whole rhetorical gesticulation that the two volumes bring across, the paper critically assesses the solidity of some philosophical options visible in some of the most important articles published in the two books in discussion. Special attention is to be given to the way in which concepts like modernity, present, change, the political, revolution and utopia are used in relation with the (post)communist context. One could find that although these concepts typically suffer from “functional unsteadiness” that can be spotted, it seems though that they tend to obtain a sort of attachment from the part of the authors that can be hard to explain.

Ciprian MIHALI

**Title of the intervention:**

*Loi, norme et autorité dans la construction de l'État de droit postcommuniste*

**Report on the intervention:**

La construction de l'État de droit à la chute du communisme passe par un bouleversement radical du régime de la loi, par une profusion inouïe des normes et également par une redistribution des figures et des pratiques de l'autorité. Mais toutes ces modifications ne vont pas sans provoquer des tensions et des conflits non seulement dans la nouvelle structuration des pouvoirs et des institutions étatiques, mais aussi dans les recompositions du lien social et des modèles individuels adoptés surtout par les jeunes générations. Comment s'établissent les nouveaux rapports entre la loi et la norme dans l'État de droit postcommuniste ? Quels sont les mécanismes sociaux, médiatiques et politiques qui proposent ou imposent les nouvelles figures de l'autorité ? Comment les pratiques de l'autorité modifient-elles le rapport entre la loi et la norme ?

Ana ENACHE

**Title of the intervention:**

*Images from communism: the New Man*

**Report on the intervention:**

When we think of the Communist Era the first image that pops into our mind, from an artistic point of view, is one of a hardworking man or woman. The drawing depicts either a plant or a field filled with workers and the picture never lacks dignity and happiness. Everything concerning arts had to be about the happiness brought about by The Party and its Leader. The display of joy was something required of the people, as a proof of their total adherence to the communist ideology. Whether we're thinking of painting, music, literature, poetry, one thing is for certain: they were all tinged with ideological symbols and their value was set only by this criterion: the more the socialist fight was depicted in grand images, the more they would be appreciated by the leaders of the time. And most importantly, they would get published. During those times there was an institution of censorship that belonged to the State, and every piece of art, book, mass-media material, propagandistic material had to go through its very distrustful committee. This committee would allow them to get to the public or they would stop them, their measure of judging consisting in a very limited and subjective view, mainly a political view.

The socialist materialism was not just the basis of an ideology; it was supposed to be the complex endeavor that would bring about a *New Man*, an improved man. Where, then, does this art stand in the History of Art and were we not too quick to dismiss it as void of value? We followed Boris Groys' argumentation about the universal phenomenon of communist art and try to link its parts to the particular situation of Romania.

Adrian COSTACHE

**Title of the intervention:**

*On the Different Meanings of “Post-“ in Post-communism*

**Report on the intervention:**

The presentation took its cue Jean François Lyotard’s classical analysis of the concept of “post-“ and dealt with the possible meaning of the label “post-communism” used in the Romanian context as a generic denominator for the historical times after the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s regime in 1989. By subjecting to a critical analysis the discursive strategies whereby the Romanian communist regime has been publicly condemned that author contends that, inasmuch as every “post-“ time presupposes a working-through (in the psychoanalytical sense) of the ‘ante’, the use of the label post-communist for our times is deprived of legitimacy.

Laura ILINESCU

**Title of the intervention:**

*What is that makes authority traditional?*

**Report on the intervention:**

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the mechanism of the traditional authority by reporting it at the Romanian political evolution that followed the events of December 1989. More precisely, we intend to identify the consequences, but also the reasons that determined the authority to become a strong political category, functional, operational and precise during a period of serious political convulsions, of economical and juridical confusions. Our intention is to clarify the way that the practices, the symbols of the traditional authority have influenced or strongly determined the foundation of the post-communist state of rule’s institutions and to explain the way that these categories had articulate the inefficiency of the democratic political exercise. We also try to mark the place of the traditional authority in the tendencies of the radicalization of the political discourse and action, and to explain why the Romanians still feel more attracted by the symbols such as the national cohesion and the authority, by ignoring this way the benefits of a pluralist and democratically regime, why they tend to consider the authoritarian institutions (such as the army or the church) to be more representative for saving the welfare of the nation, why they consider that the state must keep the ancient’s regime manners to organize, coordinate and control.