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Migration of foreign students in Romania. The case of Cluj-Napoca

Adrian-Cosmin Iușan *

Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to talk about the most common form of migration towards Romania: migration of foreign students. Thus, in this article we intend to realize a quick analysis of what constitutes this type of migration, which is the impact it has had on our country, the way in which foreign students relate to their status, the reasons that pushed them to approach the Romanian universities, but especially to capture how they have adapted to the new conditions.

Keyword: migration, student, foreign, impact, reason.

MIGRATION WAS FROM ancient times one of the defining characteristics of human beings, whether we are talking about a period of several thousand years, or the current one. One of the forms of migration, considered to be one of the most dynamic at the present time (Shen 2008: 147), which has not aroused particular interest in Romania is that of foreign students who come to study in our country.

Related to the definition of that term we should mention, as in most of the cases when it is addressed one way or another migration, there is no universally accepted definition. Even in these circumstances there is a common point of most definitions, namely that it involves to move and study for a certain amount of time in a university of other space than from that residence.

From our point of view there are at least three reasons why such analysis is one necessary. Firstly, there is a topical subject. Clearly when we talk of date we relate to western historiography. We do not include Romania because it is still in a process of adaptation and connection. This might be seen from the fact that, for example, has not yet appeared much historical work about student life in this country.

Thus, although there are studies and papers addressing the issue of foreign students they are dealing more with quantitative aspect. Secondly, we believe that an important reason is the impact that this form of migration has both on the foreign students and on

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the Romanian society. Last but not least, such a concern would lead to a better knowledge of their situation, which would help it can to a better understanding of what it means to be a student in Romania, based on the case of Cluj-Napoca.

Young people's interest in Romanian universities is not a new one. As you well know, Romania had met during the Communist period, a significant number of students from other countries. Thus, only in the 1980s (especially in the country's main university centres: Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Timișoara, but not only) were numerous students mainly from Arab countries and some countries such as Germany and Israel (***, "Studentii străini în România" 2012). This may seem at first glance at least unexpected or paradoxical, even from many points of view but a simple look at the situation demonstrates that this situation was a logical one, which went for some political and economic considerations.

Why foreign students choose Romania?

Reasons for coming to Romania of that time were mainly two. In general, especially after 1971 when Nicolae Ceaușescu adopts a new leadership way, he lost contacts with the West and the privileged position of Romania, especially in terms of economic benefits. In these circumstances, the Communist leader's attention was directed to some countries in the Arab world, being concerned about the so-called non-aligned states, considering that Romania only would won from this approach (Osia 2015: 24). Given that the relationships become very good with a number of states such as Syria or Iran, young people from these countries come to study in Romania, especially since the regime was similar to that in their own country. Of course, they didn't have a privileged position, what means that they were supervised by the Securitate (***, "Administrația locală supraveghea studenții străini", 2007), especially because the problem of terrorism (Deletant 1998: 301). A second reason relates to the fact that many of the young people who came here were from families who migrated from Romania at some point (mostly Jews, Germans). Many of them were more than glad with the prospect of studying in the country where their family used to live at some point (***, "Studentii străini în România" 2012).

After 1990, as expected, things begin to change with regard to the areas of origin of the students. If, as I said, until the revolution, in particular, young people were of Arab descent, now we see a multiplication of countries that "send" student in different cities of our country. Thus, although the first remain overrepresented (in particular from Tunisia) we start to meet students from South America, Asia (especially China and Japan), Israel, and the West (in particular from France, Italy, Spain and Greece) (***, "Studentii tunisieni, cei mai numeroși în universitățile din România, 2015).

One reason is the policy of the European Union but also various non-governmental organizations from the West and from the country, which worked very hard after the falling of communism regime (1989). Even if it became full member of EU in 2007, Romania had begun negotiations since the early years of following the events of December 1989. This is an explanation why our country becomes a point of interest for students, in particular by the fact that foreigners are becoming more informed about it through various programs but also by the policy of European Union which is encouraging, through specific policies, since the 1980s, the mobility of students and the right to study in a different space, other than that of the country of origin (Guruz 2011: 2010).

Although it may seem surprising the number of foreign students in Romania has experienced a sinuous evolution. For instance, in 1981, there were registered 19.962 (Nicolescu, 2010: 28) of foreign students. In 2014 there were 17.000 (***, "Taxele si condițiile de cazare mai bune au atras in Romania 17.000 de studenți străini) and currently it is said to be approximately 25.000 (***, "Numărul studenților români e în scădere. Crește cel al studenților străini, 2015). This situation shows that we are witnessing an increase regarding the number of students from other countries.

Please note that the above figures do not represent the number of those who graduate a Romanian university. In fact, especially after the introduction of the Erasmus programme and other similar to it, the number of those who come to study for more than 1 year has fallen, so most of those who come here, are staying just for periods of between 1-12 months (Dwyer, 2010: 151).

Linked to the reasons that pushed them to choose Romania between so many countries there are various and, in most cases, they are multiple. The reason most often stated by students is the school fees, well below the amount that would be required to pay in most European countries. In this sense, F. A. C. from Chile, a Polytechnic student, is a typical case. Coming to Cluj-Napoca in 2014, he chose the city because the fees he has to pay are very low compared even to those from his own country. He said that he has applied at several universities at the same time in countries like Hungary and the Netherlands. Even though he was accepted by more of them and their offer was tempting, however, the one from Cluj-Napoca convinced him the most financially. And he does not regret the decision (Interview with F. A. C. in 30.11.2015).

From the information provided by the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, we can see that a foreign student pays, on average, somewhere around 4000 euros (depending on the specialization and courses that the student has the right to choose) (Document taxă pentru anul universitar 2014-2015). Although the amount is apparently very high for a country as Romania is, we have to keep in mind that fees in the U.S. can reach thousands of dollars and in the United Kingdom they can be somewhere 9.000-10.000

pounds, available for example, in University of Cambridge' case (***, „Tuition fees”). In addition to this, the sum can be higher because of the ordinary expenses, which in some cases can be around 12,000 pounds (***, „How Much Does it Cost to Study in the UK?”, 2012) so that only those with a good financial situation can choose a university from a country they really want. With such a sum, it's not surprising the number of foreign students increases visibly.

The biggest taxes in our country are those charged by medical universities, where the amount per one year can be 5000 euros. Even in such conditions, the number of people that come to these institutions is very high. In fact, medical school is on the first place among foreign student's preferences. For example, only in Cluj-Napoca, in December 2014 were enrolled approximately 2.200 students from 64 countries (***, „Facultatea de Medicină din Cluj, luată cu asalt de studenții străini, 2014).

A second reason is the cultural nature. In other words, there are students who choose Cluj-Napoca because they feel attracted by cultural dimension of Transylvanian. Let us not forget that the city is one typical of Transylvania, being a synthesis of Romanian, Hungarian and Saxon heritage. This situation also contributes to good fame they enjoy the area north of the Carpathians and especially myths assigned to it but also because it is known as a student town. In fact, in 2015, Cluj-Napoca was the European youth capital, being chosen in the final from a list including Ivanovo, Vilnius, Varna and other candidates.

Very interesting is the student's perception of the city as soon as the first time they walk in. F.A.C. remained deeply impressed by it though he believed that all the countries and the city are the same. He saw it as a beautiful city, different from the Santiago (the capital of his country). The city seems warmer and the student life is completely different (Interview with F.A.C. in 30.11.2015). An example in this case is the one of a Columbian. He felt an attraction to Romania and to Cluj-Napoca and he came here even though its parents did not liked the idea. It seems that in the end they agreed but because their lack of money they told him they could not help him very much. They agreed to pay the ticket but from that point he had to deal with the situation, so he had numerous difficulties when he got in Romania (Interview with C.B. in 7.01.2016).

One reason is the influence coming from others, for example, from those who have studied here. One such example is G.C. He is from republic of Moldova but later he also received Romanian citizenship. From discussions with him we can observe that he and many others from Bessarabia chose Cluj-Napoca because he got many suggestions to do it. Many of those had studied here and they told him that the universities are very good (in any case, better than in Moldova) and the student life is amazing. Moreover, he got good impression even from those who had not studied here. G.C. said that many of

his teachers, especially those from the human sciences, encourages the youth to choose Cluj-Napoca, and in particular the Babeș-Bolyai University (Interview with C.C. in 6.01.2016).

S.M. from Moldova has chosen Romania as a result of the family's situation but more especially the of his sister. When he was considering going to college, her sister was in Cluj-Napoca, studying there. At her suggestions and also to be closer to her, S.M. chose to go in the same town. He had to possibility to choose Iași, which is near to Moldova but it was “too close to the country and I hate Bucharest”. Also, he didn't want to go to Iași because the fact that there are too many students from Moldova (Interview with S.M. in 10.01.2016).

It should be noted that in the case of those from Bessarabia (another name from republic of Moldova), the situation is a special one. The reasons are usually different. As you could see, there is considerable influence from parents, teachers or other young people who had contact with the environment of the city. But there are reasons regarding the benefits of studying in our country. G.C. confessed that you can get very easy the Romanian citizenship (unless, of course, you have it already) (Interview with C.C. in 6.01.2016). Then, you receive here a diploma which is recognized “beyond” (term used to call the West). Not less true is the fact that they use Romania as a way to get to the West. The same student said that that most of students from Moldova want to go to the West after graduating. In fact, only a few decide to remain here and an extremely small number consider that the best way is to return to Moldova (Interview with C.C. in 6.01.2016).

The problems of foreign students

Nothing can prepare you for what follows especially if you sweep up the steps towards a country and a culture. Usually, it is very different from that of the country you come from. Many of students ask themselves how different can be Romania comparative to Germany, France or other European countries. Often this is the first question students have when choosing Romania. And yet, many of them have a genuine cultural shock. The language, the way of being of the people, the school and its claims, dorm life, all of this become an interesting... experience.

The most reported problem is the one of language. Normally, almost none of them had any previous contact with Romanian language, except perhaps those with Latin origins. As expected, many of them leave with a presumption that everyone here know to speak English, French, German and/or Spanish. It is interesting that usually their

expectations are met which means that young Romanians know, in their great majority, a language of the international movement.

Of course, there are exceptions, for example many of employee from national institution. Also, the foreigners must learn Romanian language, a very hard thing for most them. This becomes even more difficult if your native language has not a Latin origin and usually it has not. This does not matter because all the students have to learn the Romanian language and this is a rule regulated by the universities structures. They organize Romanian courses, both at the level of courses within the faculty, as well as at the level of specialized structures (embedded within the Babeș-Bolyai University). We can mention the Alpha Centre from Cluj-Napoca or Lingua Centre. The first one offers Romanian-language as a foreign language courses (from beginner) in three levels, preparation for the Alpha test (it is a language test) and consulting services, while the second one has Romanian language courses for foreigners on three level, as well as summer courses in Romanian language (http://www.ubbcluj.ro/ro/structura/unitati/alpha_lingua).

Despite such courses foreigners do not enjoy attending to them. F.A.C. confessed that it is very difficult for him because, in general, the fact that the courses are exclusively in Romanian and rarely did the classes have English explanations. If these courses fail to arouse the curiosity of the students, they usually drop them because most of foreigners say to themselves that they will go home, so they don't really need to learn Romanian. Of course, it varies from case to case. A. F. A. took contact with Romanian language long before he got here. Being very interested in the Romanian history, he understood that Romanian language is a fundamental element and without it the process to approach its history could be almost impossible. In doing so he decided that after graduation from Chile he want to apply at the Faculty of history of Cluj-Napoca, which he did ([Interview with F.A.C. in 30.11.2015](#)).

The distance from home is also a difficulty aspect that the students must handle with. If for those who come from neighbouring countries this is not a major problem (with small exceptions) or a one to taken into account, another is the situation with those coming from outside Europe. T. H. is a student from Tunisia. He believes that for these students, this is the most difficult problem to deal with. When asked about how often he goes home, he replied that only after the graduation, which means that he has never been there for 3 years, and he will not go there until 2 years from now on. After losing a part of his family, he was forced to work in difficult condition in order to study (he was for a while a truck driver). T. H. still wants to return to his country from time to time. His chance is that there is internet and so he manages to talk almost daily with his family, even if the time zone used to create them many unpleasant things ([Interview with H.T. in 6.01.2016](#)).

S.M. confessed the only problem he had was not the distance from home (he has to go just somewhere around 12 hours by train) but that, like most of the students, whether we speak of strangers or not, he spend only a short time at home. He goes a few times there (2-3 times per year), especially in the holidays ([Interview with S.M. in 10.01.2016](#)). C.C. argues that, on the contrary, he doesn't have a problem with it especially since a part of his family is working abroad. But he goes home too when he can ([Interview with C.C. in 6.01.2016](#)).

Clearly, as you can see there are solutions. One of them is to meet with their others from their country under various organizational structures. In this sense, an illustrative example is that of the Bessarabia Group Initiative (G.I.B.) with branches in all major universities centre in the country. This is a student non-profit organization, established in 2006 at the initiative of students from Bessarabia. The declared goal of G.I.B. is to help the students from Moldova to fit into Romanian society (<http://www.gibcluj.ro/scurta-descriere.html>).

One of the major achievements of this organization is the *Bessarabian Accent* magazine, which covers various topics of interest. The success of the organization can be seen in the fact it organizes the annual "Bassarabia" festival, event that enjoys a great success, conducted in collaboration with various structures such as the League of Students from Romania or the University Babeș-Bolyai (<http://www.gibcluj.ro/scurta-descriere.html>).

The second meeting is that in the modern means of socialization. The most used is Facebook. One such example is that students from South America who live in Cluj-Napoca have created an on-line group. Within it they not only socialize but they also post important announcements for other members of the group ([Interview with F.A.C. in 30.11.2015](#)). Beyond these things, these become relevant for that because the group keeps the members in touch with each and it realize new connections between the people from various countries.

Church plays an important role and it can be a place of refuge. Cluj-Napoca it is an interesting case because many of Christian denomination have at least one church. You can also find places of worship for Muslims and Jews. It becomes important because those who attend the church keep a connection with their compatriots and the church becomes a place for support, especially because of its transnational characteristic. In this way, the home sick syndrome can be reduced substantially.

Accommodating is one that gives more headaches for young people studying abroad. It lies more in understanding the lifestyle of those who live in the space and to fight their preconceptions about otherness. ([Kelbrat 2014: 60](#)). From conversations with young foreigners, most of them confirmed that there have been hit by such a situation. H.T. is a Muslim. He said he had no problem. H.T. can free exercise of his religion and he was nev-

er labelled as “terrorist” or other offensive names. He says that the only conflict (verbal) was one had with other foreign students (Interview with H.T. in 6.01.2016).

Bureaucracy is an issue unpleasant for most of the student and it can be a long and tedious experience (Nakireru 2000: 23). Of course, Romania doesn't make an exception. C.G. believes that, at least for him, this is the most onerous task he must carry it year after year (Interview with C.C. in 6.01.2016). In other words, you have to go periodically to the various institutions of the Romanian State or country of origin and to presents lots and lots of papers. Clearly, it is necessary for reasons related to security but many consider that it should be simplified because many of the requirements addressed could be removed without too much trouble. The most important suggestion that the institutions should use more the internet (Interview with A.A.C. in 15.01.2015) and in this way students will be able to resolve many of his obligations only with their computer.

Student impact on society

The impact of foreign students on the Romanian society is one which in our opinion cannot be classified in terms such as “large” or “small” or other similar terms. Although less studied (most of them are articles of newspapers), we can affirm that this impact is one present, visible and active.

The wave of foreigners brings many benefits. The most important of these can be that fact of increasing the visibility of Romanian schools, growing the quality of education, diversifying a favourable price/quality ratio (Nicolescu, 2010: 28) and others. This are presented despite the many issues that our country failed to exceed in terms of education (see the problem of numerous problems such as education reforms).

Impact can be seen by the heritage they left here. Let us not forget that universities receive a great economic contribution from or due to them. Furthermore, they also contribute to the city's economy because as students, they spend large sums of money. From discussions with those interviewed much of them told my they have a very active life in terms of “going out” (Interview with C.C. in 6.01.2016), but also in other spaces such as those of a cultural or artistic interest. As expected, most of them go out with students from their own country or with a similar cultural or religious identity, although there are exceptions. F.A.C. says that goes in town very often. Usually, he is accompanied by other South Americans. The main reason is represented by the language barriers between Romanian and them. He noticed that many of the foreign students prefer to group together by nationality (Interview with F.A.C. in 30.11.2015).

After a period of exploration they come into contact and with Romanians but also

with those of other countries. The first they interact with are their faculty or fellow classmates. Since that time, except for the situations of conflict which may arise, it starts a genuine cultural exchange, in the elements of music, books and other such items. Clearly this situation is beneficial for both sides especially that they brought to the discussion topics and new realities. The most important is removal of certain misconception that exists. For example, the same student told me that, in general, Romanians say about South Americans that are very cheerful, good dancers, all the time put on fun but this is partially true. He mentioned the drugs problems or the aspect of the unsafety on the streets (Interview with F.A.C. in 30.11.2015).

Process visible above concerns influence exerted from and to foreign students. In the same category we can mention various events that they initiate or they participate to. We think here of festivals, magazines, and other like this.

Unfortunately, we believe that this impact in the ways that we've featured (but also under the other) it is closely related (with little exception) to way in which the institutions of the State and the school create a friendly space to develop. In other words, a special attention should be given to how to spend the amounts coming from tuition fees from foreign money. In our opinion, a part from it should be used in investments area and to increase the quality of our education system.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the subject of foreign students should be one of great interest in Romanian society. Far from being parsed properly and satisfactorily, the importance of this topic lies in the very understanding of one of the most active and most impactful social structures in our country: the foreign students. Understanding them can make us see how society can evolve to become competitive with those from Western Europe. Foreign students were and are a fundamental part of national education system. They come in large number but it may increase if suitable measures are taken. Let us hope that this will happen.

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Politics and History in Emanuel Ringelblum's War Diaries. Emanuel Ringelblum between the Two World Wars

Victoria Nizan *

Introduction

Emanuel Ringelblum is mainly remembered for the archive he established in the Warsaw ghetto, *Oyneg Shabes*¹. However, it was his outstanding activities prior to the war that enabled him to evolve into a prominent and influential historian and prepared him for the huge task of documentation that he had carried out during WWII.

The world in which Ringelblum operated and developed his unique observation skills and analysis capabilities was turbulent, in transition, from the traditional to the modern. Ringelblum, who was himself secular as well as a communist, was also a dedicated Jew devoted to the Jewish culture and language (Yiddish). This apparent contradiction prevented him from becoming a member of the Polish communist party, but he was a member of another form of Marxist group – one that was Zionist as well as communist: Left Poalei Zion, LPZ (the left workers of Zion).

LPZ suited Ringelblum not only because of their Marxist approach to the present, but also as for them, the relationship between politics and history was evident: politics was a human activity on behalf of a certain group, activities that were the result of conclusions derived and inspired by historical research conducted by the parties involved and

¹ Oynewg Shabes is transliteration for the Yiddish pronunciation. The term entered the Yiddish language from Hebrew and the spelling of the term in Yiddish is phonetic. It means Shabbat (Saturday) delight – the best about Shabbat. In this paper, I will use the Hebrew transliteration: Oneg Shabbat.

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designed to help them.

In Poland of the first half of the 20th century, history was a necessity as the political system was democratic. This implied that it was no longer acceptable to reject Jews for a religious pretext in this new political arena, whereas Jewish history was indeed a pretext for rejecting the Jewish entity and failing to recognize it as Polish. According to Poles, history “proved” that the Jews have been a threat to Polish society (Kassow 2007: 50, 74).

The above allegations contributed to the accelerating approaches among Jews to research their own history. (Kassow 2007: 51-52) Furthermore, for Ringelblum and others, history and its research were the causes of the development of an alternative Jewish identity that replaced religion as well as strengthening the national identity on a historic basis. Thanks to Ringelblum and his colleagues, Jewish history became a common interest that was practiced everywhere and not necessarily at universities.

This paper is intended to describe Ringelblum's work in the years that preceded WWII. These years have consolidated Ringelblum's approach that history was strongly linked to politics. As this was his personal conviction, Ringelblum was very active in both fields: history and politics. Researching what Ringelblum was engaged in prior to the war reveals his preconceived approach to dealing with what has been inflicted on the Jewish population by the Germans. In other words, when Ringelblum begins to create the archive, his point of departure is that history and politics are linked and history, that is, what is happening in the ghetto is influenced by politics.

Ringelblum was an active member of a Zionist-Marxist party (LPZ), a history researcher at the Pioneering Jewish Research Institute (YIVO), a history teacher at Yehudiya (a private secondary school for girls), and in 1932 he began working for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, JDC. These extremely dedicated and meaningful accomplishments had prepared Ringelblum's for the unprecedented challenges he had to face during WWII and were the perfect background experience needed for the establishment of *Oneg Shabbat*, the archive that treasures under its wings everything and anything in writing that was going on in the Warsaw ghetto and sometimes outside the ghetto.

A Brief Account of Ringelblum's Life

Emanuel Ringelblum was a historian, pedagogue and social activist. He was born on November 1900 in Buczacz, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (now Ukraine), where he grew up till the beginning of WWI. As soon as the war broke out, his family fled the city and ended up in Nowy Sącz, Poland.

When Ringelblum was still living in Nowy Sącz, he joined the Poalei Zion movement, but when they split in 1920, he became a member of its left wing. In the same year Ringelblum moved to Warsaw and applied to the medicine faculty which rejected him by the

numerous clausus.² Eventually he was accepted to the faculty of history at the Warsaw University and in 1927, Ringelblum was awarded a doctorate in philosophy after completing his dissertation entitled “Jews of Warsaw from its Earliest History until 1527”³

Even before completing his doctoral thesis, in 1925, Ringelblum joined YIVO and became the head of its historical section. (Kassow 2007: 81) In 1928, Ringelblum received a diploma asserting his training as a teacher and for several years, he taught history at the Yehudiya Jewish secondary school for girls. In 1932, Ringelblum started working also at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). During the 30s he published two books: his doctoral dissertation in 1932 and a monograph, *Jews in the Kościuszko Uprising*, which was published in Yiddish in 1937 and in Polish in 1938.

In October 1938, the director of the JDC, Yits ak Giterman, sent Ringelblum to Zbąszyń, to assist Jews of Polish origin who were expelled from Germany but were forbidden to enter Poland. They were held on the border in a camp in the town of Zbąszyń in horrible conditions. In addition to assisting the refugees, Ringelblum has applied there the YIVO methodology of research, namely, collecting firsthand accounts of the events and the difficulties encountered by those refugees. (Kassow 2007: 102)

When WWII broke out, Ringelblum, who was incarcerated in the Warsaw ghetto like all other Jews, kept on with his social welfare work along with establishing an archive which was to gather all the information about the occurrences of the war. The archive which was called *Oneg Shabbat* is what Ringelblum is mostly remembered for, and it is this archive that has enabled the world to become familiar with the atrocities of life in the Warsaw ghetto as well as with other events of the war recorded in the archive.

Ringelblum was captured and deported to the camp of Travniki in April 1943, but three months later, the Bermans, his longtime friends, managed to smuggle him out and bring him back to Warsaw. He joined his wife and son and about 30 other Jews in a hiding at an orangery belonging to Mieczysław Wolski. During his stay in hiding he continued to write history and it is then that he has written *Writings in Hiding*, a series of monographs about life in the ghetto, among which his essay *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War* has become the most famous. Once a week, Ringelblum would meet with the Bermans⁴ and hand over to them his weekly produce.

On March 7th, 1944 the hide out was discovered. All its inmates were taken to the Pa-wiak prison. All inmates, including Ringelblum himself, his son Uri (aged 12) and wife

2 A restriction in the admission of Jews to some university departments.

3 Viewed January 13 2017 from http://www.YIVOencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Ringelblum_Emanuel.

4 Adolf Avraham and his wife Batya would gather written accounts from Jews in hiding and they are now part of the Adolf Avraham Berman Collection. Viewed January 13 2017 from <http://www.gfn.org.il/eng/?CategoryID=3496&ArticleID=3418&SearchParam=berman+collection>.

Judith (Józia), were executed at the beginning of March (probably on the 10th) 1944.⁵

Politics

Polish Jewish Politics between the Two World War

Traditionally, ideological disputes of all shades, including within the religious community, were debated, argued etc. through the Jewish press which was published by different interest groups. This meant that the press preceded political formation and it was the arena where political ideas were formed. (Engel 2001: 652) However, the administrative order issued by the occupying forces of Germany and Austria during WWI institutionalized trends that had already existed within the Jewish community in the 19th century, that is, the growth of a secular intelligentsia which was already very influential in the different Jewish communities and its battle to take over the leadership of the community were well underway when the Austrian-German decree was issued. (Engel 2001: 651-653)

Due to the structure of the Polish political system, Polish parties were mostly reluctant to absorb Jews into their ranks, let alone those who had claims for particularity. (Engel 2001: 655) This situation led to creating a feeling among Jews that their own representative would serve their purposes better.⁶ Another factor that increased the feeling of Jewish separatism was Polish attempts to minimize the Jewish political activity. For instance, even though the law granted the Jews with the right for political organization at the national level, in practice, the administration tried to reduce and limit this activity to the community framework. (Engel 2001: 658)

Polish Jewish society between the two world wars was split and divided from within, but it was also separated from the general society (because of the rise of anti-Semitism in Poland). (Mendelsohn 1982: 94) The inability to integrate into Polish society, and more importantly, the lack of hope for things ameliorating in that respect in the foreseeable future, turned the Zionist idea on all of its diversity to appealing. Conversely, Poles also found that the Zionist idea could be useful to them since it contained the seeds of evicting Jews outside of Poland. (Mendelsohn 1982: 94) On the other hand, accomplishing the Zionist aspirations was almost impossible, if only because of British opposition to a massive increase of the number of Jews in Palestine.

Besides, as Jewish society in Poland was split within: the left and right, religious and

⁵ Viewed January 13 2017 from <http://www.jhi.pl/en/blog/2014-03-07-last-days-of-emanuel-Ringelblum>.

⁶ However, the multiple opinions among the Polish-Jewish population had split their power thus reduced their impact in society at large.

secular, and so on, each of these groups strove to determine their own ideology in an attempt to get achievements on a number of levels while the present, namely, the impact on the situation of the Jews in Poland itself, was the most crucial. Thus, the criterion of Jewish life on a personal level and in everyday life was the most influential on a party's popularity. (Engel 2001: 661) The Left Poalei Zion, Ringelblum's party, was not among those enjoying a vast support like the Bund, which managed to fight for the Jews on a daily basis, also because its ideology focused on Jewish life in exile. (Engel 2001: 661)

Left Poalei Zion (LPZ)

Left Poalei Zion, Ringelblum's political party, was a movement of Marxist-Zionist Jewish workers founded at the turn of the 20th century after the Bund⁷ rejected Zionism in 1901. As mentioned before, Ringelblum joined the party when he was still a youth living in Nowy Sącz. However, when the party split in 1920, Ringelblum chose to become a member of its left wing, which looked up to the leadership of communist Moscow.

Ringelblum's conscious choice to join Left Poalei Zion indicates his personal priorities, namely, the fact that the party doctrine set the boundaries of socialism by determining that preserving the Jewish people preceded the aspiration of establishing a socialist society. In this respect Left Palei Zion was perfect for Ringelblum as he was not required to make a distinction between loyalty to the party and its political inclination since an important part of the political perception of this party was tolerating the Jewish masses regardless of their political preferences. (Kassow 2007: 23)

Left Poalei Zion was not the only party that made the connection between history and politics. This correlation characterized most of the political parties and social movements of the European Jewish organizations, starting with Zionism and even orthodox religious movements whose priority commitment was maintaining the historical concept, to be exact, the inseparable link between the ahistorical and the existence of the Jewish people, or the eternal existence of the people of Israel regardless of time and history. Thus, Ringelblum's concept, which formulated years before the war and whose core principles were relying on history as a means for achieving goals of a political nature for the entire Jewish people, irrespective of a Jew's political view, was not unusual. (Engel 2006: 125)⁸

The Left Poalei Zion Party was a socialist and therefore a secular Jewish party that had derived its ideology from sociological theories that relied on historical research which led

⁷ The Bund was a secular Jewish socialist movement, a trade union as well as a political party. The Bund did not advocate ethnic or religious separatism, but focused on culture, not a state or a place, as the glue of Jewish nationhood which was also the reason why they rejected Zionism. Viewed January 13 2017 from <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Bundism>.

⁸ Here Engel mentions that the tradition linking history to nationalism created among Jews was influenced by such tendencies among Polish historians.

to political conclusions. This party's central conflict was determining the dose for combining socialism and activism for the sake of Palestine⁹ - until 1921 this party emphasized socialism first and foremost. (Mendelsohn 1982: 149) As of 1921, they singularize themselves by their determination to focus on two centers: Poland and Palestine which was the result of their assessment that even if there was a strong Jewish center in Palestine (Kassow 2003: 74), most of the Jews would still be living in exile.

According to the Left Poalei Zion ideology, the Jewish problem was not only political, but also economical and existential. Without a state of their own, Jews would never be able to become part of the global economic system. Therefore, immigration to Palestine was a central and integral part of the ideology of this party. Immigration had to be to Palestine because, according to them, only there could a healthy Jewish entity flourish, and only there the Jewish people would be able to go through the process of modernization. (Kassow 2007: 71)

Largely, the party has failed in its attempt to provide a practical and clear vision to the idea to settle in Palestine, which led to focusing their activity in exile, in our case, Poland. Despite its ideological complexity, the idea to insist on centering activities in Poland, provided Zionism with a good grip in the left and thus brought this idea to audiences which were reluctant to join youth movements or Zionist parties. (Kassow 2003: 74) Therefore, Left Poalei Zion had gained some influence among Jewish labor organizations and they had a network of schools and soup kitchens alongside an active youth movement (Yugnt) and a popular sporting organization. Supporters of Left Poalei Zion came from Jews living in mid-sized cities but they also had supporters in Warsaw and Lodz. (Kassow 2007: 75-76) However, since Left Poalei Zion focused their activity in Poland and were inspired by the Soviet Union, they were also victims of the Polish police. (Kassow 2007: 75-76)

In the mid-1920s, the LPZ party separated its education system from the other Yiddish oriented groups (Bund) and established its own network of schools named after Borochoy¹⁰, which emphasized providing socialist education for children alongside the establishment of a revolutionary society in Palestine. (Mendelsohn 1982: 186) These schools worked hard, not only on imparting cognitive skills, but their aim was also designing a curriculum which was intended to give Jewish children a sense of security in their Jewishness. (Frost 1998: 137)

In 1937 LPZ voted to become part of the World Jewish Zionist organization, which they had left in the 20s claiming that it was a bourgeois organization. This change was due to the difficult situation of the Jews in Germany, the Arab revolt in Palestine and the fear

of the British turning their backs on the Jews. LPZ announced that they were delaying their war against the Zionist bourgeoisie given the danger they think they all face as Jews (Kassow 2003: 74)

9 The term Palestine means the geographical and spiritual land of Israel regardless of who controls it. Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1918 and in 1921 it came under the British Mandate.

10 Borochoy was the founder of Poalei Zion.

Ringelblum and the LPZ

Ringelblum was appointed a member of the Central Committee of the organization *Yugnt*, the LPZ youth organization. It was then that he started to publish in their newspapers, one of which was in Polish and the other in Yiddish. This activity was risky as those associated with the left were subject to persecution on the part of the Polish police. (Kassow 2007: 35)

Ringelblum wrote under the pen name of Munie Heler, his mother's maiden name, numerous articles that concerned Jewish history. Obviously, his analysis was in accordance with the Marxist prism and therefore his articles focused on showing the subjective aspects of the study of history. According to him, researching and writing history so far was primarily conducted from the viewpoint of the ruling classes. In other words, Ringelblum's analysis thrived to expose the prejudice of the science of history as it ignored much of the other parts of society. It failed to appreciate their contribution as well as disregarded the point of view of those not in power. (Kassow 2007: 38)

In an article he published in *Di fraye yugnt no.3, 1925*, "*Di yidishe arbetershaft un di geshikhtsvishnshaft*", Ringelblum mentions his colleague Dr. Schiper who praised the work done by three prominent Jewish historians: Jost, Graetz and Dubnov (who was still alive and active at the time), but also criticizes their work. He claimed that indeed it was thanks to them that the Jewish population has become familiar with the history of the spiritual leadership, but according to Ringelblum, what was missing was the accounts of the majority, the Jewish masses. This, according to Ringelblum, prevented Jews from fully understanding their own past.

Additionally, according to Ringelblum, both Jost (1793-1860) and Graetz (1817-1891), who were from a German origin, treated Jews in their studies only as a religion and thrived to prove that Jews were a spiritual entity whose vocation was to spread monotheistic ideas and morality. In contrast to them, Hilary (Hillel) Nussbaum (1820-1895) and Alexander Kraushar (1842-1931), both of Polish origin and against whom Ringelblum had the severest criticism, studied Judaism from the angle of assimilated Jews. According to Ringelblum, all of these works ignored in their analysis the vast majority of the Jews on the one hand and on the other hand, they turned their back on roots, namely, Yiddish and Yiddish culture. (Kassow 2007: 39)

The cultural organization within the LPZ, the *Ovnt kursn*, was one of the most important in Poland. In 1927, Ringelblum joined a committee running the *Ovnt kursn* whose aim was providing education to the uneducated, adults as well as the young. He substituted Eizenshtat who was arrested and exiled to Russia and together with Rafael Mahler, Bela Mandelsberg and Adolf Berman organized a study curriculum that would take place in the evenings in an attempt to eradicate illiteracy. (Kassow 2007: 36)

The topics of those courses were diverse and included natural science, literature and history. Their approach to history is well manifested in the topics chosen for elaboration: impact of housing on the life of its residents, climatic effects on human societies, diet, etc. (Kassow 2007: 36) Likewise, history courses included both Jewish history as well as non-Jewish history, and were taught together as one unit. (Kassow 2007: 36) Ringelblum put a tremendous effort in teaching and supervising those courses, but he never ceased to be deeply touched by his students' devotion. All of them were working people and despite the fatigue, came to the courses and showed their gratitude to this ambitious project.

As of the mid 20s, 1926 to be exact, YIVO, the first institution erected by Jews for the study of Judaism, was established, and Ringelblum offered his services to Max Weinreich and Eliyahu Cherkover immediately. (Kassow 2007: 81) This marks a crucial event for the development of Ringelblum, not so much as a politician but certainly as a historian and a scholar. Therefore, one may say that it is almost impossible to separate Ringelblum's political activities from his career as a historian in the manner in which it developed since he established the Historical Commission at YIVO.

History

1. YIVO

While the activities of the institute can be regarded as one of the fruits of emancipation, that is, the very possibility of establishing a Jewish academic institution, its creation also reflects a rift with the concept of the "Wissenschaft des Judentums"¹¹ and a deep concern for the Jewish people which has undergone a tremendous change as a result of modernity. (Kassow 2007: 78)

The institute of YIVO (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut) was established in Vilnius in 1925. It institutionalized Dubnow's call to collect and research the historical "natural resources" of the Jewish people. The aim was to establish a scientific center for the study of Yiddish, as well as Jewish history and culture of Eastern European Jewish communities. The institute was apolitical but its establishment reflected a political concept presented before, namely, that Judaism was a religion as well as a national entity.

Despite operating as a research institute, YIVO had an embedded political agenda which was expressed by initiating groundbreaking activities in the Jewish spiritual world. They have explored areas such as Jewish history, linguistics, psychology, economics, folklore and sociology. (Sandler 2002: xiii) One form of work at YIVO that reflected its political agenda was collect-

¹¹ The scientific study of Jewish culture and religion whose departing point was the Judaism was a religion and following the emancipation, Jews should adopt their country of origin customs. Viewed January 13 2017 from https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Wissenschaft_des_Judentums.

ing and documenting history – Ringelblum, who engaged in that in Warsaw, regarded it as an appropriate political Jewish response to leaving the Jews outside of history. According to him, in order to become part of the more significant forces in the world, or alternatively be an entity whose needs are taken into consideration, not only do Jews have to learn about themselves, but it is their duty because the particularity and uniqueness of the Jews is hidden from the eyes of non-Jews.

YIVO considered itself obligated to create legitimacy for the Eastern Europe Jewry existence alongside with strengthening Jewish life. They believed in the idea of *Doikayt*, that is, the contemporary or current, and thus they constituted an alternative to Zionism and territorialism. (Sandler 2002: xiii)

For example, Weinreich, a prominent researcher at YIVO, had estimated that Jewish youth have a double problem of insecurity: the youngsters first find out that they are Jewish and therefore belong to an underprivileged group, and later, as teenagers they begin to wonder about their status in the general society and the prospects of integration. Very soon, that youth is confronted with the recognition that discrimination would prevent them from developing and integrating into society. (Sandler 2002: xxii)

One of the ways to try and make those youngsters more interested in their communities was done through competitions among teenagers who had to write an essay describing their personal life story. Such competitions were held in 1932, 1934, 1938-9, and competitors were aged 16-22. (Sandler 2002: xi) The first competition (1932) took place in the Vilnius region and 32 young people accepted the challenge. In 1934, 304 essays were submitted from various countries. In 1938, there were already 289 works submitted and the range of the writers here was much larger.

An analysis of those compositions showed how significantly East Europe changed. In post WWI world, social structure caused a deep intergenerational gap. They revealed that the gaps between generations were not so much in ideologies as much as in the parents' life experience, which was irrelevant because social structure has changed and as a result, relationships at all levels. (Sandler 2002: xiii) For instance, in inter war Europe, it was no longer evident that the younger generation followed their parents' footsteps when it concerned professions. In that respect, parents' advice and guidance that was traditionally provided to their offspring became irrelevant to the young which eventually led to the increasing sensation of isolation. (Sandler 2002: xiii)

Introducing this competition which was based on information from contemporary people and concerned their personal and intimate experiences characterized research methodology adopted at YIVO. Ringelblum, who established the Historical Commission at YIVO, used a similar research approach which would also characterize his methodology in erecting the *Oneg Shabbat Archive*.

2. YIVO and Ringelblum

Even before the establishment of YIVO, in 1923, Ringelblum, and the historian Rafael Mahler, also a member of LPZ, established the “*Yunger Historiker Krayz*” (the Young Historians Circle). At the time, it was the first and only one in Poland. (Kassow 2007: 58) This group was organized at the Warsaw University and met monthly from 1923 till the beginning of the war in 1939.

The group was engaged in the study of Jewish-historical issues whose aim was affecting the understanding of the current economic and cultural situation of the Jews in Poland. (Kassow 2009: xvii) They had about 40 regular attendants and the circle became the basis on which YIVO Historical Commission relied once it was founded. (Kassow 2009: xvii) The circle published two academic journals: *Yunger historiker* (in 1926 and 1929) and later on the paper was named *Bleter far geshikhte* (1934, 1938). (Kassow 2007: 59) When these journals were first published, they were the first to appear entirely in Yiddish, and this reflects the attitude of the group, that is, the Jews must be familiar with their own history, so publishing in Yiddish was intended to make the articles accessible to many more Jews. (Kassow 2007: 60)

Ringelblum attributed importance to the group because he felt it had militant characteristics - while the initial purpose was to study Jewish history, the results of the studies were intended to serve the struggle of Polish Jewry on a double level: the national and social. (Kassow 2007: 60) Ringelblum was one of the editors of the Society's publications, and by 1939, he had written and published in both Yiddish and Polish about 216 scholarly articles of different sorts. (Shatzky 1953)

For example, he researched the history of hygiene living habits of Jews in Poland in the 18th century, the history of Jewish book printing in Poland in the second half of the 18th century, or the role of the Jews of Poland during the Kościuszko rebellion in 1794. (Ringelblum 1937) Ringelblum also wrote short monographs about Jewish communities in Poland that were published in the *Judaica Encyclopedia* published in Berlin.

As previously mentioned, Ringelblum became part of YIVO almost from day one. It is important to note that Ringelblum and the “*Yunger Historiker Krayz*” were very important to the development of the institute as its founders, including Cherikover and Dobnow, were self-taught scholars, whereas Ringelblum and his colleagues were certified doctors. (Kassow 2007: 82) In that respect, Ringelblum and his colleagues were the backbone of the academic expertise that was so vital to the development of YIVO.

As soon as Ringelblum was accepted to YIVO and founded the Historical Commission, he decided upon the guidelines for creating a collection of firsthand accounts and established a connection with people from all over East Europe to start looking

up documents and also have ordinary Jews as well as community leaders write their own accounts. (Kassow 2007: 81) However, many times he found himself quite helpless when encountering problems concerning the destruction of community records or documents that were held by individuals. Yet, he was determined to construct the historical picture by putting together information largely based on testimonies collected from anonymous people whose voice, according to Ringelblum, was never heard until then. (Kassow 2007: 83)¹²

And indeed, Ringelblum was involved in collecting documents and account from around Poland, documenting the present and in many ways educating those he came in contact with about recording and preserving, as well as simply arousing their interest and involvement in Jewish history. Once the routine of collecting was becoming a habit, Ringelblum encouraged the locals to begin writing about histories of institutions like banks etc. (Kassow 2007: 88)

In addition, Ringelblum was frustrated by the lack of attention community leaders lent to architecture and art. In many places and for lack of awareness, old community buildings were renovated with little care or attention to their original artistic value. As a result, Ringelblum got together with other organizations to teach locals about preservation and the Commission also organized an expedition that would take pictures of old synagogues and cemeteries. (Kassow 2007: 4-5)

He also addressed the Jewish Society for Knowledge of the Land in Poland (Yidisher gezelschaft far landkentenish) and with them organized programs of tourism to Jewish sites in Poland. For him Jews needed that to be separate from the Poles as the latter showed no interest in Jewish history or archeology. This was not a flaw unique to Poland, but as Jewish sites were never really researched, Ringelblum thought that the Landkentenish meant to combine pleasure (tourism) and collecting information and sources about the sites. (Kassow 2007: 85) For example, as a result of these efforts, the chair of the Vilnius branch of the Landkentenish Society wrote a book that attempted to preserve Jewish Vilnius known in Jewish circles as "Yerusholayim de Lite" (the Jerusalem of Lithuania). In light of the war that was about to break out, the importance of such a record is invaluable – during WWII, much of Vilnius Jewry was annihilated along with its cultural treasures. Those records that were gathered before the war and managed to survive the horror have made it possible for us to reconstruct the past, as well as assess more accurately the magnitude of the destruction.

One way to make YIVO influential was establishing contact with historians at large. He put tremendous efforts in having YIVO scholars participate at the Seventh Inter-

¹² In that respect, Ringelblum's attitude towards history was communist so to speak. Apparently, this attitude to history was also encouraged in USSR.

national Congress of the Historical Science that met in Warsaw in 1933. Indeed, the participation in that conference was a great achievement, as by allowing their participation, the Congress which was state-based, acknowledged the existence of an extraterritorial nation, the Jews. (Kassow 2007: 83) Furthermore, on top of this being an outstanding accomplishment for the Jewish entity, it was also a triumph for YIVO that was an independent institute and not connected to any university. Sadly, the shift of moods in Poland made it virtually impossible for Jews to be part of the Polish delegation to the Eighth International Congress. (Kassow 2007: 84)

Welfare - The JDC or the Joint

At the end of the 1920s, Ringelblum had started an additional career at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), a major relief agency established in the USA, and which had many branches in Poland. From 1930-1938 Ringelblum was the editor of the *Folkshilf* - the journal of the CEKABE, a roof organization under whose wing were credit societies from all over Poland that received help from the JDC. In addition, Ringelblum was the head of the *landmanshaft*, a department that dealt with raising money from former Polish Jews to helping those still living in Poland.

It was at the JDC that Ringelblum got acquainted with Yitzhak Giterman, one of its directors who had a major role in developing Ringelblum's attitude towards the concept of philanthropy. Here Ringelblum has learned the difference between old school philanthropy that was essentially based on providing help, but without involving responsibility on the part of the help seeker, and Giterman's approach which was to supply self-help aimed at providing the needy with tools to overcome crisis and hopefully prevent a greater one in the future. (Kassow 2007: 90)

By 1937, the CEKABE included 870 towns. These figures show that Jews all over Poland were particularly vulnerable and needed a great deal of help. And indeed the austere situation of the Jews, instead of discouraging Ringelblum, became an incentive.

As of 1936 there was a growing number of pogroms against Jews all over Poland, like in Przytyk, Brest etc. In addition, there were more and more local initiatives of economic boycott, initiatives that were supported by the clergy and the Polish government. Therefore, the JDC stepped up to protect those who were harmed and restore the businesses hurt by lending them money. (Kassow 2007: 98)

In many ways, the work conducted by Ringelblum did not correspond to his Marxist political views as the loans were given to private people, but the work certainly corresponded to Ringelblum's very developed sense of solidarity. The fact that

those loans required responsibility on the part of the borrowers made this venture a means to strengthen the community rather than weakening it while encouraging the Jewish borrowers to get more involved in the general economy. (Kassow 2007: 99)

In 1938, Giterman put Ringelblum in charge of the *landsmanshaftn* which was designed to convince American Jews to support the shtetels.¹³ One way to encourage that help was through publishing in the newspaper *Folkshilf*. Ringelblum published accounts by ordinary Jews connected to the *kases* (free loan societies) which described in the most heart breaking manner the huge difficulties encountered by the Jewish population. (Kassow 2007: 100)

Apart from providing valuable information about the realities in Poland, these reports provided Ringelblum with insight into the amazing quality of accounts that one could get hold of from ordinary people. Furthermore, as accounts were written by all sorts of people, Ringelblum's approach that Jews constituted a class of their own regardless of their background and believes was reinforced as he witnessed how despite the division of their beliefs, they all worked together in an attempt to ameliorate the situation regardless of their political or religious convictions. (Kassow 2007: 100) Their valuable and important work stood out in comparison to what the *Kehilles*, the official institution of Jewish communities. These were largely under the influence of internal politics as well as government political preferences and therefore, almost paralyzed. (Kassow 2007: 100)

Zbaszyn

In November 1938 Giterman sent Ringelblum to the border town of Zbaszyn, where about 7,000-6,000 Jewish refugees from Germany, out of 17,000 deportees, were gathered. These people had been forced out of Germany for being considered Polish but not allowed into Poland.¹⁴ Ringelblum spent five weeks in Zbaszyn as the person in charge of the refugees. In his letter to Mahler he describes what he did once he arrived to the town:

"In the course of those five weeks we (originally Giterman, Ginzberg and I, and after ten days I and Ginzberg, that is), set up a whole township with departments for supplies, hospitalization, carpentry workshops, tailors, shoemakers, books, a legal section, a migration department and an independent post office (with 53 employees), a welfare office, a court of arbitration, an organizing committee, open and secret control services, a cleaning service, and

¹³ Shtetlach – the Yiddish word for towns with large Jewish populations, which existed in Central and Eastern Europe before the Holocaust. Shtetlach were mainly found in the areas that constituted the 19th-century Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire, the Congress Kingdom of Poland, Galicia and Romania. Viewed January 13 2017 from <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Shtetl>.

¹⁴ Deportation of Germans from Polish to Zbaszyn was a response for Polish legislation from March and October 1938 which dealt with cancellation of passports to Poles living outside of Poland. The law was aimed at the numerous Jews living in Germany and that the Polish state was afraid would return to Poland because of the Nazi regime.

a complex sanitation service, etc." (Ringelblum 1938)

The information that Ringelblum provides Mahler with indicates on the one hand, Ringelblum's organizational capabilities, as well as the chaos in camp prior to his arrival. In addition, Ringelblum's approach to welfare work stands out here as he set up the camp as an independent unit from the town that had actually housed the camp. Obviously, the experience he had gathered in Zbaszyn would become really handy when Ringelblum would have to deal with the constant flow of Jews deported from their hometowns to the Warsaw ghetto.

The event of Zbaszyn exposed Ringelblum to the harsh realities of five years of Nazism in Germany, but it also revealed and exposed the Polish government antisemitism.

In the same letter to Mahler, Ringelblum concludes: "... Zbaszyn has become a symbol for the defenselessness of the Jews of Poland. Jews were humiliated to the level of lepers, to citizens of the third class, and as a result we are all visited by terrible tragedy. Zbaszyn was a heavy moral blow against the Jewish population of Poland. And it is for this reason that all the threads lead from the Jewish masses to Zbaszyn and to the Jews who suffer there..." (Ringelblum 1938). These events helped Ringelblum grasp the depth of the abyss between Jews and Poles. Their refusal to help the Jewish deportees not only struck the unfortunate refugees, but sent a message to the entire Polish Jewry that Poles regarded them as a separate entity from Polish society. (Ringelblum 1994: 306)

The encounter with the Jewish refugees in Zbaszyn was very traumatic for Ringelblum, feelings that he had put in writing in 1939 and on the spot. (Shatzky 1953) However, it is well known that when Ringelblum was in that town, he collected a huge amount of documents from the Jews who had been expelled from their homes (the material was lost) and also accounts from those refugees. Evidence of his intention to deal with gathering materials about the deportation to Zbaszyn can be found in a letter written by Ringelblum to Rafael Mahler dated December 6th, 1938, asking him to collect materials from the Jewish press and English newspapers. (Ringelblum 1938)

Conclusion or the Beginning

The events of Zbaszyn were followed by Kristallnacht or the Night of Broken Glass, on November 9th-10th, 1938. The alleged reason for that pogrom was an act of revenge carried out by Herschel Grynszpan whose parents were among the deportees to Zbaszyn. Grynszpan assassinated a Nazi German diplomat, Ernst vom Rath, in Paris and immediately afterwards the organized pogrom took place.

On September 1st, 1939, WWII broke out. This very brief account of what Emmanuel

Ringelblum was involved in prior to the war shows that he was well equipped in talent, experience and above all, motivation to react according to the events.

Ringelblum could have fled Poland in time. In August 1939 he was in the 25th Zionist Congress in Geneva and could have stayed behind. Even on the first days of the war he could have left like many others did, but he remained in Warsaw. Ringelblum took part in the Civil Defense Organization and also continued to work for the Joint relentlessly. On September 28th, 1939, Warsaw was occupied by Germany.

Although the brutality of the Nazis was immediately felt, things remained relatively normal in Warsaw until October 1940, when Jews were ordered to move to the ghetto within two weeks. This decree found Ringelblum ready for action in every respect. His organizational skills enabled him to erect a whole system of self-help and he established the *Oyeg Shabbat* archive in the ghetto. At first he worked alone, but when things became more and more complicated, he established a network of people to help. Ringelblum's background at YIVO determined how the archive would be organized. In other words, the same methods used in YIVO were implemented at the archive as well. (Kassow 2007: 147; Huberband 1969: 310).

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The Druze in Israel: A Question of Identity

Jihan Farhoud *

Historical perspective

The Druze religion, which developed in the Middle East early 11th century, is a relatively new one. The origin of the word “Druze” is “Almwhahidun” which refers to Monotheists who believe in the uniqueness and centrality of God. The name Druze was conferred to those believers after the missionary Nashtkin Al-Daraze’ who spread the principles of the Druze religion in the South of Lebanon, and who attempted to displace the head of the missionary system, Hamzah ibn Ali, assassinated in 1019.(Salach 1981: 65)

The number of Druze in the world amounts to around million. The majority are in the Middle East. In Syria the Druze constitutes 3% of the population, in Lebanon 7.3% and in Israel 1.5%.

The Druze religion was spread in the years 1017-1043. In the year 1021, following the disappearance of the Caliph Fatmi al-Hakim, the founder of the doctrine, the caliphs that roll in Egypt started a cruel and oppressive crusade against the Druze, claiming that their doctrine was far too heterodox. The Druze had to hide their belief and started to use the “Altaqiya” which means defense against Islam and external display of Islam, and on the other hand, hidden loyalty to the principles of the new religion.

Avoiding the persecution, the Druze disappeared from Egypt and moved on to Haleb Mountains in Syria, Lebanon Mountains and Galilee mountains in what is now

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Israel. The persecution of the Druze lasted until 1043, then the gates of missionary activities had been closed, and since then the Druze religion has not acquired new believers. The Druze continued to conceal true religion under “Altaqiya”. Druze who were exposed to persecutions, fled to the mountains and secretly concealed their religious manuscripts. (Salach 1989)

The historical literature written about the Druze does not provide a specific answer to the question of Druze identity. The reason for this may be found in the aims and methods of such researches. Most of them are interested in the religious aspect of the subject. Even when they refer to the ethnic or national aspect, this is done with the aim of understanding the principles of religion and the extreme heterodoxy towards Islam. (Elsheich 1978: 10)

Druze identity is the commonly shared basis for all Druze wherever they may be living. This identity is composed of characteristics that are not conditional upon being a religious or secular person. The first characteristic is biological, and is connected with the identity of the parents. A Druze is the son of a Druze father and a Druze mother. The second characteristic is mental and emotional affiliation. Druze identity consists of a feeling of identity and a profound sense of belonging with the Druze heritage, history, and tradition. Members of the Druze community feel closely connected with their prophets, holy books, Druze values and with their history. Every Druze individual identifies with the special symbols of the community and especially with the Druze flag, while at the same time preserving his citizen loyalty to the state in which he lives. (Fallach 2000)

It is important to note that this collective identity is essential for the solidarity of the entire society especially in times of crisis and when there is no clear agreement about the borderlines of national identity. The Druze community in the Middle East has passed through difficult periods of upheavals and persecutions that forced its members to protect their existence through the principle of “Taqiya”. And even until today, there is no clear and agreed definition of the components of Druze national identity.

The problems of identity emerge mainly in two situations, in a pluralistic society such as the United States, the target state for migrants, and in a state where a minority can exist in it. The State of Israel fulfills these two criteria as a pluralistic country which absorbs immigrants from various places and in which the population also includes minorities. The Druze in the State of Israel are a minority, most of which lives within two concentric circles – the Israeli and the Druze. In the State of Israel, the Druze desire integration and equality in the general society together with the preservation of their religion and tradition.

Objective Factors in Shaping the “Druze National Identity”

a. The Ethnic Origins of the Druze

In the past, the Druze were under the protection of the Islamic people, and in the 11th century they appeared on the map of history as possessors of a religion and a philosophy which differed from Islam, and they lived as an independent monotheistic community. Dana believes that “the ethnic origins of the Druze are obscure, but over the years they have declared their distinction from Islam, and today they do not regard themselves as Muslims”. (Nissim 2003). Ever since their disengagement from Islam the community was forced to sacrifice their blood and to display supreme courage, resourcefulness and sagacity in order to preserve their physical existence and their unique identity, (Fallach 2000) and also to uphold their religious and cultural particularity in the face of a dominant majority group. (Barron 1967) They were compelled, as a group of people who had physical and cultural characteristics that differed from those living with them in the same society, to keep themselves as a group apart. Despite the fact that between the 13th and 15th centuries, the Druze were integrated with the Muslims in the Middle East, about a million Druze living today in this region constitute a discriminated minority in every state where they reside. (Rimer 2007: 29-39)

Philip Hitti, an American historian of Lebanese origin, refers to the Druze by saying that he wondered about the fate of this community and was amazed to see how it had succeeded to exist for all that time as a separate religious minority, and even regarded this as one of the marvels of history. (Hitti 1966: 1-4) Since the Druze were a minority and because of opposition to a new religion, they were persecuted by rulers and other peoples. Many of them were wiped out or were forced to abandon their faith and become assimilated into other societies, mainly among the Sunni Muslims who were the majority in most of the areas in the Middle East where the Druze were living.

Even when the Druze were a dominant power in the Middle East with regard to their control over their areas, a Druze territorial entity was not established in the sense of a national Druze state. Falach thinks that the situation in which there was no desire for a national state was the result of historical circumstances in the various periods, and notes another reason which derives from the Druze nature, which is one of faith that prefers the kingdom of heaven above the kingdom on earth. (Fallach 2000) In my opinion, the third reason is the lack of an important characteristic for nationalism, which is language. The Druze in the Middle East speak Arabic. Yet, although the Druze do not have a national particularity, they have succeeded in preserving

their distinctive way of life and to survive in face of all the persecution they have suffered during the thousand years of their existence through the loyalty to their identity and culture, and by their ability to ensure their place within every society in which they lived. It is important to note that the well-experienced Druze community creates its own independence, and activates a kind of “cultural communication”, in accordance with the sociologist Max Weber who dealt with this issue.

The strength of solidarity in the Druze community, the religious ethos of brotherhood, is one of the noblest values in the Druze heritage. The Druze in general, and especially in the State of Israel, maintain a consciousness of group commitment as they have since the period preceding the establishment of the state, which means loyalty to the traditional values of the communal unity.(Habermas 1984: 3)

During the Ottoman period and the period of the British Mandate, the Druze did not manage to achieve a status comparable to that of the Muslims, Christians and Jews, that is to say, the status of a community of a defined religion, with legislative institutions and courts for civil matters, and they were considered as Muslims in all respects. (Blanc 1952)

With the ascendancy of the Arab national movement, activists in this movement declared that the Druze were Arabs and that they were pure Arab in origin. In contrast to this, many of the Druze in the State of Israel, especially community activists, believe that the Druze are not Arabs. The State of Israel recognizes them as a separate nation, and in their identity cards they are registered as Druze nationals.(Fallach 2000)

b. Travelers and historians as a Main Source for the Origin of the Druze

The first attempt to investigate the origin of the Druze was made by European travelers and research scholars who raised various suppositions. Some thought that the Druze were Arabs of pure Arab stock, while others did not accept this approach. At the beginning the Druze did not give sufficient consideration to the question of their origins, because the government of the state in which they were living treated them as a religious minority without consideration of their ethnic origins. Elsheich (a researcher of the Druze community and a citizen of Israel) thought that the attitude of the government to the religious character and not to the ethnic origin derived from the fact that the Druze did not express doubt of their affiliation with the Arab nation, although they gave this matter little importance and were not conscious of being Arab as were their Muslim neighbors.(Elsheich 1989) Firro distinguished three approaches in the study of Druze origins: The approach based on the Druze religion and the origins of the religious founders and propagators; the approach based on

the study of ancient tribal migrations in the Middle East; and the approach based on anthropometric research that examined skeletons of ancient peoples in Lebanon. (Firro 1992)

“The question of the ethnic affiliation of the Druze is not clear, and historical research has no final and absolute answer in this matter”.(Firro 1982: 44) The most important source in which the Druze are mentioned are the books of travelers who toured Palestine during the Ottoman period. The first among them were two Englishmen, Pococke and Maundrell, who assumed that the Druze were the remnants of the army of French crusaders who had been under the command of De Dreux, and who had disappeared in the Chouf Mountains of Lebanon.(Betts 1988) The 18th century English scholar, Adler, attributed the Druze to the tribe of Derusai, one of the ancient tribes of Midian.(Hitti 1966:14-17; Elsheich 1978:145-149)

Another source of information was received 780 years ago from the Jewish traveler, Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela (Binyamin Metudela). Tudela passed through Lebanon in or around 1165, was one of the first European writers to refer to the Druze by name who learn of them probably from Christian and Jews. he writes: ‘And near to them, and to the inhabitants of Sidon-about ten miles distant-is a nation which fights the Sidonia’s; this is the nation called Durzian. They dwell on high mountains and in rock hollows.’ (Ben-Zvi 1931-32: 436-451) He was impressed by the Druze, by their fighting spirit and the courage of their hearts, and as he describes them in his writings: “They are light of foot in running over the mountains and hills and no one can fight against them”. (Metolda 1907:11)

At the beginning of its existence, the Druze community was subject to harsh persecutions that cause them to migrate from Egypt and to settle in South Lebanon, after which many of them moved to the area of Mount Lebanon. In the 18th century, after the civil war in Lebanon, a large migration of the Druze began to area around the Hauran plateau in the southwestern part of Syria, which was given the name of “the Druze mountain” (Jabal al-Druze).

The persecutions and life in hostile surroundings that were the fate of the Druze ever since the founding of their religion, caused its conversion into a secret religion and the settling of the Druze in distant and isolated places in order to ensure their safety and continued existence. For the duration of a thousand years the Druze managed to preserve their independence, their religion and their heritage, in spite of their dispersal amongst other peoples.

Some of the Arab historians and researchers in the modern period believe that the Druze living today in Israel, Syria and Lebanon were here before they received the Druze religion, (Talea’ 1967:13) that they were Arabs of pure Arab origin, and

are said to be the descendants of the twelve Arab tribes that migrated to Syria before the Islamic period. (Areslan 1931:455; Abu Izzeddin 1984:1-14) That is to say, the Druze and the other inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon belong to the Brachycephalic race and to the Semitic race that spread to Syria in the wake of the migration northwards of Arab tribes from the Arabian Peninsula. From the time of the development of Islam and at a later stage, they went and settled in Lebanon. (Zaher- Eddin 1994: 78) Some of these tribes reached the area of Safed in the northern part of the State of Israel, and the Carmel Mountains in the coastal region of the state.

The historian Hitti claimed that the Druze are a mixture of Persian, Kurd and Arab races. (Hitti 1966:14) Hitti, in his research, came to the conclusion that the Arab origin is connected with the "Taqiya" principle. The Druze reject his theory, but considered themselves as Arabs during the Mameluke period and the Ottoman period, when a non-Arab dynasty ruled Greater Syria. Some researchers claimed that the Druze were descendants of ethnic groups that had once lived in the Middle East: Arabs, Persians, Indians and Kurds. (Abu Husin 1982; Talea' 1973; Takialdin 1963: 4)

ElSheich adds that there is a feeling of Arab identity because of the language and the culture, but not of nationality, destiny and policy, while with Israel there is identity and identification of destiny and policy. The attitude of the government in the State of Israel towards the Druze, ever since its establishment, was influenced mainly by their religious affiliation and less by their ethnic origin. The reason for this may have been because the Druze did not doubt their affiliation with the Arab nation, but in practice they regarded this as of less importance and they did not have the Arab consciousness which their Muslim neighbors had. (Elsheich 1989: 15-16)

Researchers and anthropologists, who did not find any connection between the origin of the Druze and their Arab neighbors, held the opinion that Druze identity was the result of the policy of Israeli governments. The identity of the Druze in Israel is not static, but has been fashioned and refashioned as a result of establishment policy which acted almost systematically to prevent the development of a collective identity beyond the particular communal identity which has characterized similar religious communities in the Middle East before the emergence of modern national states. (Firro 1998:57-61)

The identity of the Druze in the State of Israel can be viewed in three directions. The first direction is the one that adopted the position of the nationalist Druze in Syrian and Lebanon and regarded the Druze as Arabs and as an Islamic sect. The second direction began at the end of the 1960s and is represented by young educated Druze who come from families that had been associated with Israelis even before 1948, and who refused and are opposed to any connection of the Druze to Arabs

and Muslims. The third direction is represented by integration activists who do not see any contradiction in their being Arabs and also being loyal to the State of Israel. (Firro 1999: 209)

An argument is being conducted among the researchers, and in the community itself, over the exact group identity of the Druze: Are they a religious sect within Islam, a religious community within the Arab nation, or a nation in itself?

In every country in which the Druze live today, they are participants in all that characterizes non-religious Arab culture such as language, customs and secular traditions. The Druze in Lebanon and Syria regard themselves, and are regarded by those surrounding them, as Lebanese and Syrians, which means they are Arab nationals. The question is therefore, whether the Druze in Israel are Arabs. As we shall see below, the answer in Druze society itself is a controversial one.

The State of Israel took an official stance on this question when, in 1962, they began to register the term "Druze" instead of "Arab" in the nationality section of the identity card. Among the Druze, not much protest was aroused against their definition as a nation, although there were voices in opposition, especially among the thin layer of young educated Druze. (Firro 1999: 168-179)

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Romanian foreign policy options in the first years after the fall of communism

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THE GRADUAL FALL of the communist system in East-Central Europe placed the nations from this area in an entirely new situation, not only from political and socio-economic point of view, but also from their foreign policy and security system of alliances.

In fact, Central and South-Eastern Europe are less geographical, but more geopolitical entities. Since the collapse of Soviet Union, Western Europe became the manager of the two regions: Central and South-Eastern Europe, which have maintained their strategic importance, but for different reasons. For example, Central Europe during the post - Cold War decade was a safe area, enjoying the protection of the European Union and NATO. By contrast, South-Eastern Europe was a rough area, exporting to the West the instabilities. But over the years, both regions became an area of strategic interest for the Western European and the North Atlantic institutions. The first step towards one Euro-Atlantic policy in Central and South-Eastern Europe consisted defining the regions and the Western interests in these regions. (Duna 2000: 201-202) And, without any doubt, in East -Central Europe, the events which took place after 1989 have brought transformations all over Europe. In this situation, the Euro-Atlantic states, organizations and institutions had several alternatives regarding this region, such as: cooperation, integration or to do nothing.

In the same time, the strategy of each states in East-Central -Europe had its particularities, that has been influenced by the new reality which appeared on the continent after the collapse of the Soviet Union and also by the war in Yugoslavia. First of all it

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appeared in order to face the multiple pressures of the insecurity in the zone. And, of course, any government, in any country, has the minimal obligation to safeguard the territorial integrity of the state. Then, some of the states in the East-Central-Europe zone asked and believed to be better protected by the Western defensive structure and others are outside any security structure in Europe. On the other hand, the concept of security includes not only the military component, but also others which the states from this region were not only pressing in the same way as the first one, but they are in a total interdependence. This was because the process of democratization and rebuilding of the institutional and economic structures in former communist European countries was correlated with the process of building up the system of European security and first, Central –East-Europe has adhered to the formula of a new European system of security, initiated by CSCE. (Pușcaș 1998: 44-45)

Looking on the whole at what happened in the first years after the removal of the communist regime, security constituted the common option and desire for every former European communist country, but for Romania, the security problem is extremely acute and pressing in a condition in which after 1989, all the states from East-Central-Europe have decided to become part of the Western system. In fact, the greatest challenge facing Romania soon after 1989 was exit from its isolation, imposed at the beginning of the communist regime by the Soviet Union and then, in the 80's, by Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Within the context of change for Romania was necessary to find a strategy to follow in this complex situation. Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary might be an exception because until 1985 they had been part of a Western strategy with reference to "Central Europe", which also regarded the former East Germany. The events of 1989-1990 have introduced new and unexpected components in the development of that strategy especially since the necessitated immediate solutions. (Pușcaș 1996: 123).

From the point of view of international relations, the disappearance of the USSR determined Romania to orient its efforts towards its acceptance by the emerging Western structures. Romania started the European Union accession process later than its neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe although its relations with the European Community and Romania's geostrategic location within the Carpathian - Danube - Black Sea zone, in the proximity of energy sources in the Caspian Sea and the Middle East, are advantages that could have recommended the country as an attractive candidate. Despite frequent official declarations expressing the country's intention and determination to reintegrate with Europe after the 50-year communist rule, Romania did not follow an aggressive and sustained policy to join the regional organization in the early 1990's. After establishing diplomatic relations with the European Community in

1990, Romania signed a Trade and Cooperation Agreement in 1991, and, in 1993, it concluded the Europe Association Agreement that would become the legal framework for the implementation of the accession process. (Marine 2011: 88)

The agreement imposed on the associated countries that they adapt their economic system to the European demands in view of achieving structural compatibility. The admittance of Romania into the community of states aspiring to integrate into the European structures determined the government to pay even greater attention to democratic procedures and to human rights. A first step in this sense was Romania's signing of some essential agreements, like the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and of the additional protocols. Then, the government rethought its policy towards minorities. In order to underline the adherence of Bucharest to European values, Romania was, on 11 May 1995, the first country to present the Council of Europe with the instruments for the ratification of the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Even if these steps were made in order to redeem the country's and governments' public image, the adoption of these documents by Romania was of major importance. (Popa 2006: 684)

It was only in June 22, 1995, that the Romanian government submitted Romania's application for European Union accession. One day earlier, on June 21, 1995, the leaders of the Romanian political parties had signed the Snagov Declaration, expressing their parties' commitment to support the country's accession process. In the same year, the Department for European Integration was established, and the government launched a National Program for Legislative Harmonization aimed at the transition towards the *acquis communautaire*. The openings lost steam when the European Commission noted in the conclusion of the Regular Country Report for 1997 that it is uncertain whether Romania will be in a position to assume the obligations of membership in the medium term. The Commission urged Romania to take action to improve the shortcomings identified in the report and suggested that adherence to the European Union pre-accession strategy will prepare Romania better to meet the obligations of membership. (Marine 2011: 89)

In Romania, EU accession negotiations were conducted in parallel with an accelerated process by which Romania will aim to become a NATO member.

It is already well known that in the first two years after 1989, Romanian external policy was marked by the presence in the East of a still strong Soviet Union, but also by the complex evolution of international relations following the Gulf War, etc. Thus, in the midst of the process of disintegration of the Soviet Union, on 22 March 1991, the Treaty of collaboration, neighbourhood and friendship between the USSR and Romania was signed in Moscow. It was to be the last such treaty signed by the Soviet Union,

and it was in fact a sign of respect made by the new leaders of Romania towards the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, as in December 1989 the Soviets had been the first to recognize the National Salvation Front as the legitimate authority in Romania. (Popa 2006: 682)

But after the disappearance of the Soviet Union (December 1991), and the abolishment of the Warsaw Pact (which left Romania and the other countries of Eastern Europe outside any security zone) it became clear that the West would dominate Eastern Europe (at least as long as Russia will be in a situation of confusion in terms of political and economic level), Romanian leader Ion Iliescu has changed its external strategy. In that conditions, NATO began to be considered a viable option by an increasing number of personalities of Romanian politics, diplomacy and military structures. And, once in 1994 NATO expansion to the East appeared possible, Ion Iliescu himself has initiated negotiations with the North Atlantic Alliance. (Gallagher 2010: 147) Also, other political leaders from Bucharest have argued that the country meets the military conditions for membership, but Romania it was refused first. In that conditions, it started a process for reforming and modernizing the Romanian army and to bring them closer to Western standards. On 14 September 1994, the Partnership for Peace between Romania and NATO was officially accepted by the North-Atlantic Council, and Bucharest joined the other states of the former Soviet bloc. Giving way to Western pressure, Romania had to make constant efforts towards regulating the relationship with its neighbours. (Popa 2006: 684-685)

On the other hand, from 1994 until 1999, NATO has been increasingly interesting by the Eastern Europe, especially from the necessity to promote a stable climate which sustain the peacekeeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia. Even more, after the terrorist attacks on New York on 11 September 2001, the strategic importance of countries such as Romania, which represent important stopover for the Middle East area has increased, especially in view of Americans. (Gallagher 2010: 148-155)

Looking back at the first years after the fall of communism, we can see that Romania embraced firmly the European Union accession project in the late 1990s, and the accession efforts to join the European Union and NATO took more a decisive course after 1998 when a center-right government showed its determination to break away from policies of previous administrations that had successively followed the events of December 1989. The proposed transformations of the Romanian society in its transition to a democratic state based on the rule of law and towards a free market economy followed an evolutionary path. It was the imperative obligation to adhere to the European Union *acquis communautaire* and to meet the NATO membership requirements that pressured Romania to undergo a significant reorganization of its institutions. (Marine 2011: 88-89)

In the late '90, Romania becoming more realistic regarding the need to fulfil the conditions for its integration into Western security and political structure. Throughout this long process, the Romanian authorities have not neglected the policy of proximity, especially the relations with Republic of Moldova which, in that new context of EU and NATO enlargement, had a special importance for diplomacy from Bucharest. Also, Romania started a successful series of initiatives in the field of cooperation at the Danube Region and at the Black Sea region, and promoted regional cooperation, security, extension of democracy and cultural diplomacy.

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