

Summary of the Thesis

“The Jewish Community of Medias in the History and the Memory of the 20th Century”

Key-words: Jewish History, 20th Century, Memory, Medias, 20th Century, Identity, World War I, World War II, Holocaust, Zionism

This main purpose of this thesis was an approach that went from general towards the particular for analyzing the chosen topic. In the first part of it the general definition of history was attempted so that it would open a perspective on the history of the Jews, a general perspective that marked the most important reference points which would eventually be found within the history of the Jews in Romania, then within their history in Transylvania and then in the remaining fragments belonging to the Jewish Community in Medias. We tried to define a chronological position for the thesis, with a general outlook on the 20th century so that we would define both the timespan that was to be analyzed and its inherent specificities. When describing this century we considered the changes that were brought by this century and the particular aspects that would be encountered in the second and third part of the thesis. In order to define this background we considered describing the European context as a territory, as a cultural and political background inasmuch as these would have accommodated the movements and the ideological changes that were to be analyzed.

The second part opens with the previously announced premises for the question in debate, with the methodological approach of other scholars referring to neighboring areas or who, at least, offer some relevant concepts that might be used when analyzing this particular period. We tried to define the particular aspects of these methodologies that belonged to the most recent studies.

After having defined these reference points we considered the definition of the historical and geographical background for the Jews in Medias. We noticed details from travellers' notes, considerations belonging to the authorities of that time and other particularities of the area. Eventually, we tried to find as many sourced as possible that referred to the history of the Jews in the context of the Habsburg Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, changes, differences

between communities and the ideological complexities that were entailed by the latter. We tried not to overlook the cultural aspects, the linguistic ones, particularities which defined the community until the beginning of the 20th century.

The lack of direct evidence and historical sources determined a further general analysis of the great changes caused by the Great Union at the beginning of the 20th century. We tried to follow the conflicts, their origins since we considered them as being a constant for the history of the Jews as a national minority. We considered giving a particular importance to the intellectual movement, the reforms so that we would define the image of an interwar Transylvania. We used information from the press in Medias, which contained details referring to the image of the Jews here, some views which the other members of the town's people had on this community, and also the Jews' image on themselves.

Further along, we tried to define the view from Bucharest, mostly about the region and the politic here. Afterwards, we tried to define the Jewish condition within the national and regional context. The means by which this image was described was a comparison between the Transylvanian historiography and the one from the Romanian Old Kingdom; we noted the similarities and the differences, mostly when dealing with Zionism.

After having defined these questions, and having pointed the particularities regarding the other national minorities, we advanced to analyze the anti-Semitic laws that were entailed by the ideologies that were previously presented. The study went further to analyze the Communist regime, its changes and identity crises. We insisted on the Zionist movement to pinpoint its role in the re-definition of the Jewish identity and then the State's fluctuant position towards it. We offered an aftermath of World War II, the Holocaust and the pressures throughout the communist period. We considered the emigration stages, its causes and the opinions evolving around them. When analyzing this, we analyzed the sources and the press in Medias, which offer a local and unique perspective on these chances that get to be quite relevant both for the history of the Jews in Post War Southern Transylvania and the Communist discourse for this area.

The third part of the thesis is mostly dedicated to the memory, its role for history in general and its role in the reconstruction of the Jewish history here. The arguments were mostly build from the analysis of the interviews, interviews with people living here or who got to

observe the community and its impact at some point of its existence. We did not overlook the analysis of some documents, the majority of them being brand new. All of these will be used to define a lived history: survivors from the Holocaust, some of the Jews who were enrolled in hard labor systems and other example of Jewish life inside the Communist regime.

In order to offer a perspective on the spiritual life of the Jews in Medias we considered analyzing the cultural and spiritual manifestations: the synagogue, the hallmark of the Jewish life here and the books that were found here. We indexed and analyzed the contents and origins of these books and we considered giving a particular importance to the Jewish Prayer books found here.

The topic and the methods for approaching it were altogether an exercise for analyzing a Jewish history and life throughout such a conflicted and critical century. The interviews offer a genuine perspective on the history, bringing about a lived history, a history of a community that was mostly ignored and ascribed to the general context of the regional politics. Given the fact that the whole thesis attempts to elucidate as much as it tries to particularize, the entire process had to be undoubtedly objective.

The study itself would be entirely fulfilled within a greater analysis of the region. The Southern part of Transylvania still maintains Saxon particularities which speak of a unique world that influenced the Jewish life here. Ingrained in the town life or facing the changing regimes, the Jewish Community of Medias could be considered an example of survival. Their history here meant action, faith, assimilation, continuity, etc. The entire process of analyzing the history of the Jews here resulted in a privilege, but mostly an immutable responsibility; the history that seemed to emerge from the fragments found here seemed to be as permeable as the Jewish community in its entirety.