

# Short Version of Country Reports



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## Summary of Policy Recommendations

### EU level:

- Acknowledge the symbolic capital of cultural opposition as a way of countering new forms of authoritarianism
- Provide more funding for the humanities
- Make EU funding more easily accessible (language, administrative requirements)
- Create a systematic effort to preserve the heritage of dissent
- Facilitate Europe-wide (meta) standards
- Enhance sharing of DH and data infrastructure capacities

### National level:

- Provide more funding and more stable funding
- Provide a framework and a strategy for long-term preservation
- Refrain from imposing interpretations
- Strengthen the autonomy of cultural and academic institutions
- Guarantee access to (archival) documents
- Decentralize funding
- Foster trust among private stakeholders

### Regional / local level:

- Recognize the value of the collections
- Facilitate collaboration
- Support individual initiatives
- Promote Citizen science

### Collection level:

- More public-private cooperation
- Better networking and exchange
- Exchange best practices
- Professionalization
- Increase visibility, reach out, use the Internet, be interactive

## The Baltic Countries

*by Vladas Sirutavičius, Saulius Grybkauskas*

Not enough attention is being given today to the preservation of the legacy of the anti-Soviet cultural opposition, and the understanding of its significance in society in the Baltic States. This is partly because of the historical memory policies in these states, which accentuate Soviet repressions, such as the armed partisan struggle against Soviet policy, and the murders and deportations conducted by USSR secret security organs, or the open anti-Soviet dissident movement. For this reason, the more sophisticated cultural opposition that operated in a grey area, in terms of negotiating with the government on interpretations of the cultural heritage, language and history, is harder to notice, while the documentation of its activities has practically been left to private initiatives. State archive and museum systems are oriented towards documents with special collection status, such as the protection of documents in Lithuania that belonged to the Communist Party, Soviet security and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as the search for and archiving of anti-Soviet armed resistance sources, which national legislation has delegated to the Lithuanian Special Archives. Other state archives in the country administer and store documents already existing in their lists of collections, without looking for new documents. That is why it should be the concern of private individuals, cultural opposition figures and their heirs, to see to the survival of their collections, ensuring accessibility for researchers and the public. The description of these collections during the course of this project has shown that collections of personal papers, which are usually in disorder and not inventorised, contain volumes of interesting material on the cultural opposition.

Secondly, the dominant historical discourse is focused on the Soviet government's terror, and the resistance towards the regime by armed groups. This narrative overshadows the activities of the cultural opposition. This approach by government institutions, and the still-prevailing totalitarian approach in the Baltic States, devalues the cultural opposition, and raises questions as to its importance. This can be said especially about the attempts to put activists in three categories: those who collaborated, those who adapted, and those who fought against the system. This kind of categorisation does not allow for an adequate understanding of the period, as life simply does not fit into three boxes or categories; it was rather more varied. In addition, it would be misleading to take a person's whole life and attribute just one model of behaviour, as life is undeniably varied: at different times, one could have made mistakes, opposed, or lived with the system.

## Bulgaria

*by Ulf Brunnbauer, Anelia Kassabova*

The collections described in the COURAGE registry (and those not yet described or not even known) are an impressive manifestation of the creativity and sheer will of individuals and groups to document and explore the socialist past, despite difficult framework conditions. The main challenge is obviously the lack of funds – not only a result of generally small public budgets but also of a lack of state interest in this specific area. Even with a little more support, much could be achieved. Hence, the list of recommendations must start with the most fundamental issue: money.

But there are also other areas of possible improvement, not all of which directly depend on increased funding (although this would certainly help, too). Our research has shown, for example, that there is little systematic networking between the collections and the responsible institutions, although people running these initiatives very often know each other (historians in Bulgaria are a community still widely based on personal connections). Better networking would not only help to circulate useful information and support processes of learning from each other but could also serve lobbying purposes. Not least, it might help to create firm collaboration that could be used for project applications, especially with respect to international (European) funding. Active networking would also increase visibility and, thus, help to identify previously unknown collections. Owners of materials worth preserving might be encouraged to either pass them on to a pertinent institution or even to build their own collection, if they see that there are experts to whom they can turn for advice. A recognizable community of individuals and groups, documenting the heritage of cultural socialism and organizing joint efforts, could stimulate new initiatives.

Given the limited financial means of many collections, dissemination is usually a problem. Some of them, such as the Central State Archives, Comdos and the Institute for the Study of the Recent Past, can afford to publish their own book series. The latter institute may be highlighted as an example of best practice for combining academic research and publishing with events that target academic and non-academic audiences, and initiate public debates. It is also a successful fundraiser. What seems to be lacking, though, is systematic communication between relevant collections and the research community. A possible model for this can be seen in the activities of the Blagoevgrad-based “Balkan Society for Autobiography Research and Social Communication” which created its own collection mainly out of oral history interviews (described as “Everyday Life in Southwest Bulgaria in Socialism” in COURAGE). It has developed novel research and dissemination activities on the basis of these interviews. The Society has continually found funds, many of them project-based, for conducting oral history research and

preserving its results, and for carrying out research based on these materials. It is a good example, therefore, of the productive aspect of combining collection and research.

## Croatia and Slovenia

*By Josip Mihaljević, Teodora Shek Brnardić*

Unlike many other East European societies, Slovenia and, even more so, Croatia are still struggling to come to terms with the consequences of the legacy of the undemocratic regimes and systems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the public sphere, there are different interpretations of the past, which are not always rooted in the scholarly research and discussions. Bearing in mind this context, it is evident that researchers face many difficulties when dealing with the period of socialism in Croatia. The attitude towards communism and the socialist past is contingent upon the political divisions between the political left and right, and therefore scholarly research into the period is often neglected due to a lack of understanding by the creators of politics. This lack of consensus and political will has institutional consequences: there is no separate public institution that studies the socialist past (an institute or museum). Therefore, when discussing the efforts to preserve and study the memory of dissent and opposition, we must consider the consequences of political indifference, such as a general lack of funding. Moreover, the cultural legacy of dissent did not get much public attention. Although some valuable contributions had been made so far, a comprehensive study of dissent as a phenomenon both in Slovenian and in Croatian historiography is still lacking.

Some of the reasons for this unfortunate situation are methodological (theoretical), namely the lack of a proper definition of dissent and a paradigm that would help in researching the phenomenon of dissent and cultural opposition. The other important issue was access to archives, which was not completely open and free. Practice in the first two decades of Croatia's independence shows that there were severe obstacles in Croatia if one wanted to research the history of the socialist period (1945-1990). This was primarily due to the unavailability of the relevant archival material. Since it gained its independence at the beginning of the 1990s, Croatia amended its legal framework regarding access to archival materials several times. However, the latest changes are user-friendly and enable more accessibility to the archives, which was already exercised within the COURAGE project.

There are many research institutions in Croatia and Slovenia which deal with the socialist past, but there are only a few of them which deal with the socialist period exclusively, like the Centre for Cultural and Historical Research of Socialism in Pula, or the Study Centre for National Reconciliation in Ljubljana. None are dedicated to the theme of dissent and cultural opposition.

Most public collections in Slovenia and Croatia are rarely financed with direct or special funding. Collections that are held in public institutions (archives, museums, libraries) are usually financed by the state (Ministry of Culture) through the financing of institutions. Very few collections are privately funded. The same applies to the collections described in COURAGE registry – most of the public collections do not have a separate legal status, which means that they cannot apply for funding on the local, national or European level.

The Croatian COURAGE team attempted to cover most of the topics that were defined in the COURAGE project. The goal was to include those collections that will represent the most critical oppositional phenomena of the socialist era in Croatia and Slovenia. There are 54 described collections from Croatia, 11 from Slovenia and five from abroad. Most of these collections are held and operated in public institutions (60), and the state is usually their owner. A smaller number (10) is owned privately and mostly created at private initiative. The public collections described in the Registry are mostly archival funds of state institutions and associations. If we look at the type of operating organisations, 30 collections are held in archives, 10 in libraries, 9 in museums or galleries, 8 in academic institutions and 3 in NGOs. The described collections differ in size, type of operation, geographic scope, actors, users and in the themes which they cover. In the case of collections in Croatia, the topics related to the diaspora, national movements (the Croatian national movement), and state and party control are the most common. The collections in Slovenia are more diverse, and none of the themes stands out significantly, except perhaps the theme of human rights movements. In the collections that were created through the work of institutions and organisations, the history of collecting and preserving generally does not involve significant cultural-opposition stories, because in most of the cases, the law mandated the acquisition of these collections by the state archives.

The fall of communism is the most crucial event in the history of most of the collections in Croatia and Slovenia. It meant the end of an era after which people were able to begin gathering testimonies about cultural opposition and dissent. Institutions opened their doors to the public, and many individuals handed over various materials and collections to archives, museums, and research institutions. However, most of the collections described in the Registry are rarely used, even after the fall of communism. The potential of these collections has not been sufficiently exploited academically, and even less so socially. The most significant problem is the lack of funding, which is not very easy to solve. However, some actions may be taken by stakeholders that can alleviate the problem somewhat.

## Czech Republic

By Michaela Kůželová, Miroslav Michela

The collections held in the Czech Republic and described in the COURAGE online registry illustrate the various activities and background to a culture which did not follow the official state ideology. The stories behind these collections show how the specific activities and actors were interconnected at a regional and international level. It is important to note that the topic of cultural opposition in Czechoslovakia before 1989 is of international significance, and there already exist frameworks and contacts across borders (especially Czech-German and Czech-Polish cooperation). However, the “national perspective” still dominates in the Czech Republic. Narratives focused on dissent and exile became an integral part of constructing a post-socialist Czech identity. They became part of regular public commemorations, often framed within a contemporary political context.

The current Czech research which examines this phenomenon, including the popularization of material stored in Czech institutions, is highly productive and has the strong potential to attract a wider public. In addition to academic and highly analytical texts, a significant number of activist/witness outputs have been produced, such as books, exhibitions, documentary films etc. The Václav Havel Library has been very active in connecting academic discourse with former participants, along with current discussions on recent political and cultural issues concerning cultural opposition.

In general, the history of Czechoslovak dissent, democratic exile and cultural opposition is one of the main fields of interest in studying and discussing the contemporary history of Czechoslovakia. Therefore, many Czech institutions also continue to be interested in the work of Czech studies abroad. The connection of academics and their work with institutions administering the relevant collections is usually a very good means for presenting and popularizing the topic, in addition to helping to propose ways to interpret and research contemporary Czech/Czechoslovak history. The dominant historical discourse still focuses on the communist government's terror and the resistance by armed groups to the regime and the totalitarian approach, but there are also new, very influential approaches inspired mainly by Western academia.

Czech archivists and stakeholders have already made great efforts to preserve the heritage of dissent, exile and cultural opposition. In that respect, we have identified a variety of successful practices in acquisitions, communication, preservation, and popularization that have been changing over time and place. At the beginning of the 1990s, the successful collection work was predominantly connected to the personal ties of those engaged in the opposition movement. They established highly specialized, and in the case of preserving cultural opposition heritage,



very important and successful institutions such as Libri Prohibiti or the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czechoslovak (later Czech) Academy of Sciences. Others, such as Czechoslovak Documentation Centre, were already in existence abroad.

Nowadays, many non-specialized institutions have a large number of collections, one especially successful example being the archivists from the National Archives and the National Museum (where the archive of the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre is also held) and the Museum of Czech Literature. Most of the collections are stored in Prague in well-equipped, large, nationwide institutions run by the state. In these institutions we can find a huge number of personal collections, which is related to the question of trust towards the institutions and their social function.

The Stakeholders and archivists from both public and private institutions administer collections who deal with cultural opposition are usually very professional and show an enthusiastic attitude to this topic and stored artifacts. However, a significant part of this material is not officially accessible because it has not yet been processed. Despite that, the will usually exists to support researchers and they have the opportunity to access materials which have not been fully processed. In some cases, access to the collection is denied due to the protection of personal rights or permission from the heirs is requested. Moreover, copyright issues pose a great challenge following the adoption of the new EU GDPR regulation. Sometimes archives also have problems with storage capacity. Many buildings were reconstructed in the 1990s and some new buildings were also built at that time. However, many buildings are now in such a condition that costly reconstruction is required.

Institutions usually present their activities to the wider public through the media (Czech Television, Czech Radio) or through various kind of events such as exhibitions, public discussions, conferences or articles in the press. The opportunities for promotion are strengthened by collaboration between a variety of institutions. This cooperation in collecting, preserving, disseminating and analysing the topic is usually very good and can also be seen on various occasions, including mutual promotion. Institutions sometimes even share information about new acquisitions and give instructions on how to work with them.

These institutions often organize special programmes for pupils and students or children in general. Some institutions, for example the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, have developed their own educational activities based on recent trends in the methodology of history teaching. Many educational materials dealing with the topic of dissent and culture in Czechoslovakia before 1989 can be found at the <http://dejepis21.cz> website. Another very successful website is [moderni-dejiny.cz](http://moderni-dejiny.cz), run by the civic association PANT, which has received support from, among others, the European Union. These educational materials are often created by teachers or through close cooperation with other institutions, e.g. the Libri Prohibiti

library. Many educational documents for students contain primary sources – images (photos, scans) of material stored in various Czech archives and libraries. The use of these educational materials (e.g. working papers) or the digitalization of material helps to significantly raise awareness and acquire knowledge on the topic of cultural opposition in Czechoslovakia before 1989, including a better understanding of authoritarian forms of governance and the means of opposition.

The inclusion of the collections in the COURAGE registry provides great potential for increasing the national and international profile of this topic, such as the use of internet search engines, which is a very common practice nowadays, especially among the younger generation and students. Therefore, it is essential for archives and libraries not only to organize events such as exhibitions (which are often visited mainly by professionals), but also to have financial sources for broader popularization, especially on the internet. For example, the activities of the Security Services Archives are already in this direction. In addition to the preservation and extensive digitalization of archival sources, this archive is also very active in presenting such topics to a wider public.

Digitalization has received a great amount of attention in this respect, and numerous projects have been carried out to facilitate the digitalisation process of collections and other materials as it enables wider public access to these collections. The websites of the Security Services Archives, Libri Prohibiti, the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre or [vons.cz](http://vons.cz) and [scriptum.cz](http://scriptum.cz) offer a great deal of useful information. However, the adaptation and interpretation of the topic is not always attractive for the public. The “Memory of Nation” project run by the Post Bellum association is an example of a successful approach. As part of this project, short biographical stories, including links to original sources, have been published in the mainstream media.

On the other hand, there is also the question of how to attract offline visitors to a collection which cannot be digitized. One possible way of encouraging visitors to a museum is to include places in state-funded tourist schemes which would be available to state employees in the form of free vouchers to be used in designated places.

## Germany (German Democratic Republic)

*By Laura Demeter*

This report begins by providing the reader with an introduction to the context and state of the arts concerning research on cultural opposition and dissent in Germany. By framing the debates concerning the relevance of the recent past in Germany and highlighting the normative and institutional setting, the significance of the collections in addressing the preservation of the legacies of the regime from a long durée perspective is discussed.

Moreover, the report aims to provide a more thorough and broader understanding of the conditions which facilitated the preservation of the legacies associated with the GDR. Consequently, by also including dissent and opposition, the need to expand debates concerning heritage preservation and the legacies of the GDR is revealed. Moreover, the report identifies that, in addition to the discourses which addressed the significance of the past, the normative framework and institutions are to thank for creating the conditions which allowed assets testifying to dissent and opposition in the GDR to be safeguarded and preserved.

The significance for the preservation of heritage associated with opposition and dissent during the GDR is discussed based on the collections identified by COURAGE. By delivering an overview of the actors, themes, and typologies of assets, the potential of the topic to expand discourses on the material legacy of the GDR and its significance for preservation is highlighted.

Finally, this text concludes by offering recommendations on how to further proceed with such assets at local, national and European levels, focusing on both challenges and opportunities. Various solutions to improve decision-making mechanisms by focusing on the sustainability of the collections and institutions (funding, digitalisation), network and carrying capacities, and audience development with a focus on youth involvement are suggested.

With an outlook on the future, ensuring the financial sustainability of a plurality of institutions and collections ranks highest among the recommendations which this research has produced. Furthermore, supporting and promoting international exchange is a must given the transnational significance of the topic. In this sense grassroots initiatives require greater backing. Digitalisation is likewise discussed as an important tool to facilitate access to information and items, but also as a challenge proving that its implementation alone cannot be understood as a silver bullet, but that additional means to secure and access information are also required. Knowledge transfer and supporting inter-disciplinarity are essential to further ensure youth involvement as a guarantee of long term preservation for the material legacy of the GDR.

## Hungary

*By Péter Apor*

The theme of cultural opposition has not emerged as a means of framing public politics in Hungary. The cultural legacy of dissent, however, has been an object of vivid public interest since the early 1990s. Oppositional culture is largely associated in Hungary with the emerging circles of intellectual dissent in the 1980s and the semi-legal, non-conformist art produced since the 1960s. Nonetheless, groups that cultivated non-communist and critical cultures were more numerous and had existed practically since the rise of the dictatorship in the country in 1948–49. In addition to (1) intellectual dissent and (2) non-conformist art, these groups included (3) religious associations and (4) underground youth subcultures.

The infrastructure and institutional frames of archival and museum collections in Hungary are regulated by two major laws: the 1997 museum, library and archives act and the 2010 modifications of the 2001 act on cultural heritage. In principle, access to the documents of the communist era is fairly liberal in Hungary. Academic researchers enjoy open access to documents in public archives with the formal support of any academic institution, with reasonable restrictions pertaining to privacy rights. However, recent government initiatives to reorganize the major institutions of Hungarian culture (including museums, archives, and libraries) created unanticipated hindrances to practical public access to the documents. This situation increases the value of other types of collections, in particular the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security Services, regional and local archives, libraries and museums, and recently discovered private collections.

Until 2018, archives, libraries, museums, universities, and academic institutions were maintained by the Ministry of Human Capacities (this is the official English title of the ministry, though its Hungarian name would be more accurately translated into English as the Ministry of Human Resources). Hungary spends a relatively high percentage of its GDP on culture (roughly 2 percent, compared with the EU average of 1 percent). Collections suffer from insufficient support, however. Public budgets normally cover the sustainability costs (salaries, technical maintenance) of public museums, libraries, and archives and rarely allow for innovation or new acquisitions. Public collections can submit applications for funding to, for instance, the National Research Fund and the National Culture Fund, which regularly support these institutions. However, due to the relatively limited resources of these two foundations, larger-scale innovative initiatives or research programs are often pursued with the assistance of international public or private funding agencies such as the European Union or the Soros Foundation. Smaller and, particularly, regional and private collections are often unprepared to handle such complex application procedures, and, thus, they are frequently left to their own devices.



## Moldova

*By Andrei Cusco*

During the first years after independence, when an increasingly nationalizing agenda prevailed in Moldovan politics, research on the communist era focused on the traumatic experiences of mass deportations, famine and collectivization occurring in the late 1940s and early 1950s or discussed the armed insurgency active during the same period, thus disproportionately emphasizing the Stalinist era. In contrast to the picture that seemed to prevail in Moldovan historiography in the early 2000s, the displays of anti-regime opposition in the MSSR (mainly in the guise of a nationally oriented opposition activity, discontent in the cultural sphere, but also occasional examples of dissent coming from below) were neither as rare nor as insignificant as previously thought. The variety of actors involved in the anti-regime cultural and political opposition in the Moldavian SSR should be particularly emphasized. Certainly, there were ups and downs in this process (with the late 1950s and the late 1960s and early 1970s probably being the most prominent periods of anti-regime discontent). However, the Moldovan case is specific not so much due to a lack of substance of the phenomenon itself as due to the general lack of interest of the political stakeholders and of a large portion of the civil society in preserving and institutionalizing the memory of opposition and dissent under communism. In fact, aside from the case of the Commission for the Study and Evaluation of the Communist Totalitarian Regime – a short-lived, politically inspired “truth commission” established in 2010 – and several monuments erected to the regime’s victims, no enduring state initiative was undertaken in this regard in the post-independence period. The absence of a special research institution devoted to the study of the Soviet past is especially regrettable, making Moldova one of the few countries without such an establishment. Another major issue is the lack of funding, which is a derivative of this broader situation.

A total number of fifteen Moldovan collections have been described in the COURAGE Registry. This is roughly similar to the case of the smaller Baltic states (Latvia and Estonia), reflecting some specific problems encountered in the Moldovan case, mainly the relative scarcity of relevant private collections and their overwhelming concentration in the capital city, Chişinău. Among the most frequent topics, one could mention: national movements, censorship, democratic opposition, human rights, surveillance and all its varieties, literature, film, and music. The main problems uncovered during the project period were the following: 1) the low institutional capacity of most Moldovan public repositories to publicize and disseminate their collections; 2) the inefficiency of networking, both among public repositories and in establishing connections with potential private collectors; 3) the reluctance of institutional stakeholders to share information about their operation (including budget data, information on ongoing projects and personnel statistics). Despite the (admittedly not very successful) model of the above-mentioned Commission or several cases of “best practices” (e.g., the policy of the Archive for Social-Political Organizations (AOSPRM), which provides unrestricted access to its

holdings and is a researcher-friendly institution, or the more ambiguous, but still generally open-access approach pursued by the National Museum of History), the general situation in Moldova is far from satisfactory. Several policy recommendations could improve this situation, including: 1) the creation of a special institution devoted to the study of the communist period and its legacy; 2) the systematic encouragement (both by state agencies and by professional historians) of existing repositories of relevant materials (primarily the main Moldovan archives and the National Museum of History) to explore and disseminate their collections; 3) the establishment of an enduring partnership between the public repositories and potential private collectors; 4) the increase in the number and quality of relevant publications in the field, including through targeted institutional policies aimed at encouraging applications for external funding; 5) an emphasis on international cooperation and on its benefits for the relevant stakeholders, despite their reluctance to engage in such projects.

## Poland

*By Barbara To łoczko-Suchańska*

The experience of the Polish team within COURAGE might be distinguished by the fact that the field of cultural opposition under state socialism was not as much explored, as rather approached from a different perspective. Because the subject is quite well described in social and historical sciences, we have less discovered new phenomena, but rather managed to reach and describe some new examples and manifestations. In the collections descriptions we question the existing narration and read the events, activists and items in a new context. The cultural factor of preparing the systemic changes is often overshadowed and not properly represented in public narration of the transformation. Hopefully, switching the focus onto the cultural aspects will add a new perspective for interpreting the socialist reality – so eagerly described as grey, dull, and monotonous. Some signs of the new paradigm are already visible in Poland, as the year 2017 was celebrated as a “Year of Polish Avant-garde” through a series of cultural events organized by tens of museum, research institutes, theatres, and galleries in numerous cities<sup>1</sup>. The neo-avant-garde scene under socialism was an important part of those celebrations.

As much as it would help to form some conclusions, it is not possible to identify what are the best and the worst practices in dealing with collections on cultural opposition. It is connected to the fact the extensive group of social actors in this field, recognized as stakeholders, are an extremely diversified set of entities and represent unlike interests. Good and bad practices are seen differently by the policy makers, public institutions, foundations, emotionally engaged private owners – yet alone by the historians and theoreticians, audience or former activists. It seems that the clashes of different visions may be expressed through the problem of institutionalization of the collections. After recognizing the importance of this issue, in April 2018 we organized a seminar for private stakeholders<sup>2</sup> to discuss their attitudes (as the perspectives of public stakeholders and the policy makers was readable from available sources). It turned out that they have plenty of reservation towards handing their collections into the institutions’ repositories, and even towards cooperating with public museums, galleries and archives. Their reluctance referred for example to the belief that:

- their collections may be misused (e.g. by journalists or for political purposes);
- items will be kept in archives and never displayed;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://rokawangardy.pl/>, 16.10.2018.

<sup>2</sup> All of them were individuals who never registered their activities: private stakeholders, fulfilling the role of creators, owners, operators and sole supporters.



- they have sufficient exposure possibilities (thanks to the Internet);
- the collections will lose the opportunity to be ever displayed as a whole entity.

Interestingly, the above remarks are the opposites of what is commonly believed to be the perks of institutionalizing collections, like gaining a better access to the items for the public or good exhibition and dissemination opportunities. It seems that the crucial issue is the lack of trust towards institutions. In spite of the fact that some of them were highly appreciated by the stakeholders, for the reasons mentioned above they would not like the institutions to be operators of their collections. The unspoken, yet easily recognizable was also the notion that no institution is able to get to know a collection equally well as its creator. Therefore, our biggest recommendation is to solve the issue of public distrust, induced by problems of fluid working staff (discontent with mediocre salaried and excess of work) and unstable funding – strongly depending on the governments' changes.

## Romania

*By Cristina Petrescu*

The endemic lack of financial resources allocated to culture in one of the poorest countries of the European Union is no surprise. There is little to be done in this respect. What could be done, however, in order to (A) safeguard the preservation of these collections and (B) enhance their national and transnational visibility is: (1) better accessing of private and external sources of funding, (2) better use of the existing financial and human resources, and, last but not least, (3) better education of the next generation, to whom this heritage must be transmitted. Some examples of best practices reveal how some of these goals could be achieved and highlight what problems remain to be overcome. It is from discussions with the stakeholders approached in the context of the project that possible legal and practical solutions to these problems have been suggested.

In terms of archiving and collecting, one example of best practice is the Sighet Memorial, which today is a major site of European remembrance, a recipient of the European Heritage Label. The museum collection was established by the Civic Academy Foundation, which made skillful use of private donations and grants offered by private foundations to set up a unique museum collection on communism in Romania. Minimal state funding was assured by a special law, which thus guarantees the continuity in the functioning of the museum. In short, it is an example of good mobilisation of public and private resources following a private initiative. Also remarkable is the capacity of the operating foundation to inspire the trust of private collectors: all items displayed in the museum collection were the result of public appeals for objects, all of which originate from private collections. The museum is one of the most visited in Romania with more than 100,000 visitors every year, so it is a place where these private collections have achieved the highest possible visibility. This particular achievement illustrates how private operators can make better use of private financial resources to safeguard the preservation of private collections in the context of a museum. However, this type of museum, which is dedicated to the victims of, and the armed resistance to, the communist regime, mostly covers the late 1940s and the 1950s, while it represents the entire pre-1989 past by emphasising state violence against citizens and citizens' response to these violent acts. Thus, in this museum there is practically no place for the largest part of the collections discovered by COURAGE research, which refer to a different period in time, mostly the 1970s and the 1980s, and speak mostly about non-confrontational tactics, about ways of by-passing the system or developing parallel worlds. For this purpose, new permanent exhibitions on the communist past need to be established, either within an existing museum, like the National Museum of History, or by establishing a new institution able to absorb and rescue all these private collections of items of the past which cannot be preserved in digital copies in an electronic repository. This is a direction in which powerful lobbying is needed.

This also brings into discussion the question of trust in public institutions, as many of the private collectors clearly expressed the idea that they would like to donate what they have

collected in order to make it available, but they cannot decide what is the best place. This dilemma is the result of significant differences between central and local archives, libraries and museums, large and small repositories of collections, traditional and new operating institutions. There is no general solution to this dilemma. Often, the central institutions function better, because they have more and better trained personnel, capable of inventorying the new collections and making them available in shorter time. For instance, the National Archives in Bucharest received the Lovinescu–Ierunca Collection, created by two prominent members of the Romanian exile community, as a donation in 2012 and made it available for research in 2015, while the Iași branch of the National Archives received a similar donation, the Mihnea Berindei Collection, in 2013 and it is not yet available for research; the UB team was effectively doing pioneering work when describing this collection. The newly established institution specialised in the collections created by the exile community, the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER) has managed to attract many collections created by the diaspora. However, the Institute lacks adequate storage space and is short of professionally trained staff, so most of the collections in its custody are hardly available for research. In other cases, local institutions, large or small, but with a well-established tradition in the local community, inspire trust and individuals from that community prefer to donate their collections to such local repositories. This is the case of Central University Library (BCU) Cluj-Napoca or Teutsch Haus Sibiu, both housing more than one collection of cultural opposition. At the same time, the visibility of these collections is much lower in a provincial repository than in a central one, as the case of the Eginald Schlattner Collection at Teutsch Haus illustrates: although the founder is a best-selling international author, his archive has been visited by only one person. A good example of a locally operating institution which has been able to make visible efforts not only to build a museum collection by a public appeal for items in private ownership, but also to increase the visibility of its collections is the Memorial of the Revolution of 16–22 December 1989 in Timișoara. Mostly with private funding, the association which operates the museum has erected twelve commemorative monuments within the urban perimeter of the city, while the building of partnerships with local schools and the promotion of educational programmes has tremendously increased the visibility of the museum collection at local level. Nevertheless, this collection which refers to a major and tragic event of recent history has only limited societal impact at national level. Its inclusion in the COURAGE registry definitely increases the national and transnational visibility of this collection, yet the question remains of how also to attract offline visitors to a collection which cannot be digitised. One possible way of encouraging visitors to the museum is to include such places in the state-funded tourist schemes available for state employees in the form of free vouchers to be used in designated places.

Finally, many other collections of cultural opposition consist of documents that can be digitised and made available worldwide online. Although governmental funding for institutional investments is severely limited since the economic crisis of 2008, several institutions have initiated such programmes by applying for special grants, among them the National Archives in

Bucharest, where expensive special equipment able to digitise rare and precious documents now operates slowly but steadily. The difference between old and fragile manuscripts and documents relating to the recent past is that the former category includes fewer items but all requiring special handling, while the latter consists of numerous items but these can be scanned faster and even using less costly equipment. An example of good practice in digitising and disseminating documents is CNSAS, which in a period of eight years has made available in digital format more than 10 million pages, including documents from several fonds in its custody. Those documents not requiring anonymisation, especially those from the documentary fonds, are now available online. These resources have been integrated in university curricula, while students have been attracted to internship placements. The project of digitisation has been possible with few human resources (three employees), ingenious low-cost technical solutions, and a special partnership with an external institution, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, which was co-interested in supporting this process with new equipment. However, the digitisation of an archive of 25 linear kilometres will require many years at this speed. Besides, the emerging digital archive requires the creation of metadata standards for easier management of these electronic resources and easier identification of the relevant digital material. This is a general problem with Romanian collections, which cannot be solved without adequate programmes of personnel training. In short, such ample programmes of digitisation need more funding, more and better trained personnel, and better knowledge to create metadata on the newly established digital repositories. A solution can only come by changing the legal framework so as to allow the use of the turnover from photocopies released to researchers, which now goes entirely to the state budget, for the purchase of digitising equipment, and to permit the transformation of successful students' internships into limited-time and conditioned work contracts and then into permanent employment with clear missions. These provisions would allow a state-run non-profit institution to use the financial resources it actually produces, and would motivate prospective employees to train themselves for a position that triggers changes instead of perpetuating the status quo. Of course, these are policy recommendations which require further lobbying for their implementation.

To conclude, all general policy recommendations at European level, regarding issues such as digitization for better preservation or networking for better access to funding, are perfectly valid in the case of the collections in Romania too. However, the specificity of the greater part of the collections discovered in this country, the majority of which are either private collections with limited access because the owners do not trust institutions enough to donate them or state-owned collections which require metadata systems for easier access and management, necessitates some specific policies. These policies would include the establishment of European grants for the preservation of that part of the cultural heritage which is privately owned and in danger of being lost. These grants should encourage collaboration between the institutions willing to administer such collections and the private owners at national and international levels. Other types of European grants should encourage institutions holding collections to train their personnel for the purpose not only of digitizing their collections, but also of creating

metadata systems for easier management of the electronic repositories and quicker identification of the digitized materials by prospective users. Such policies would require rather modest resources at European level, but would safeguard precisely that part of the cultural heritage which is consistent with the system of values promoted by the European Union.

## Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo

*By Milena Dragičević Šešić, Jacqueline Nießer, Ulf Brunnbauer*

When assessing the legacy of dissent in socialist Yugoslavia, three important differences must be taken into consideration between Yugoslavia and the other former socialist countries. First, Tito's socialism was an experiment which tried to regulate a multi-cultural reality embracing many ambivalences and syncretism. Therefore, despite the one-party political system of Yugoslavia's socialism, culture in socialist Yugoslavia was not subordinated to a single paradigm. Additional heterogeneity was possible, as in 1953 the Federal Culture Ministry was abolished and ministries of culture existed only on the level of the Yugoslav republics.

Second, after the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, socialist Yugoslavia positioned itself in the Non-Aligned Movement, which contributed to a more open cultural sphere, influenced by trade and travel with and to the West. Therefore, cultural life in socialist Yugoslavia was more pluralistic than in any other socialist state in Eastern Europe, with its continuous monopoly on power by the Communist League.

Third, another crucial specificity of the Yugoslav system was self-management, which was also part of the cultural sector. Many voices and expressions of dissent were possible within or despite the establishment. Nevertheless, socialist Yugoslavia had an illiberal regime under which breaches of human and civil rights occurred, and free expression was sometimes severely hampered and criminalized.

When it comes to assessing how the post-Yugoslav countries deal with the legacy of socialist Yugoslavia, there is another striking difference between the Yugoslav successor states and the other countries of Eastern Europe: the first multi-party elections ended in war and the disintegration of the country. We are therefore looking here not only at post-socialist but also post-conflict societies.

This historical context, both during the socialist period and the period of transition, affect public perceptions, political initiatives, and research on the legacy of socialist Yugoslavia today. It also leads to a very marginal interest in dissent, non-conformism, and culture in the socialist era. In Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo the strong polarization of the public sphere constitutes a major obstacle to the study, preservation, and interpretation of the cultural heritage of the socialist period in all its complex modes of representation, as well as efforts to communicate and debate this heritage. This is why censorship, dissent, and non-conformism in Yugoslavia are often interpreted through a very narrow lens, and ambivalences, interdependences, and discontinuities are reduced to simple explanations of pro-communist or anti-communist stances.

Another problem is that research institutions on the one hand and cultural institutions on the other hand are functioning within their own worlds, separately from each other, since in these countries, museums and archives are not seen as research institutions, but rather as “belonging to” (being under the supervision of) the respective Ministries of Culture. Furthermore, scholarly research and primary and secondary education also remain separate, and this too should be overcome. Research findings should be introduced into the primary and secondary school curricula as soon as possible.

The necessity of transdisciplinary approaches to research on cultural opposition also creates major challenge. Lip service is paid to collaboration in multidisciplinary teams, but in reality, transdisciplinary research is not really supported in the academic world. The university system, which is structured around relatively rigid models of career development, favours disciplinary research and publishing; cooperation happens mostly among researchers in the same field, while transdisciplinarity is seen as a threat to disciplinary coherence or as an excuse for allegedly sloppy scholarship.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the legacy of war significantly impedes efforts to deal with the legacy of socialist Yugoslavia. Cultural institutions which are important to the entire country are in a state of neglect. The state does not support them, because doing so would imply acknowledging the existence of a common cultural and historical heritage. Seven such institutions of national significance struggle merely to survive. Also, in public institutions without national significance in Bosnia and Herzegovina librarians and archivists struggle to preserve their collections under precarious financial conditions. Ethnic divisions within the cultural sector impede cooperation and prevent a systematic indexing of cultural heritage for the entire country. Festivals, private efforts, and international funding offer something of a solution to the ongoing state of emergency in the cultural sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Montenegrin culture is closely intertwined with Serbian culture, and the separation of the two as a nation-building process is contested. In brief, for the state of Montenegro, the primary issues in contemporary cultural policy and public discussions concern the construction of its identity (language, alphabet, church autonomy, etc.). Thus, the culture of dissent in socialist Yugoslavia seems to be a minor point of reference, and it is not seen as an important theme to be studied and discussed.

In Macedonia, the communist period occupies an ambiguous place in collective memory. Although anti-communist nationalists have created a museum to celebrate the struggle for Macedonian statehood which also glorifies the victims of communism, it is hard to disavow communist rule in Macedonia entirely. After all, it was thanks to the Yugoslav and Macedonian communists that a modern Macedonian state was established in 1944 as part of the Yugoslav federation, the Macedonian nation was officially recognized and the language standardized, a national history was written, and an autonomous Macedonian Orthodox Church was

established. Even the scientific and cultural institutions which are officially commissioned to create national Macedonian culture are legacies of communist rule (with some additions after independence). This dilemma may be one of the reasons why there are few efforts to tackle the cultural aspects of the socialist period in the research initiatives. The only theme related to communist rule that has attracted more interest is the repression of Macedonian nationalists and their activities in exile.

In Kosovo, infrastructure, education, housing, and cultural institutions also developed rapidly in socialist Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, modernization in Kosovo was based on the severe destruction of cultural heritage. This is why efforts to address the cultural heritage of Yugoslavia are overshadowed by the legacy of the repression of Albanian cultural identity in Kosovo. Nationalist opposition to Yugoslav rule is therefore the primary topic of interest. An emerging focus on modernist socialist architecture in Kosovo, however, offers a view onto the culture of socialist Yugoslavia from a different perspective.

Although all five countries experienced and are experiencing cultural struggles to consolidate their identities after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, public funds for culture and education in general are relatively low. In the already underfinanced cultural public sector, the topic of the cultural heritage of dissent in socialist Yugoslavia remains marginal.



## Slovakia

*By Magdaléna Stýblová, Vladimír Zvara*

While there has been real progress achieved in online documentation in selected areas in the most recent decade, the public archives in Slovakia, which remain the main source of historical documents and knowledge, are stagnating and are at a clearly insufficient level. They are extremely underfinanced and their superordinate authority, the Ministry of Interior, shows very little interest in their development. The scientific activities of archivists, including research and necessary business trips to other archives, have been hardly supported by the Ministry during the past decade. The public presence of public archives and their communication to the public should be intensified and the archive catalogues should be made accessible online as soon as possible.

The Nation's Memory Institute (NMI), and other public institutions dealing with the communist past, should be given more resources and support. This has not been the case to date, and also the location of the NMI does not reflect its importance. This might be related to the fact that there are still former communists and even communist secret police agents among politicians in Slovakia, as well as supporters of the wartime Slovak Republic. Slovak laws condemn totalitarian regimes and ban totalitarian ideologies, but there is obviously still no consensus of opinion about the communist past and sympathy for it is still widespread among the public and political elite.

If the economical and personal situation of public archives and research institutes would improve, they could also make more effort to take over valuable private collections, which are threatened by the changing situation of their owners, lack of interest among their heirs, and other challenges.

## Ukraine

*By Orysia Maria Kulick*

The Ukrainian collections in COURAGE challenge traditional chronologies of cultural opposition to Soviet rule, as they demonstrate the importance of culture in questioning dominant narratives promoted by the Bolsheviks since 1917. They also underscore the role of diaspora communities in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of cultural opposition.

Museums, archives and private collections in Ukraine generally suffer from the same structural problems: the lack of funding, the shortage of space, and the shortage of trained personnel. They also struggle to cope with the sometimes unpredictable shifts in Ukrainian memory politics. The institutions that seem to navigate the troubled waters of Ukrainian cultural heritage well include the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe that runs digitization projects, promotes its collections domestically and to an international audience, and taps into various networks in Ukraine as well as abroad. Among the diaspora collections explored by COURAGE, the Cleveland Museum-Archives deserves special mention due to the successful networking, digitization and educational projects that were organized in the last few years. The Hoover Institute at Stanford University, which contains numerous collections relevant to COURAGE, is an exceptional organization with funding and staffing levels most Ukrainian collections could only dream of. While its professional practices could serve as an example for institutions in Ukraine, their implementation would require a radical improvement in the financial situation of museums and archives, which currently seems unfeasible.

Significant improvement of the social function of collections of cultural opposition in Ukraine could only be expected if the following conditions are met: 1) significantly increased funding levels; 2) a radical decrease of political pressure; 3) increased professionalization; and 4) an increase in networking activities and the sharing of best practices. Although in the context of war funding levels are unlikely to increase, it is very important to create a legal, political and financial framework which creates stability and predictability. Such an environment would reduce the collections' exposure to shifts in memory politics and would pave the way for the enhancement of professional practices at the respective institutions that take the specific conditions and needs of the collections into consideration. Professional practices at the various institutions could also be enhanced by the intensification of networking activities at a domestic as well as an international level. Increased networking could potentially result in the sharing of best practices, the wider visibility of the collections and increased funding opportunities for joint projects. It is inevitable that state institutions reach out to smaller collections run by private individuals or organizations in order to raise awareness of the different conditions in which collections operate and increase trust between state actors and non-state associations or private individuals. Although all stakeholders have a role to play in promoting the heritage of cultural opposition in Ukraine, the state should make the first radical step towards the

de-politicisation of the topic and the creation of a professional atmosphere that takes the needs of the relevant collections into consideration. The development of a long-term strategic plan that leads in that direction and is observed by the current and subsequent governments would be highly advisable.