

ABOUT STEREOTYPES – FROM TYPOGRAPHICAL MOULDS TO MATRIXES OF THOUGHT

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Abstract

From 1798 until now, the society has passed from the term of "stereotype", which at that time called the typographic moulds of lead, to that of "stereotype" in the sense given by Walter Lipmann, that is of the images in our mind, which helps us build an interpretation of the world, necessary to understand it, to adapt and find a place and a role within it.

Although stereotypes seem to play a positive role, helping us to think and react more quickly to a new situation, they are a kind of false friends, leading us to a subjective form of normality, and what lies outside this normality it becomes the fuel for stigmatizing those who are not "common".

Stereotypes contribute to increasing social distance and push people to act to the detriment of other people, such as ethnic stereotypes, those antipathy based on inflexible generalizations, resulting in the emergence of vulnerable communities in the face of aggressive discourses.

The importance of stereotypes as precursors of prejudices and foundations of discrimination is equally great, regardless of whether we talk about the abundance of negative references to Jews in Romanian proverbs and sayings, the negative attributes related to the Roma ethnicity in various Romanian dictionaries, the journalistic discourse related to the "exoticism" of the LGBT community or the unfavourable views of the Hungarian minority by the Romanian majority.

Therefore, conceptions such as "eating at the Jew but not sleeping at night alone in his house" or "they will call the gypsies to take you if you are not behaving yourself" are equivalent to ideas about genetic determination or mental disorder that induce homosexuality, as well as eating meat kept under the saddle by the predecessors of the present times Hungarians and all these ideas are efficient fertilizers for conflicts, waiting only for a trigger.

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Something about stereotypes

It has been 222 years since Firmin Didot first used the term "stereotype", which at that time named the lead typographic moulds that revolutionized the printing technique. From then until now things have evolved, except that not always in the anticipated directions, at least in terms of the way people perceive and interpret the surrounding reality. And maybe because this is sometimes difficult to understand something, people have simplified the cognitive process, resorting to easier ways of interpreting events and the environment, thus reaching stereotypes within the meaning given by Walter Lipmann, to that "orderly image, more or less consistent of the world, to which our habits, tastes, abilities, comfort and hopes have adapted" (Lipmann, 1922), which is in essence that world we are and feel adapted to, which we understand and it is familiar to us, in which "people and things have their places well known and do certain things expected". Each of us wants to feel "at home" and stereotypes help us.

Concepts that strongly correlate, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination are faces of the same polyhedron: stereotypes - the cognitive component and often unconscious or involuntary, prejudice - the affective component of stereotypes, and discrimination - the behavioural expression of stereotypes (Devine, 1989). Although stereotypes seem to play a positive role, helping us to quickly form an opinion and adopt a measure as quickly as possible or to have a reaction, they are false friends, which leads us to personal and often subjective forms of normality, and what lies outside this normality and goes beyond the "norms" becomes an argument for stigmatizing those who are not "common" and who are often vulnerable to the power of the "common" majority.

According to some authors, stereotypes are "cognitive filters that capture different characteristics of groups or individuals, some emphasizing them, others ignoring them, depending on context, motivation, affective disposition of the one who processes information" (Stănculescu, 2003). These filters are all the more misleading because

little is known about the degree of accuracy and the substance that composes the various stereotypes (Judd and Park, 1993) and on the other hand their efficiency is determined by the need for *cognitive closure*, that is the desire to identify each problem with a clearly defined solution so that confusion and ambiguity can be avoided (Kruglanski, 1998). This is particularly important because studies show that people with a high level of need for *cognitive closure* easily access their own stereotypes, use them relatively frequently in analyzes and reasoning (Dijksterhuis et al., 1996), and tend to reduce the information seeking time necessary to make a decision (Webster and Kruglanski, 1998).

Sometimes stereotypes are profitable, for example when used to promote a product, to increase or enhance its market value. Often the advertising uses the stereotypes already consolidated in the collective mind: the woman is responsible for the cleanliness of the house and the man provides the financial support for it; the woman prepares the food and the man repairs the stove (although sometimes with risky improvisations, but these are also his concern, because he has the technical knowledge ...); the woman has emotions and the man has rationality; one is admired, and the other is the admirer; one - pink and the other - blue. Mr. Proper helps his **grandmother** to wash the floors more efficiently, Norvea toothpaste comes to the aid of the "**30-year-old man, beautiful, smart and with money**", as for Supramax, it solves the dissensions of the **eternal dyad of son-in-law and mother-in-law**.

However, stereotypes can also complicate things, as they essentially contribute to increasing social distance, raising invisible barriers between communities or pushing people to act to the detriment of other people. This is the case with ethnic stereotypes, which, according to Allport (1956), represent "antipathy based on a wrong and inflexible generalization; the antipathy can be felt or expressed, it can be directed to a group as a whole or to an individual because it is a member of that group". He stated that the ethnic stereotype is "an aversive or hostile attitude towards a person belonging to a group, just because it belongs to that group and is believed to have the intolerable characteristics of the group" (Allport, 1956, as cited in Surdu, 2010).

In the confrontation between in-group and out-group members, stereotypes play an essential role, as they underlie prejudices, which take the form of anti-Semitism when the subject of stereotypes is the Jewish people, of xenophobia when talking about refugees, of homophobia if the references are addressing sexual minorities. That is why we will address in the following some of the stereotypes encountered in the Romanian society, starting from the most vulnerable communities in the face of aggressive discourse: Roma, Jews, Hungarians and LGBT.

Greed + Conspiracy = Jewish?

In the Romanian proverbs and popular sayings there are plenty of references to the Jews (including the well-known word "jidan", a pejorative way of referring the Jews) which is why we believe the assumption that the aversion to the Jews has a considerable temporal extent is justified, being difficult to identify the first moment when it appeared, that "T zero" that can be considered temporal reference: "The Jewish people, daring and devilish"; "At the home of a Jew you can eat, but do not sleep there alone at night"; "To eat in an Yiddish house but to sleep in an Armenian house"; "Boil a Jew and two Greeks come out, boil an Armenian and two Jews come out"; "The red beard jew leads the devil to Easter, the black bearded Jew leads the devil to feed with grass"; "The jew, until he deceives, he does not eat"; "The Jew only from a distance is a man" (we emphasize this saying in particular, since it seems to foreshadow the exclusion of the Jews from humanity itself); "To be worse than a Jew".

Interesting are some unique uses given to the word "jidan" in the Romanian peasant thinking, which denotes the level of intensity with which it refers to the negative characteristics associated with the imaginary Jew: the use, in the popular language of Transylvania and Bucovina, of the word "jidan" for the name given to some insects that secrete a nasty odorous liquid, and in Moldova for the name of a cockroach, the "Mamornic" - *Meloe proscarabeus* (Oişteanu, 2012).

Last but not least, we appreciate that the impact of the Jews on the peasant thinking can be estimated as particularly great, considering the fact that in some geographical areas (among which we mention

Bucovina) traditional characters of the New Year appear as masked characters, and among the masks used there are also those of the anthropomorphized "nasties", which are considered to highlight what is most unpleasant in the human nature, but in a playful way, which allows a free expression, different from that of daily life. These masks include the one that "embodies" the Jews, an element of the set of masks of ethnic character (along with the Turkish, Armenian, Greek and Gypsy masks). The "Jews", as a group of masks, are part of all the participants and play the role of "unscrupulous merchants", one of the strongest stereotypes for Jews.

Coming to the present times, we find from the study "The hate speech in Romania" (Foundation for the Development of Civil Society, 2014) that the themes of the anti-Semitic discourses in Romania are built on the basis of two-dimensional conspiracy theory: the intention of fragmenting the Romanian territory, respectively of economic subjugation of the Romanian people, altogether being "the Judaization of Romania". Thus, if prior to 1919 (when the Jews acquired Romanian citizenship), the foundation of the anti-Semitic ideas was the economic subjugation of the Romanians by the Jews and the attempts to establish a Jewish enclave on Romanian soil, after 1920 the image of the Jewish conspirator of a plan was amplified, in which masonry, capitalism and communism were mixed, and the 1930s were marked by ideas regarding the involvement of Jews in the national losses suffered in World War I. In the 1950s and 1960s anti-Semitic stereotypes were shifted to the image of Israel as an ally of the United States, in the sense of "Jewish capitalist power", and in the national-communist era of the 1970s-80s, the image of the Jew was associated with the violence of the establishment of communism and collectivization, where the fault of the Jews appears to be associated with that of the Hungarians, this theme being so well consolidated that it is maintained even today.

Similar results had a project of monitoring the discursive aggression against Jews and Roma in social media (National Institute for Holocaust Study in Romania "Elie Wiesel", 2016), whose conclusions were that, most commonly, the authors of the aggressive messages mentioned as moral traits of the Jews: greed, immorality, bad intentions, tendency to have criminal behaviour, inferiority to the

Romanians from a spiritual point of view. They also carried anti-Semitic stereotypes from the interwar period (the Jewish innkeeper, pawnbroker or leaseholder), but also theses from the conspiracy space, in two main directions:

- **involvement of Jews in events that marked the history of Romania:** the uprising of 1907¹; the massacre at the White Fountain²; the withdrawal of the Romanian troops after the Soviet ultimatum; the economic crisis of the 1980s; the establishment and maintenance of the communist regimes in Romania and other countries of Eastern Europe (favourite arguments included the belonging to the Jewish ethnic group of Soviet leaders or NKVD leaders and the belonging to the Jewish ethnic group of members of the Communist Party, first or foremost from the secondary / tertiary level);

- **"Jewish plots" on an international scale:** the creation of Islam due to the desire to destroy Byzantine Christianity; the conception, by the Jews of Europe, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of a project for the establishment of a Jewish state on the territory of today's Romania; conspiracy to remove from power Nicolae Ceaușescu and his execution; the elaboration and application of genocidal policies during World War II and thus of the Holocaust.

One part laziness, one part quarrel and one part thievery make a Gipsy

The "problem" of the Roma people seems to be subsequent to the interwar period, when what stimulated the extremist reflexes was mainly the "problem of the Jews", the Romanian nationalism being rather concerned about this ethnic segment, against the background of

¹ The peasant uprising of 1907 started on February 21st in 1907 in Flamânzi, Botoșani and spread in the following period throughout the country. The uprising was defeated by the Government, its repression by the army leading to many dead and injured people.

² The White Fountain massacre took place on April 1, 1941, in North Bucovina, where between 2000 and 4000 Romanians were killed by Soviet troops as they tried to cross the USSR border into Romania.

the greater visibility, both economically and socio-cultural. As quantitatively (by number) and qualitatively (by the socio-economic positions held) the Roma were not considered "dangerous for the Romanian nation", at that time Romania did not experience an anti-Roma psychosis as one could say that exists now or as it existed against the Jews (Matthew 2010).

Apparently there is no such problem at the moment, if we look at the first EU-MIDIS survey (carried out in 2008 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in the 27 Member States) that shows that Romania has reported the lowest discrimination level (25%) compared to the Czech Republic (64%) or Hungary (62%). Despite the good score recorded by Romania in this chapter, discrimination exists, and the causes for which the Roma are discriminated against are the marginal, traditional and difficult to integrate character of their community, then the status of fugitives – nomads, customs and beliefs, different from the populations they come in contact with and their perception of their paganism (Surdu, 2010). Another reason for dissatisfaction with the Roma is their behaviour in other countries of the European Union, where they travelled on economic-financial considerations and determined an unfavourable image of Romania and Romanians, which is why there were voices calling for renunciation to the name of "Roma" and the acceptance of the name of "Gypsy", because the resemblance to the word "Romanian" creates confusion that affects the image of Romanians.

The aspect of discrimination faced by the Roma people in Romania cannot be neglected, given the reactions existing within the Romanian society when it comes to this ethnicity, reactions that draw from what we call "peasant wisdom". Thus, one of the strongest stereotypes for the Roma is the criminality (Săftoiu, 2017), more precisely the robbery/theft, accredited by the existence of many proverbs or sayings ("how many gypsies, as much thieves", "the gypsy until they stole they do not live", "it is easy to learn to steal when you live with the gypsies", "he cut his bread with the gypsy's knife", "the gypsy also climbs another's horse"), but also by the phrase "gypsy earning" (which presumes an income slightly illicit, if not really stolen) and verbal derivatives such as "they gypsied me" (equivalent to "I was

robbed/cheated"). The potential danger posed by the Roma results from the warnings issued to non-Roma children, compelled to follow the rules drawn under warnings such as "you will be stolen by the gypsies", "I will leave you to the gypsies", "I will call the gypsies to take you if you are not a good child", "do not go there because you will be beaten by the gypsies". Also a verbal derivative refers to another stereotype related to the idea of Roma people, respectively the one regarding the quarrelsome or noisy behaviour, however disturbing, we think of "gypsy", possibly with a clarifying complement – "as at the door of the gypsy tent" (Săftoiu, 2017).

Other stereotypes suggested by the Romanian proverbs and sayings (Grigore, Neacșu, Furtună, 2007; Săftoiu, 2017) are correlated with violence ("he got used to something as the gypsy horse with the whiplash", "the Gypsy when he became king, first of all he hanged his father"), begging/junk ("if you give something to the gypsy today, he comes also tomorrow", "he asks for dole as the gypsy does", "if flies would make honey, the gypsies eaten with the spoon", "when he is hungry, the gypsy sings/dances"), lack the religious sentiment ("a gypsy is a the gypsy even on Easter day", "only the devil has seen the a gypsy as a pope and weddings on Wednesday"), the marginality ("neither a cask made from an osier, nor the gypsy as a leading man", "nor the reed is not like the tree, nor the gypsy is not like the man"). We emphasize the latter stereotype in particular, because it hides an extra nuance of gravity: not only does it rule the marginal place of the Roma, but prefigures, to the limit, the justification of a violent, perhaps even lethal, action against them.

Moving from the level of the proverbs and sayings to that of the conceptions conveyed in Romania, we found that the thinking has not suffered categorical changes in recent times, at least in terms of the perception on the Roma. Thus, if the results of the "Barometer of Roma inclusion" (Open Society Foundations, 2007) denote vague stereotypes, related to the fact that Roma people identify Roma by the skin colour (23%), appearance/physiognomy (17%) and behaviour (13%), the respondents of the opinion poll "Social cohesion and interethnic climate in Romania" (2008), are much more specific, showing that the main

characteristics that best characterize the Roma are those of "dirty", "thieves" and "lazy", and "most of the Roma are breaking the laws".

Similar were the results of the opinion survey "Stereotypes for the Roma" (Sociological Research and Branding Company, 2010), according to which the most common traits associated with the Roma are: thieves, lazy, filthy, reluctant and backward and, not least, according to a study carried out by the Agency Foundation "Together" in 2013, about 62% of the terms associated with Roma people with Roma are negative, and almost a quarter of them are classified in 3 main categories – theft, laziness and aggression (Cace, Toader, Vizireanu, 2013).

It is possible that a consequence of the way Roma are perceived by non-Roma people is that, according to the opinion survey "Social cohesion and interethnic climate in Romania" (The Centre for Research in Interethnic Relations and The Institute for the Study of the Problems of National Minorities, 2008), 77.9% of Romanians (and 71.9% of Hungarians) have "little" and "very little" confidence in the Roma. Also, another consequence could be that non-Romanians identify a solution to the "Roma problem", a solution that draws attention both through radicalism and its "viability": in 2008, 70.6% of the participants in the opinion survey "Social cohesion and interethnic climate in Romania" thought that Roma should be forced to live separately from the rest of society "because they cannot integrate", an idea found also in 2016, when the solution was deportation somewhere in Romania, in a dedicated area that might allow the detention in safe and controlled conditions (The Foundation for Community Development Agency "Together", 2016).

If you don't have an aquarium it means you are gay

The title above comes from a joke about what reasoning and logic means: if you have an aquarium, it means you like nature, so you like what is beautiful, so you like women, so you're not gay. Otherwise ...

Unlike the previous communities, in the case of the LGBT community, finding the stereotypes through which it is represented in the Romanian collective mind was a real challenge, because a series of elements indicating the "historical" existence and the perpetuation of

the perception were lacking in time, most of them were not demonstrable, more specifically no studies have been identified that analyse the reasons or pretexts that underlie the public opposition to LGBT and neither proverbs or sayings that portray, even caricaturally, the LGBT community, fixing it in this way in the collective memory.

This situation could be explained by the fact that until the last years the LGBT community was practically "out of law" or, at best, not recognized as such, and its members did not benefit from visibility, they were not a recognized part of the society, with their good side and bad side, so that this presence facilitates the appearance of proverbs, sayings, words of spirit, something that defines the community, laudatory or depreciative.

References to LGBT were found in the pages of the Penal Codes rather than in peasant thinking or even "urban literature", as Romanian literature does not abound in homoerotic productions, which is a consequence of the fact that Romanian writers associated homosexuality with something foreign, improper to the Romanian people (Mitchievici, 2010). As a result, gay authors have been marginalized and gay stories censored.

In this regard, we have referred in our approach to "inside" opinions, respectively to the few studies conducted by non-governmental organizations with concerns in the LGBT area, according to which LGBT people are presented as "indecent, provocative, promiscuous or as reversing the roles of gender, while gay men are often associated with transvestites".

Another category of data and also the most of the data collected came from the media, which considered LGBT as an "exotic" topic for the public opinion, perhaps because of the vivid colour of the outfits and the "glamorous" attitude of the participants in the Gay Pride parades. The media attention was not scientific in nature and manifested itself in a somehow unbalanced manner, perhaps even on the background of a limited knowledge of the phenomenon. In this regard, a report monitoring the press, made by the ACCEPT Foundation, submitted between 01.09.2005-28.02.2006 and based on the analysis of a set of articles published in the national newspapers ("Adevărul", "Libertatea", "Ziua", "Evenimentul zilei", "România liberă", "7 Plus" and

“Cotidianul”), noted (especially in tabloid publications) the tendency of journalists to refer especially to gays, while lesbians were much less visible and bisexuals and transsexuals were completely ignored. Also, the attitude of the journalists towards the LGBT community as a whole was generally neutral, although 30% of the monitored articles presented LGBT in a negative way, mainly due to the stereotypes related to criminality, especially paedophilia.

At the level of the journalistic discourse, the ideas conveyed about the members of the LGBT community can be classified according to the following categories:

❖ **the explanation of LGBT emergence / existence**

- they are "sick", homosexuality being a "disease", most often psychic (Ruscior, 2016);
- homosexuality has a biological (Copăceanu, 2017) or genetic determination (National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis, 2012);
- they were victims of sexual assault in childhood or adolescence (Rotaru, 2019);

❖ **the LGBT identity**

- they dress in bright colours, strident colours (Apostol, 2015), especially pink (Laszlo, 2015);
- they dress in black leather clothes, accessorized with metallic objects (Racoviceanu, 2019);
- they wear clothes usually used of the opposite kind (Bâltoc, 2015);
- gays are the exact opposite of straight men, that means they are not attracted to sports, neither as a practitioner nor as a viewer, they are overly attentive to their "look", they do not have a firm walk, they have feminine gestures, they are interested in cosmetics (Codos, 2015);

❖ **the LGBT behaviour**

- they have promiscuous behavior (Lengyel, 2016);
- they speak affected, in order to obtain emotional expressivity (Pincott, 2017);
- when they are in a group, they become ostentatious (Robu, 2013);

- have non-normative, orgiastic sexual practices (Arvinte, 2017);
 - they consume hallucinogenic substances, especially in the context of sexual acts (Kelland, 2019);
 - gays have female traits and lesbians have male traits (Valentova, Kleisner, Havlíček, 2014);
- ❖ **the consequences of being a LGBT person**
- homosexuals are the cause of the worldwide spread of AIDS (Conrad, 2017);
 - it would not be "normal" that homosexuals constitute a family in the traditional sense of the notion (Tiță, 2017);
 - homosexuality is against nature, because sex has the role of producing children, and homosexuals cannot give birth to children (Dima, 2018);
 - homosexuality is a capital sin (Yedroudj, 2019), which is spreading worldwide (Ionașcu, 2018);
 - if they will adopt a child, he would in turn become a member of the LGBT community (Saiu, 2019).

Az a szep ... but only if he does not think so much about autonomy

The most common stereotypes about Hungarians, encountered in *ad hoc* discussions with Romanians or in the media, refer to the character and nature of Hungarians and their plans (with or without the support of the Hungarian state) to fragment Romania territorially:

- they want to take from us Transylvania or a part of it (Diac, 2017);
- they refuse to speak Romanian, and in the localities with Hungarian majority population if you do not speak Hungarian you are ignored (Dan, 2017);
- they are arrogant and look at the Romanians "from above" (Mut, 2015);

- DAHR³ is an extremist organization (Tănasă, 2015);
- they have exaggerated claims regarding minority rights in the Romanian territory (Lumezeanu, 2011);
 - the autonomy that they request will lead to separatism according to the Kosovo model (Teodoreanu, 2016);
 - they are aliens (Funar, 2019), they came here from Asia by riding horses and ate meat kept under the saddle, in order to be kept eatable (Pârlog, 2009);
 - they are supported by the interference of Hungary in the areas mainly inhabited by Hungarians in Romania (Fati, 2020).

A summary of the defects attributed to the Hungarians was made by Sorin Mitu⁴, who, in the article "Romanians and Hungarians - a nightmare couple", showed that the main accusation of the Romanians towards the Hungarians refers to the "wickedness" – seen as an expression of bullying, followed by "cruelty" – associated with the "primitivism and temperamental character" and with the Asian origin of the Hungarians (Mitu, 2014).

We consider that the mentioned stereotypes must be viewed in the light of the fears encountered at the level of the Romanian society and that were revealed by a series of opinion polls, the most recent being carried out during April - May 2019 by INSCOP Research for LARICS – the Laboratory for the Analysis of the Information War and Strategic Communication:

- 62.6% of respondents agree that “Hungary is acting to gain control over Transylvania, in one form or another”;
- 58.2% consider that “Hungary mixes in an unlawful way in Romania's internal affairs”;

³ DAHR stands for the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, the main political organisation representing the ethnic Hungarians of Romania, founded on the 25th of December 1989, immediately after the fall of the Communist dictatorship in the Romanian Revolution of 1989. Officially organised as a national minority organization (not as a party) it nevertheless acts as one of the main parties of Romania. The DAHR has been a parliamentary party since 1990, it has its own representatives in the Senate and in the Chamber of Deputies, and since 1996 was junior coalition partner in several Romanian Governments.

⁴ Professor and director of the Department of Modern History at the “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj, specialist in the history of Transylvania, comparative imagology and the study of nationalism.

- 60.2% believe that “Hungary has the interest for Romania to be a weak state”.

In 2011, the relations between Romanians and Hungarians were perceived favourably, as indicated the results of the “Barometer of interethnic relations” (realized in March 2011 by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy – IRES in collaboration with the Romanian Association for Evaluation and Strategy – ARES), according to which 63% of the respondents had a “good and very good” opinion about the ethnic Hungarians. Hungarians were seen as “unfavourable” by 29.8% of Moldova province people, 24.9% of Muntenia province people and 18.9% of Transylvanians and Banat province people. The study also indicated an increased acceptance of this minority among the interviewees: 83% would have accepted Hungarian work colleagues, 79% would have accepted Hungarian neighbours, 80% would have accepted Hungarian friends, and 69% would have been agree to have family members belonging to this minority. A significant detail is the fact that the political representation of Romanians by the Hungarians was accepted only by 46% of the respondents.

The results of the survey are all the more important since, at the time of the survey, the nationalist feelings were freshly marked by an incident centred on a symbol of Romanian history, namely the symbolic hanging, by the Hungarian ethnic Csibi Barna, of a doll that embodied the national hero Avram Iancu, the fact being known by 57% of the respondents in the study, mainly persons over 65 years of age and only 30.8% of the respondents aged between 18-35 years. According to the survey, 70% of the respondents considered that Csibi Barna's initiative would affect the relations between Romanians and Hungarians, and 57% of those interviewed thought that the incident could also affect the relations between Romania and Hungary. In the context of the favourable perception of the Romanians towards the Hungarians, 47% of the respondents stated that Csibi Barna's action “does not represent the opinion of all Hungarians in Romania”, while 45% said that it is “provocative to the Romanians, a gesture of defiance”.

Although the general perception of Romanians about Hungarian ethnicity was “good and very good”, it is worth noting the categorical,

sharp opinions on a number of issues that correlate with some of the above mentioned stereotypes:

- 50% of the respondents had a "bad and very bad" opinion about the possibility of Hungarians from Romania to obtain citizenship of the Hungarian state;
- 72% of the respondents did not agree with the decision of some presidents of the Romanian County Councils to apply for and receive Hungarian citizenship next to the Romanian one;
- 51% of the study participants felt that the DAHR's role in the Romanian policy is a negative one.

Two years later, the "Barometer of public opinion – The Truth about Romania" (survey conducted by INSCOP Research on September 2013), shows that Romanians consider relations with the Hungarian minority in the last place in terms of good relations throughout history (with 27.2% of respondents) in a hierarchy of which the following ethnic minorities still belong: Serbs (69.4%), Germans (69%), Bulgarians (67.9%), Jews (59%), Turks (49.9%), Roma (30.2%). The only minorities to which the respondents mostly considered the relationships have been throughout history are the Roma (58.8% – "bad relations") and the Hungarian one (59.7% – "bad relations").

In the same survey, 29.1% of the respondents consider that the present day relations between Romanians and Hungarians are "bad and very bad", for 29.2% they are "good and very good", and 37.3% evaluate them as being "neither good nor bad". And on this dimension, the difference between the geographical regions is maintained, which can be explained as we have tried above: the residents of Banat-Crișana-Maramureș and Transylvania perceive the Romanian-Hungarian relations as "good and very good" in a proportion higher than those of Moldova-Bucovina and Muntenia-Oltenia-Dobrogea.

What draws attention is that, according to the INSCOP survey, radical opinions and intransigence tend to diminish among people who have contacts (relatives, friends, acquaintances, neighbours) within the Hungarian community:

- of the people who have Hungarian knowledge/ friends, 42.7% consider that the historical relations with the Hungarian minority are "good", while, at the level of those who do not have

Hungarian knowledge, only 16.6% consider the historical relations with the Hungarian minority as "good";

- also, respondents who interact with Hungarians consider to a much greater extent (45.9%) that the present relationships are "good and very good", compared to those without connections in Hungarian environments (19.1%);
- those with Hungarian knowledge consider to a greater extent than those without Hungarian knowledge or friends that Romanian-Hungarian tensions have as substratum "exaggerations of the press" (26.6%, respectively 12.9%), and reciprocally, those without Hungarian acquaintances or friends consider that tensions are caused by "electoral challenges of Romanian and Hungarian politicians".

Conclusions

Ideas such as "eating in the Jew house, but not sleeping there at night" or "gypsies will take you if you are not behaving yourself" compete as intolerance and reductionism with scientifically unsustainable assumptions about genetic determination or mental disorder that would induce homosexuality as well as with the meat-based nutrition kept under the saddle by the Hungarian predecessors of the present times, thus constituting fertilizers of the conflict, waiting for a trigger factor.

From stereotypes to the actionable opposition to a social or ethnic group the distance is not as great as it seems at first sight and may depend on seemingly minor events. The recent reality offers enough examples, if we think only of the case of Ditrau, which, paradoxically, opposed an ethnic minority to another ethnic minority, the latter being characterized by an additional attribute, that its members, refugees from Sri Lanka, were strangers not only in the region, but also on the national territory. We say paradoxically, because in this case we can talk about the interchangeability of roles – a community vulnerable to the aggressive discourse of the majority has in turn become an intolerant and aggressive majority, very close to the limit of transposing facts and stereotypes of thinking into violent deeds.

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