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**Advocating for the cause of the “victims of Communism” in the European political space: memory entrepreneurs in interstitial fields**

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Since the 1950s, the Council of Europe and the European Community/European Union have implemented symbolic policies aimed at self-legitimization and identity-building through the recollection of a common history and the promotion of shared values. Over time, European institutions have established a set of legal and political norms based on the principle that painful pasts need to be fully acknowledged in order to be overcome. After the Cold War, this “*acquis historique communautaire*” (Larat 2005) evolved in a twofold way. Its goal gradually shifted from reinforcing “European identity” to using “European memory” as a public policy tool meant to strengthen democratic citizenship throughout the enlarged EU (Gensburger and Lavabre, 2012). At the same time, Europe’s “dark past” was included into the common heritage promoted via cultural policy instruments (Calligaro 2013). In this context, a new constellation of actors entered European institutions and set out to reshape these remembrance policies by challenging their core - the uniqueness of the Holocaust as “the absolute evil against which Europe itself was defined” (Littoz-Monnet 2012:1182). Their historical narrative is based on the equivalence between two totalitarianisms<sup>1</sup>, Stalinism and Nazism, and stresses the “duty to remember” and to “honor the victims” in a way that bears a striking resemblance to the “Holocaust template” (see Zombory in this issue). It also posits that Europe will not be united unless it is able to form a common view of history, which includes Nazism and Communism and judges their crimes with a single set of moral, political and legal norms.

Following Pollak (1993), these actors can be defined as *memory entrepreneurs*, i.e. individuals who create common references to a painful past and ensure their respect by calling for historical reckoning, collective remembrance and legal accountability. These memory entrepreneurs are positioned in the various institutional arenas that form the European political space and belong to different social sectors: politics, academia, Institutes of National Memory (INM)<sup>2</sup> and victims associations. The members of European assemblies constitute the most relevant empirical entry to grasp how the criminalisation-of-communism enterprises, which originate in some member states, are translated into the European political space. Elected under national frameworks but embedded in institutions governed by specific rationales, those representatives are placed at the interface between transnational assemblies and national political fields. They are therefore very instrumental in the circulation of categories (“totalitarian Communist regimes, Communist crimes”) and figures (“victims of Communist crimes, heroes of the anti-totalitarian resistance”) of indictment of the Socialist

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<sup>1</sup> This interpretation of Communism, centered on its criminal nature and its structural proximity to Nazism, has been heavily criticized since the 1960s for its incapacity to fully grasp the social and political mechanisms that explain the diversity and the longevity of Socialist regimes. After the Cold War, *The Black Book of Communism. Crimes, terror, repression* (Courtois et al 1999) sparked hefty debates on totalitarianism and the assessment of Communism, both as an ideology and as the matrix of a distinct type of dictatorial regimes (Dreyfus et al 2000; Rousso 2004).

<sup>2</sup> This generic term refers to the state-sponsored institutions established in post-communist states to manage the archives of the Socialist security apparatuses. Though their names and scopes of competence vary, they all conduct research and educational projects, which build official narratives of Communism (Behr 2015, Mink in this issue).

period. The retrospective assessment of Communism has given rise to fierce political conflicts, first at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) starting in 1992, then at the European Parliament (EP) after 2004<sup>3</sup>. Anti-communist mobilisations seemed implausible in these hierarchically arranged political arenas because they were being led by dominated actors, primarily representatives from the new member states equipped with little European political resources. Yet these neophytes reversed a correlation of forces unfavourable to them and won political trophies in the form of resolutions and declarations calling for the CoE and the EU to condemn the mass violence of the Soviet-type regimes and to recognize their victims<sup>4</sup>. However, calls to juridify, or even to judicialise the treatment of Socialist crimes at the European level faced limitations when requests to use criminal law – to penalise negationism of those crimes and institute an international court headquartered in the EU to judge their perpetrators – were unsuccessful. As part of an inter-institutional trade-off, remembrance served as a substitute for legal treatment of mass violence (Littoz-Monnet 2012, Littoz-Monnet 2013). Within the framework of the new citizenship program “Europe for Citizens,” the EU thus created in 2007 a remembrance policy aimed at sponsoring projects that maintain “the main sites and archives associated with deportations as well as the commemorating of victims of Nazism and Stalinism” (European Commission 2007:9).

The existing literature has mainly focused on the role played by post-communist members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in historical debates in the immediate aftermath of the Eastern enlargement of 2004-2007. Several authors interpreted the Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism adopted by the EP in April 2009, which consecrated a totalitarian interpretation of Communism, as an inflexion of the hegemonic Western interpretation of the past (Perchoc 2014, Mälksoo 2014, Neumayer 2015). This official document however fell short of anti-communist memory entrepreneurs’ ambitions in two respects. In order to frame the legacies of Socialism as a “European” and not a “national” problem, mobilized MEPs had adjusted their demands to the requirements of the European political profession – and particularly to the need to denationalize issues and euphemize conflicts by seeking ideological compromise (Beauvallet and Michon 2013). As a result, the Resolution included the Nazi and Communist regimes in a denunciation of all forms of authoritarianism and totalitarianism that befell the continent in the twentieth century, instead of singling them out as Europe’s worst dictatorships. Moreover, in line with previous EU policies for managing painful pasts that rely exclusively on symbolic tools, the EP did not call for legal steps against the perpetrators of Communist crimes (EP 2009). The anti-communist cause undoubtedly lost its salience after the end of its 6<sup>th</sup> term in July 2009: no Parliamentary resolutions were adopted, and the own initiative report on “Historical memory in culture and education in the EU” tabled by the Polish MEP Marek Migalski in 2013 was rejected by the Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Education even before it could be discussed in plenary session (EP 2013). In order to keep the issue of Communist crimes on the EU’s agenda and prevent the dilution of the cause in a broad anti-totalitarian discourse, anti-Communist MEPs however carried out a wide range of awareness-raising activities (exhibitions, film screenings, conferences, hearings) about Socialist crimes. This article seeks to explore this overlooked dimension of memory activism and to account for these

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<sup>3</sup> Due to space limitations, the debates on Communism held at PACE cannot be analyzed here, although they played a crucial role in strengthening the claims made in the EU.

<sup>4</sup> PACE adopted three important resolutions on “Measures to dismantle the Heritage of Former Communist Regimes” (PACE 1996), on the “Need for International Condemnation of Crimes of Totalitarian Communist Regimes” (PACE 2006) and on “Commemorating the Victims of the Great Famine (Holodomor) in the former USSR” (PACE 2010). In the EP, three documents gradually crafted a narrative of indictment of Communism: the resolution on “The Sixtieth Anniversary of the End of the Second World War in Europe on 8 May 1945” (EP 2005), the declaration on “the Proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism” (EP 2008) and the resolution on “European Conscience and Totalitarianism” (EP 2009).

representatives' failure to build on the Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism to further their claims in the EU.

Cutting across the sociology of memory and the sociology of European integration, it advances scholarship on the reconfigurations of the EU's memory politics in three ways. Firstly, empirical findings fill some blind spots regarding the forms, the intensity and the impact of non-legislative anti-communist activism during the EP's 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> terms<sup>5</sup>. Second, contrary to normative or essentialist analyses of "European memory" as a spontaneously shared reading of history, an actor-centered political sociology of European integration takes fully into account the issue of agency in transnational "mnemopolitics" (Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015)<sup>6</sup>. The struggles over the past are studied from a relational viewpoint by stressing the conflictive nature of the political undertakings aimed at institutionalising a "proper way" to refer to Europe's former dictatorships and to manage their legacies. This article therefore does not evaluate the legitimacy of the MEPs' claims or the personal, ideological and partisan reasons for their actions, but observes their strategies and the constraints they face. Third, in line with the "practice turn" in EU studies (Adler-Nissen 2016), this article connects the parliamentary discourse on Communism to the institutional context of its elaboration. It relates claims for memory adjustment to existing studies of European political profession, which have shown that low electoral legitimacy and the relative indeterminacy of their mandates are strong incentives for MEPs to establish links with social and political actors outside the Parliament (Beauvallet and Michon 2010). Representatives routinely create networks in *interstitial fields*<sup>7</sup> where actors from different social spheres – politics, academia, NGOs and interest groups – meet and exchange institutional credibility, scientific legitimacy and policy-oriented knowledge. These practices are in line with the techniques of scandalization and expertise that are the most efficient at the EU level, i.e. the use of moral and scientific arguments instead of contentious behavior based on "politics in the street" (Balme and Chabanet 2008). In the case at hand, mobilized MEPs have set up networks that pool individual and collective resources (prestige, institutional know-how and contacts in administrative, political and diplomatic circles) in order to circulate anti-communist grammar across the European political space. Their struggle to criminalize Communism rests on alignments of interests with INM staff and like-minded historians and legal scholars, who endow their claims with scholarly authority during awareness-raising events held in the EP and at its margins.

This article argues that two main reasons account for these memory entrepreneurs' failure to keep the legacies of Soviet-type regimes at the top of the EP's agenda after 2009. First, Central European societies remain divided in their assessment of the Socialist period (Mark 2010, Bernhard and Kubik 2014). The criminalization of Communism is associated with INMs and with a particular segment of academia, which are contested on scientific and political grounds (Kopeček 2008). The uploading of those debates to European institution has resulted in a strong ideological polarization in the EP regarding the interpretation of

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<sup>5</sup> Some papers mention the creation of anti-communist networks (Mälksoo 2014, Welsh 2015) without however providing a detailed analysis of their activities.

<sup>6</sup> The empirical data used in this article have been collected with a qualitative method combining documentary study, semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observation. Eighteen members of PACE and the EP, 17 of which represented states of the former Eastern bloc, were identified as memory entrepreneurs because of their participation in all the debates on Communism, their involvement in initiating official texts condemning Socialist crimes and their contribution to awareness-raising actions since the early 1990s. 36 semi-structured interviews were conducted by the author with those representatives and with administrators of the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the EP and PACE involved in remembrance policy.

<sup>7</sup> This notion was coined by Medvetz to depict American think tanks as embedded in "a semi-structured network of organizations that traverses, links, and overlaps the more established spheres of academics, political, business and media production" (Medvetz 2012 : 25).

twentieth-century European history. Anti-communist MEPs, who overwhelmingly belong to the Christian-Democratic group EPP (Europe's People Party), face fierce opposition from their peers in the S&D (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats) and in the GUE (European United Left). Second, the anti-communist memory entrepreneurs' demands are in great contrast with the patterns of remembrance established in the Western World in the 1970s and consecrated by the EU in the 1990s. Their request to acknowledge their own suffering presented as wrongfully ignored differs from the "politics of regret" favoured by Western governments, which amounts to admitting past wrongs and asking for the victims' forgiveness (Olick, 2007). The will to impose a single narrative collides with the "multi-perspective" history promoted by the European organisations, admitting the plurality of points of view on the past as long as they are founded on an objectively established factual basis (Garcia, 2009). Moreover, including historical episodes other than World War II among the relevant pasts of Europe questions the significance of the Holocaust as founding event of the continent's history. Their vision of Socialist systemic crimes is structured by a "mimetic rivalry" with the Judeocide (Laignel-Lavastine, 1999): denunciation of the "amnesia" and the "amnesty" seen as surrounding Communist crimes results in calling into question the singularity of the Nazis' extermination of the Jews, allegedly obscuring the full comprehension of other mass violence. This leads anti-communist memory entrepreneurs to be regularly accused by their political competitors and by militants of the Jewish cause of trivialising Nazism and minimising the complicity of parts of Eastern European societies in the extermination of the Jews.<sup>8</sup>

The next section analyzes the creation of two overlapping hybrid networks meant to coordinate claims for recognition and prosecution of Socialist systemic crimes at the EU level, i.e. the intergroup "Reconciliation of European Histories" and the "Platform of European Memory and Conscience." It shows that their membership is geographically and ideologically very homogeneous, and that this weak representativeness hinders their capacity to turn their demands into politically audible requests in the European political space. The memory entrepreneurs' repertoires of contention and impact inside and outside the EP are subsequently assessed through these networks' flagship projects. Because their vision of Europe's experience of dictatorship in the twentieth century is heavily centered on the Socialist period and doesn't allow for the confrontation of different interpretations of Communism, their activities appear politically motivated. As a result, their impact in the EP is limited to a very specific segment - the post-communist Conservatives, while their symbolic resonance in the general public is restricted to the former Eastern bloc.

## **I. Two overlapping hybrid networks**

In the EP, mutually exclusive perspectives on Communism are defended by representatives with distinct biographical characteristics and ideological references, who belong to two antagonistic coalitions. The first interpretation distinguishes several phases in the history of the Socialist regimes, characterised by variable degrees of political violence. It also makes a distinction between fascism and Nazism on the one hand and Communism on the other by underscoring the uniqueness of the Holocaust. This is the argumentative line of a heterogeneous group of Central and Western European members of the S&D and the GUE

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<sup>8</sup> The American academic Dovid Katz, for instance, wages a campaign against "Holocaust obfuscation," (<http://defendinghistory.com/>), while the Simon Wiesenthal Center reacted strongly to the adoption of the Resolution on European Conscience and Communism (<http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/s/content.asp?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=4442915&ct=7548759#.VHXAFc90zIU>).

groups. The former condemn the violations of human rights perpetrated by the Soviet-type regimes and underline that social democrats were persecuted by right-wing as well as by left-wing dictatorships during the twentieth century. The latter make antifascism the basis of their political engagement and stress the risk of resurgence of far-right ideologies. Their reading of Communism and post-communism highlights the positive aspects of the Socialist experiment and the shortcomings of capitalism. A second vision, anchored in the totalitarian paradigm, characterises Communism by its alleged essence, namely violence. It considers it an ahistorical project of brutality comparable with other outbursts of mass violence, notably genocidal, and demands equal treatment of the victims of Nazism and of those of Stalinism/Communism.<sup>9</sup> This perspective is mainly advanced by members of the EPP, and to a lesser extent of the ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe) and the Green/EFA (Greens/European Free Alliance) parliamentary groups. Those MEPs are former dissidents, but also younger politicians from post-communist states who built their political profile on the criticism of the collusion of two totalitarian regimes that shared out Central and Baltic Europe through the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and committed equally cruel crimes in these regions (Neumayer 2015). It is against this background that a small group of memory entrepreneurs created transnational networks that reach from the EP to INM, parts of academia and victims associations in the former Eastern bloc.

### **1) The informal grouping “Reconciliation of European histories”**

The genealogy of the group “Reconciliation of European histories” (REH) can be traced back to the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> EP term, when Conservative MEPs started activating national and party links to seek equal political and legal treatment of Communist and Nazi crimes. Those representatives drew on the collective resources from the EPP, the biggest political group in the Parliament, and to a lesser extent from the smaller Union for Europe of Nations (UEN). They also approached the two main right-to-the-center European Foundations, the Robert Schuman Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which provided them with legitimacy and fundings to organize conferences and publish their proceedings.

Starting in 2004, the EPP led a series of coordinated actions to raise awareness about the legacies of Communism. In the run-up to its enlargement, it called for the EU to “adopt an official declaration for the international condemnation of totalitarian Communism” and underlined that “the fight against fascism has demonstrated that the demolition of a regime does not defeat an ideology, and that the memory of the crimes committed must be maintained in order to prevent revival of totalitarian ideologies and practices” (EPP 2004). In June 2006, the EPP organized a Study Day on “The Reunification of European History” with a welcoming address by its Chairman, Hans-Gert Pötering. The MEPs, historians and human rights activists who took part in this event criticized the lack of clear European condemnation of Communism after the Cold War<sup>10</sup>. Because they proceeded from the right part of the political spectrum only, those initiatives had no official follow-up.

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<sup>9</sup> The choice of these terms is politically significant. Although none of the MEPs in this study deny Stalinist crimes, some establish a distinction between on the one hand Stalinism, a historical period during which mass violence was committed in the Eastern bloc, and on the other hand communism, an ideology having produced extremely diverse political practices, which cannot be reduced to the concept of crime (Dreyfus et al 2000).

<sup>10</sup> MEPs Sandra Kalniete, Tunne Kelam, Vytautas Landsbergis, Gunnar Hökmark and Györgyi Schöpflin; the historians Alfred Erich Senn (University of Wisconsin), Richard Overby (University of Exeter) and Françoise Thom (University Paris 4); Serguei Kovalev, the President of the Russian NGO Memorial.

In November 2007, the Council of the EU adopted a Framework Resolution on the fight against racism and xenophobia that failed to penalize the denial of Communist crimes and called instead for the organization of a public debate in the EP on “crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes.” This prompted a group of 5 MEPs from Hungary (Györgyi Schöpflin, EPP), Estonia (Tunne Kelam, EPP), Latvia (Girts Valdis Kristovskis, UEN), Lithuania (Vytautas Landsbergis, EPP) and Poland (Wojciech Roszkowski, UEN) to found a working group entitled “United Europe-United History” aimed at “reappraising the history of Europe from the perspective of human rights.” They suggested forming a Working Group on “Truth, Justice and Reconciliation” charged with selecting case studies of violations of human rights that “should be either sent to the International Court of Justice or should be examined by a special Tribunal, or should be publicized in the media and promoted as necessary in the European Union schools.” Second, the Group wanted to establish “general and legal principles how a democratic state should deal with the legacy of undemocratic or totalitarian past,” and to set up “a European institute which should promote the awareness of the common European History [and] investigate past wrongdoings in order to strengthen the European identity and the consciousness of democracy and human rights.”<sup>11</sup> Again, they had no impact in the EP.

After the 2009 European elections, two of these memory entrepreneurs left the EP<sup>12</sup> and the Working Group failed to be officially recognized as an Intergroup. These parliamentary groupings, officially aimed at “holding informal exchanges of views on particular subjects and promoting contact between Members and civil society,” allow MEPs to publicize political preferences, exchange information and coordinate legislative activities (Nedergaard and Jensen 2014)<sup>13</sup>. They also represent an access point to European decision-making bodies for interest groups, which often support them financially with the hope of turning their demands into legislative proposals (Bouwen 2004). Since 1999, an intergroup can be formed only if it is supported by three political groups.<sup>14</sup> Although a political group usually coordinates an intergroup, its legitimacy depends on the range of national delegations and political tendencies it encompasses. The informal status of the REH group illustrates the weak appeal of the anti-communist cause not only in the Parliament as a whole, but even within the EPP, which decided to support the creation of other intergroups at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> term in 2009<sup>15</sup>.

This narrowly defined informal grouping was renamed “Reconciliation of European Histories” and reactivated under the leadership of the newly elected MEP Sandra Kalniete in 2010. It is primarily led by four figures of the opposition to Communist regimes turned EPP representatives. Their life stories produced convergent representations of the Socialist past centered on terror and repression, while their previous social experiences and positions provide them with personal connections and political negotiation skills at the national and international level. In addition, these MEPs specialize at the EP as “defenders of Human Rights,” especially in the post-Soviet space<sup>16</sup>:

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<sup>11</sup> [http://schopflingyorgy.hu/news\\_display/united\\_europe\\_united\\_history/](http://schopflingyorgy.hu/news_display/united_europe_united_history/).

<sup>12</sup> Girts Valdis Kristovskis and Wojciech Roszkowski.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/20150201PVL00010/Organisation>.

<sup>14</sup> Idem.

<sup>15</sup> During the 7th EP term, the estimated number of intergroups was 80, out of which 27 only were officially recognized. At the beginning of the 8th EP term, 28 intergroups were officially recognized, cf idem.

<sup>16</sup> As illustrated by the parliamentary activities mentioned on each MEP’s webpage: membership in commissions, drafting of reports, questions, declarations and motions for resolution, cf <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search.html>.

\***Sandra Kalniete** (LV): born in banishment in Siberia in 1952, art historian. One of the leaders of the Latvian popular front (1989-1991), diplomat, Foreign Affairs minister (2002-2004). Member of the Convention for the Future of Europe (2003), European commissioner (May-November 2004), MEP (2009-...).

\***Vytautas Landsbergis** (LT): born in 1932, musicologist. President of the Council of the Sajudis movement (1988-1991), President of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania (1990-1992), member of PACE (1993-1996, 2000-2002), MEP (2004-2014).

\* **László Tőkés** (RO): born in 1952, bishop. Leader of the 1989 demonstrations in Timisoara. MEP (2007-...), vice-president of the EP (June 2010- January 2012).

\***Tunne Kelam** (EE): born in 1936, archivist and historian. Member of the Estonian Committee (1990-1992) and of the Estonian Parliament (1992-2004). Member of PACE (1993-2000), MEP (2004-...).

### **Text box 1. Leaders of the REH Group**

When the REH Group was created in the spring 2010, it aimed to reach across national and ideological divisions in order to achieve “true reunification of European history based on truth and remembrance.” More specifically, its goal was to “develop a common approach regarding crimes of totalitarian regimes, inter alia totalitarian Communist regime of the USSR, to ensure continuity of the process of evaluation of totalitarian crimes and equal treatment and non-discrimination of victims of all totalitarian regimes.”<sup>17</sup> Despite their pan-European ambitions, its members face serious difficulties in engaging their fellow MEPs outside of a distinct segment of the Assembly: the post-communist Conservatives. Out of its 40 official members, 32 come from the former Eastern bloc and 33 belong to the EPP. The REH lacks the material resources (secretariat, meeting rooms, translation) that an official recognition as intergroup would entail. The Robert Schuman Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, as well as the EPP, sponsor a large share of its activities, in which the former Conservative Presidents of the EP Hans-Gert Pöttering and Jerzy Buzek regularly take part<sup>18</sup>. During the 7<sup>th</sup> EP term, one of Sandra Kalniete’s assistants managed its newsletter and website, which documents the group’s activities and provides links to INMs. The last posting was however added in March 2014 and the website has been dormant in the 8<sup>th</sup> EP term<sup>19</sup>.

## **2) The Platform of European Memory and Conscience**

Intertwined national and transnational logics account for the creation of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience (hereinafter Platform) between 2008 and 2011. This network was set up to strengthen the links between MEPs from the REH group, who belong to its Board of Trustees, and INMs and academics defending a totalitarian analysis of Communism.

The Platform is the result of a Czech initiative dubbed “the Prague process,” which combined the moral capital of the dissidents with the institutional resources of the Czech INM (the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, hereinafter ISTR). In order to establish its

<sup>17</sup> <http://eureconciliation.wordpress.com/about/>.

<sup>18</sup> Hans-Gert Pöttering, from Germany, and Jerzy Buzek, from Poland, were Presidents of the European Parliament for the EPP, respectively in 2007-2009 and in 2009-2012.

<sup>19</sup> <http://eureconciliation.wordpress.com/about/> (last accessed on February 27, 2017).

legitimacy in a very conflictive national context (Dvořáková 2007), the newly created ISTR organized a conference on “European Conscience and Communism” in Prague in June 2008, with the help of MEP Jana Hybášková<sup>20</sup> and the support of First Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs Alexandr Vondra. The “Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Totalitarianism” that was adopted during this conference was later signed by prominent former dissidents, MEPs and PACE members, human rights activists, historians and INM staff. The Declaration called, e.g. for the creation of an “Institute of European Memory and Conscience which would be both [...] a European research institute for totalitarianism studies [and] a pan-European museum/memorial of victims of all totalitarian regimes” (Prague Declaration 2008). This project benefited from the attention that accompanied the EU Czech Presidency in the first semester of 2009, from the inter-institutional trade-off that used remembrance as a substitute for legal treatment of Communist crimes in the EU in 2009-2010, and from the political support of the Visegrad Group in 2011-2012. In October 2011, the constitutive meeting of the network was hosted in Prague by the ISTR, under the auspices of three Conservative Prime ministers: Donald Tusk of Poland, also acting President of the EU Council, Viktor Orbán of Hungary, and Petr Nečas of the Czech Republic. It initially brought together 18 INM, alongside the Institute for Information on the Crimes of Communism based in Stockholm and the Foundation History of Totalitarian Regimes and their Victims based in Amsterdam. In 2011-2014, the Platform was financially supported by the International Visegrad Fund<sup>21</sup> through a three-year Strategic Grant awarded to the ISTR.<sup>22</sup>

To assert the necessity of its action, the network points out that “many of the problems encountered in countries in transition to democracy, including erosion of values, widespread corruption and lack of trust of citizens in the state are a direct legacy of totalitarian rule” (Platform 2001:1). Its objectives are threefold. First, the Platform seeks to “increase public awareness about European history and the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes and encourage a broad, European-wide discussion about the causes and consequences of totalitarian rule, as well as about common European values, with the aim of promoting human dignity and human rights.” Its members also commit themselves to “create a pan-European documentation centre/memorial for victims of all totalitarian regimes” in Brussels and to “support initiatives at the European level with a view to giving indiscriminate treatment to all crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as to their victims” (Platform 2011:3).

The Platform presents its activities as a combination of historical education and promotion of democratic values, but it mainly uses universalistic ethics of human rights to advocate for a specific cause: the recognition, not of the undisputed reality of the crimes committed by the Socialist regimes, but of their moral, political and legal equivalence to Nazi mass violence. In its constituting agreement, the Platform puts in a single category “the totalitarian dictatorships of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe, National socialism, Communism and Fascism.” While recognizing the “exceptionality and uniqueness of the Holocaust”, its members note that “both the National Socialist and Communist dictatorships committed crimes against humanity, war crimes, including crimes against national minorities and

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<sup>20</sup> Former diplomat, MEP for the European Democratic Party (2004-2009), who had close ties to Czech authorities during the Czech EU Presidency. Hybášková initiated, with Tunne Kelam and the Hungarian MEP József Szájer, the process that led to the adoption of the Resolution on European Memory and Conscience by the EP in April 2009 (Neumayer 2015).

<sup>21</sup> An organization founded in June 2000 by the Visegrad Group countries - the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia - to promote regional cooperation, cf <http://visegradfund.org/about/>.

<sup>22</sup> The ISTR was excluded from the Platform in 2014 after an acrimonious change of leadership, but the Platform’s headquarter remained in Prague. Since 2014, its main financial support has come from the Hungarian government.

genocide” and that “many perpetrators of those crimes have not been brought to justice” (Platform 2011:3).

In 2017, this strikingly homogeneous network defines itself as “a non-profit international non-governmental organisation bringing together 51 public and private institutions and organisations from 18 countries<sup>23</sup> [...] active in research, documentation, awareness raising and education about the totalitarian regimes which befell Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>24</sup> It plays a key role in the circulation of an anti-communist grammar between INM, the EP and PACE. Göran Lindblad, its President, uses the notoriety he acquired as Rapporteur of the Resolution on the “Need for International Condemnation of the Crimes of Totalitarian Communist Regimes” at PACE in 2006, while its Managing Director, Neela Winkelmann-Heyrovská, was one of the main links between the EP and the Czech authorities during the Prague Process. INM historians represent the majority of the members of the Platform’s Executive Board and Supervisory Board. Conservative MEPs form the Board of Trustees, with the notable exception of the Czech politicians Alexandr Vondra and Martin Mejstřík, the American journalist Anne Applebaum, and the French historian Stéphane Courtois, who coordinated the *Black Book of Communism*:

**Council of Members:**

*Each and all members are represented to the supreme body of the Platform, which decides on the creation and cancellation of membership and approves the budget and the Annual Report of the Platform.*

**President:**

*Elected by the Council of Members for a two-year term*

**Göran Lindblad** (SE), former MP, former member of PACE (2004-2010), EPP.

**Managing Director:**

*Elected by the Council of Members for a four-year term*

**Neela Winkelmann-Heyrovská** (CZ), former assistant to Martin Mejstřík at the Czech Senate, took an active part in the preparation of the Prague Declaration in 2008 and of the EP Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism in 2009.

**Executive Board:**

*Elected by the Council of Members for a two-year term. Governs the activity of the Platform in-between the meetings of the Council of Members.*

**Toomas Hiio** (EE), Member of the Board, Estonian Institute of Historical Memory

**Zsolt Szilágyi** (RO), Head of Cabinet of László Tőkés, former Vice-President of the EP

**Siegfried Reiprich** (DE), Director, Saxon Memorial Foundation for the Remembrance of Victims of Political Tyranny

**Paweł Ukielski** (PL), Deputy Director, Warsaw Uprising Museum

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<sup>23</sup> 13 EU Member States (Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria), Ukraine, Moldova, Iceland, Canada and the United States of America.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.memoryandconscience.eu/about-the-platfor/about-the-platform/> (last accessed on February 27, 2017).

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**Stéphane Courtois** (FR), historian, editor of the *Black Book of Communism. Crimes, terror, repression* (1999)

**Anne Applebaum** (USA), journalist, Pulitzer-Prize winning author of *Gulag: A History* (2003)

**Text box 2. Representatives of the Platform<sup>25</sup>**

The Platform fosters exchanges of resources between different social milieus with complementary legitimacies. It helps MEPs mitigate the ideological dimension of the anti-communist cause and present their actions as founded on science, meeting a social demand expressed by victims associations and congruent with public policies of management of the Socialist past. MEPs rely on the expertise provided by INM staff to rest their interpretations of controversial facts<sup>26</sup>. In return, they give a European label to institutions and victims associations whose positions may be contested within domestic academic and political fields. This is supposed to increase their visibility and their reputation, while strengthening their position in the competition for victimhood in Europe.<sup>27</sup> In line with established practices in the field of culture and history, setting up networks is also a condition to claim symbolic and financial support from the European Commission and the International Visegrad Fund. However, although the European Commission financially supported its two flagship projects in 2013 (*see below*), it never gave the Platform any operational support.

**II. Advocating for the cause of the “victims of Communism” inside and outside the EP**

Memory entrepreneurs involved in the REH and the Platform advocate for the cause of the “victims of Communism” by combining the repertoires of contention of *scandalisation*

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2011/10/26/representatives-of-the-platform/> (last accessed on February 27, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Such as the numbers of victims of Communist crimes or the analysis of complex historical episodes (for example, 1945 in Eastern Europe as « liberation from Nazism », « domination by the USSR », or both).

<sup>27</sup> The main competitor of the Platform is the Warsaw-based NGO « European Network for Remembrance and Solidarity » dedicated to scientific, educational and promotional projects related to the study and documentation of the dictatorial experiences in twentieth-century Europe (Büttner and Delius 2015). In its commemorations of mass violence, the European Commission also relies on older networks that uphold the thesis of the singularity of the Holocaust (Plessow 2015).

and *expertise* (Offerlé 1998). From a moral standpoint, they criticize the post-communist regimes and the international community for their alleged failure to clearly condemn Socialist crimes – a failure which explains, in their view, the weakness of Central and Eastern democracies and the symbolic inequality between victims of Communism and of Nazism. They also rely on historical and legal science to assert a crime-centered representation of Communism and of the political regimes that availed themselves of it. The figure of the “victim of Communism” results from the articulation of a specialized historical knowledge and an emotional appeal meant to create empathy with the victims, but also outrage at the impunity of the perpetrators and the indifference of the EU. For this purpose, MEPs organize awareness-raising events in the EP, while simultaneously using the Platform and the REH group to try to reach out to the general public. But their demands are in great contrast with the patterns of remembrance established in the Western World in the 1970s and Europeanized in the 1990s, which hinders their capacity to circulate their interpretation of Communism in the European political space.

### 1) Awareness-raising events in the EP

To keep the issue of “Communist crimes” on the EU agenda, the REH group regularly organizes hearings and conferences with the help of the EPP and its Foundations, of the rotating EU Presidencies of Central European governments<sup>28</sup>, and of a small group of INM scholars and academics. Instead of allowing for confrontation of scientific approaches and normative beliefs, the REH amounts to a “circle of mutual legitimation” (Bourdieu 1976: 90) with redundant participants who share the same vision of Communism:

**.29 March 2011** : public hearing “**What do Young Europeans know about Totalitarianisms?**”, under the patronage of the Hungarian EU Presidency and the EPP Group, organized by MEPs Kalniete, Tókécs and Zver, with the participation of e.g. Joseph Daul (EPP Chairman), Heidi Hautala (Green Chairwoman of the EP’s Sub-Committee on Human Rights), MEPs Kelam and Landsbergis, and staff of six INM.

**.19 October 2011** : EPP hearing on the **European Commission’s Report “The memory of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe”**, organized by MEP Kalniete with the participation of Jerzy Buzek and the head of the Czech INM.

**.7 March 2012** : seminar supported by the Robert Schuman Foundation on “**Life after the Soviet Union. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the USSR’s collapse**” under the patronage of Joseph Daul, with the participation of e.g. MEPs Kalniete, Weber (vice-Chairman of the EPP Group) and Buzek.

**.8 May 2012** : conference on “**Occupation after Liberation**” organised by MEP Vaidere with the participation of e.g. MEPs Daul, Kelam, Landsbergis and Schöpflin.

**.5 June 2012** : conference on “**Legal Settlement of Communist Crimes**” organized by the REH and the Platform with the participation of e.g. MEPs Buzek, Kalniete, Kelam, Tókécs, Zver, Schöpflin and Hautala, INM staff and Göran Lindblad.

**.27 May 2015** : conference “**Justice 2.0. International Crimes of the Communist Regimes. Cases for Further Investigation and Signal Litigation using International Criminal Justice**”, organized

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<sup>28</sup> Slovenia in 2008, the Czech Republic in 2009, Hungary and Poland in 2011, Lithuania in 2013 and Slovakia in 2016.

by the REH and the Platform with the participation of e.g. MEPs Kalniete, Kelam, Tókécs and Zver, Göran Lindblad and three legal scholars.

### **Text Box 3. Events organized by the REH Group in the EP**

The vast majority of the REH's members don't take part in any of these events, and some of them prefer to act on an individual basis to perpetuate the anti-communist cause in the EP. The Latvian MEP Inese Vaidere<sup>29</sup> provides a good example of alternatively collective and individual mobilizations. Vaidere co-authored the Declaration on "the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism" adopted by the EP in September 2008. She also asked several parliamentary questions during the adoption of Framework-Decision and the hearing on the crimes of totalitarianism in 2008, in which she emphasized the similarities between the Communist and Nazi regimes and criticized the unequal treatment of their victims<sup>30</sup>. During the EP's 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> terms, Inese Vaidere organized several conferences, hearings and cultural events that combined the promotion of Latvian culture, the criticism of the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union and the rejection of the linguistic claims of the Russian-speaking minorities:

.15 February 2012 : hearing of the EPP group "**Why Latvian must remain the only official language in Latvia**", with MEPs Buzek and Daul.

.8 May 2012 : conference "**Occupation after Liberation**", with MEPs Daul, Kelam, Landsbergis and Schöpflin.

.April 2014 : "**Latvian song and dance celebration**".

.14 May 2014 : screening of a documentary film about **the Latvian composer Raimonds Pauls**.

.October 2014 : exhibition "**Riga Capital of Culture 2014**".

.19 March 2015 : conference "**David and Goliath : small Nations under totalitarian rule**" with MEPs Morkūnaitė, Kelam and Schöpflin.

.27 May 2015 : screening of the film *Alias Loner* about the priest Antons Juhņevičs at the beginning of the Sovietization of Latvia.

### **Text box N°4. Events organized by Inese Vaidere in the EP**

Her interest for historical themes also led Inese Vaidere to support the making of a documentary film untitled *The Soviet Story* in 2008, for which she got funding from the Riga City Council and the UEN group. The young director Edvins Šnore wanted to react to the film

<sup>29</sup> Born in 1952, economist, former Minister of Environment, Vice-Mayor of Riga and president of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Latvian Parliament. MEP since 2004, for the UEN (2004-2009) and the EPP (2009-...).

<sup>30</sup> Cf "Written Question to the Commission by Inese Vaidere. Object : Crimes of the totalitarian communist regime", 6 February 2008, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2008-0591+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=en>; "Written Question to the Council by Inese Vaidere. Object : Crimes of the totalitarian communist regime", 12 February 2008, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2008-0591+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=en>.

*Baltic Nazism* made in 2005 by the Russian nationalist organization “The Third Rome.”<sup>31</sup> *The Soviet Story* intended to disclose not only the gravity of Communist crimes, but also the links between the atrocities of the Soviet regime and those of Nazi Germany:

“The film tells the story of the Soviet regime and how the Soviet Union helped Nazi Germany instigate the Holocaust. The film shows recently uncovered documents revealing this. Interviews with former Soviet Military intelligence reveal shocking details. *The Soviet Story* is a story of an Allied power, which helped the Nazis to fight Jews and which slaughtered its own people on an industrial scale. Assisted by the West, this power triumphed on May 9th, 1945. Its crimes were made taboo, and the complete story of Europe’s most murderous regime has never been told. Until now...”<sup>32</sup>

The film’s poster perfectly summarizes the argument of the film: Communism in general, and the Soviet state in particular, were built on a system of terror. The poster represents a pile of corpses on which a couple is drawn according to the socialist-realist style. Under this mass grave, photographs of Lenin and of Vladimir Putin are put side by side, next to contrasted visual symbols of the Soviet period - a starving child and a woman’s body in a field on the one hand, propaganda art on the other:



Source : [www.sovietstory.com](http://www.sovietstory.com) (last accessed on January 11th, 2016)

*The Soviet Story* aims to demonstrate that the USSR did not only commit crimes : it was a criminal enterprise by essence, which inspired Nazi mass violence and was equally responsible for the breaking of the Second World War. Using a particularly controversial expression of the *Black Book of Communism* (Courtois et al 1999), Edvins Šnore claims that the Soviet “class genocide” and the Nazi “racial genocide” can be equated. *The Soviet Story*

<sup>31</sup> This film accused Latvian citizens of committing crimes against humanity during the Second World War and established a direct link between those crimes and the difficulties experienced by Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia after 1991, cf [http://www.3rim.ru/projects/2005/nacizm-po\\_pribaltijski](http://www.3rim.ru/projects/2005/nacizm-po_pribaltijski) (last accessed on January 11th, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> cf [www.sovietstory.com](http://www.sovietstory.com) (last accessed on January 11th, 2016).

thus uses Nazism to demonize Communism by association but makes a peculiar use of archive material. Soviet crimes are illustrated by shocking images of dead bodies and mass graves, whereas the Nazi atrocities are not documented and the only images referring to the Third Reich are extracts from Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda films. Šnore also interviews several historians<sup>33</sup> and MEPs<sup>34</sup>, all of whom agree on the comparability of the Soviet and Nazi crimes. Resentment towards the EU's indifference is clearly expressed in the following statements by the voice over: "The victims of Soviet crimes are quietly passing away, receiving no comfort, no justice – in the EU that is reserved for other victims". The film ends with a call for the Russian authorities to investigate those crimes and prosecute their perpetrators, because failing to come to terms with the totalitarian past feeds xenophobia and political extremism in today's Russia.

Unsurprisingly, *The Soviet Story* sparked an international row immediately after Inese Vaidere organized its premiere to the EP in April 2008, with the pro-Kremlin youth movement "Nashi" protesting in Brussels against the screening. The main Russian media and pro-government political movements immediately criticized the film and its director, whereas the Polish, Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian presidents praised them. The film was broadcast by about twenty European news channels, and *The Soviet Story* was screened to members of the U.S. Congress and in several diaspora circles in the United States and in Canada<sup>35</sup>. On 17 May 2008, the UEN group organized a press conference at the EP to criticize the "uncivilized protest" against this film in Moscow.

## 2) Reaching out to the general public

The Platform's two flagship projects directed to the general public, a travelling exhibition and a reader for high school students, are equally framed by the totalitarian paradigm and a mimetic rivalry with the Holocaust. Because INMs provided the content of the country case studies presented in those educational materials, a great emphasis is put on the historical experience of the Baltic and Central European countries at the expense of a comprehensive vision of Europe's past.

In 2013, the Platform put together an international travelling exhibition on "Totalitarianism in Europe" which was financially supported by the EU program Europe for Citizens and the International Visegrad Fund. By February 2017, this exhibition had been presented in twelve EU member states, as well as in the USA, the Ukraine, the EP and PACE<sup>36</sup>.

Its most striking feature is that it breaks with the usual presentation of Europe's dark pasts provided by European organizations, in which "evil ideologies and subsequent crimes are being denounced without clearly pointing to the individuals and societies who are guilty thereof" (Kübler 2010: 1). The travelling exhibition shows not only "the statistics of the victims of the gravest crimes of 20th century Fascism/Nazism and Communism from 12 EU Member States," but also some of the leaders of the totalitarian regimes responsible for international crimes. When available, a third element of information is given: the number of

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<sup>33</sup> Françoise Thom (University Paris 4), Norman Davies (University of Oxford), Nicolas Werth (CNRS, France), Pierre Rigoulot (CNRS, France), George Watson (University of Cambridge), Boris Sokolov (Russian State University of Social Science) and Natalia Lebedeva (Russia Academy of Sciences).

<sup>34</sup> Inese Vaidere, Wojciech Roszkowski, Ari Vatanen (FIN, EPP), Christopher Beazley (UK, EPP), André Brie (DE, GUE) and Michael Gahler (DE, EPP).

<sup>35</sup> cf [www.sovietstory.com](http://www.sovietstory.com) (last accessed on January 11th, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> cf <http://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2013/11/17/presentations-of-the-international-travelling-exhibition-totalitarianism-in-europe/> (last accessed on February 27th, 2017).

prosecutions of perpetrators after the fall of these regimes and the prison sentences that were actually served. The dictatorships are therefore personified, and the individuals responsible for international crimes are personally identified by a photograph and a short biography. Although the exhibition claims to “educate [the broad public] about the criminal nature of the totalitarian regimes and about the interconnection of both European totalitarianisms of the 20th century,” its design mainly equates them: it is conceived as a black album presenting, on individual pages per country, the Nazi/Fascist regime on one side, and the Communist regime on the other. No distinction is established in the degree of responsibility of the leaders whose photographs and biographies are included, regardless of the functions they held - Hitler and Mussolini are shown alongside ministers of Defense or of the Interior, heads of political police or ideologists of various Socialist regimes. The catalogue also stresses “the difference between the common perception of the Fascist and Nazi dictatorships on the one side and the Communist dictatorship on the other” and states that “the justice done has been a precondition for the moral restitution of the victims and reconciliation within society” in the case of Nazism. It criticizes the impunity granted to the perpetrators of Socialist crimes, despite the numerous conventions signed by European states since 1945 to protect human rights (Platform 2013a: 1).

Although the Platform presents the exhibition as an analysis of “the most devastating totalitarian regimes based on radical belief – Communism, Fascism and Nazism”, its geographic coverage is very uneven. It does take into account twelve EU members that used to belong to the Eastern bloc<sup>37</sup>, but includes only two Western countries: the Netherlands and the German Federal Republic. Fascism is mentioned only through the occupation of Slovenia by Italy, whereas the regimes of Pétain, Franco, Salazar and the Greek colonels are completely ignored. In addition, the exhibition makes rather ambiguous references to the Holocaust. The catalogue recalls “the unparalleled tragedy of the Holocaust and World War Two and its atrocities” while mentioning quite vaguely that “the totalitarian regimes committed *practically*<sup>38</sup> the same categories of international crimes”. It also adds up all civilian victims of international crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in order to underline that Communist totalitarianism is “responsible for much larger losses in human lives than World War Two” (Platform 2013a: 1).

This exhibition serves two main purposes. First, it was a step leading to calls for the EU to prosecute former Socialist leaders who ordered or condoned international crimes. In 2015, the Platform thus launched the campaign “Justice 2.0” in order to achieve international justice for the killings along the Iron Curtain during the entire Cold War and the persecutions of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria in the 1980s<sup>39</sup>. Second, the traveling exhibition is a substitute for the Museum/Memorial to the victims of Communism that was mentioned in 2011 in the Platform’s Constituting Agreement. No step was taken in this direction until the fall of 2016, when the Slovak EU Presidency supported a competition organized by the Platform under the auspices of Tibor Navracsics, the Hungarian EU Commissioner for Education and Culture. Young Europeans were invited to make proposals for such a memorial and the winning entries were to be exhibited during the commemoration of the European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarianism held on 23 August 2016 in Bratislava. 5 students, all from Slovakia and the Czech Republic, were honoured at this event, which was however not attended by any Western European politician<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> The former GDR, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland, Romania.

<sup>38</sup> Underlined by the author.

<sup>39</sup> cf <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/justice/>.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2016/08/24/eu-commemoration-event-and-ministerial-conference-on-23-august-2016-in-bratislava-slovakia/>.

The Platform's second flagship project is the reader *Lest we forget: Memory of Totalitarianism in Europe. A reader for older secondary school students anywhere in Europe*, which also benefited from the financial support of the program Europe for Citizens and the International Visegrad Fund, and the input of some INMs (Platform 2013b). This book shows the persecutions experienced by opponents to Communism and to Nazism, but also by Jews, Roma and Crimean Tatars in 12 countries from the former Eastern bloc<sup>41</sup>, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Austria. The foreword presents this collection of "30 remarkable life stories of people affected by totalitarianism from 16 European countries" as a tool to "promote mutual respect and harmony between European citizens [and] deepen the integration of a free and democratic Europe" (Platform 2013b: 3).

The reader's introduction written by Stéphane Courtois, "The tragic memory of European totalitarian regimes," states the main arguments of the totalitarian analysis of Communism – including its most disputed elements. It highlights the radical novelty of the totalitarian regimes that emerged in the 1920s-1930s and reiterates Ernst Nolte's interpretation of Nazism as a reaction to, and even an imitation of, Bolshevism<sup>42</sup>. The Holocaust is duly mentioned and qualified as genocide and the extermination policy carried out by the Nazis against the "Slavs" is also recalled. But Communist crimes are then put on an equal footing with Nazi crimes: "the war situation enabled totalitarian powers to secretly engage in civilians' massacres and collective deportations against groups defined according to ideological criteria: racial for the Nazis – targeting specifically the Jews imprisoned in ghettos – and social for the Communists – targeting the economic elites, deported with their families to the USSR" (Platform 2013b:10). This symmetric vision of both dictatorships, which excludes any discussion of the purpose of these deportations, logically leads to criticizing the "double standards" used in the assessment of Communism and Nazism. The Nuremberg Tribunal, the UN Resolution that defined genocide and recognized the specificity of the Holocaust in 1948, are opposed to the "glorious powerful memory of Communism" which allegedly existed in Europe between 1945 and 1989<sup>43</sup>. Courtois finally mentions the Resolutions adopted by PACE and the EP "towards the reunification of memories", and ends his introductory text with these words: "most European countries are reunified today in the EU on the political, legal, and economic levels. But we are far from a common European memory which would equally consider the tragedies provoked by the great totalitarian systems, Nazi and Communist alike" (Platform 2013b:13).

The biographies presented in the reader alternate between a "humanitarian" and a "conflict-ridden" perspective (Diaz and Gutiérrez 2009). The former stresses the innocence of victims persecuted for their ethnic or religious identity, while the latter makes references to fighters, to individuals who resisted state terror and deliberately opposed totalitarian regimes. Those life stories thus embody the "victims" as well as the "heroes" of anti-totalitarianism, while relying on a human rights paradigm, which is highly valued in the EU and gives the anti-Communist cause a broader significance. According to a conception of history as a reservoir of exemplary behavior, those tragic lives are told as role models and each story ends

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<sup>41</sup> Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic.

<sup>42</sup> Ernst Nolte initiated the *Historikerstreit*, which opposed liberal and conservative German historians about the significance of Nazism in German history in the late 1980s and raised the issue of the uniqueness of the Holocaust versus its comparison with the crimes of Communism (Knowlton and Cates 1993).

<sup>43</sup> According to Courtois, this lack of balance results from the role of the Red Army in the victory against Nazi Germany and the "myth" of the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe in 1944-1945, but also from the strength of the French and Italian Communist parties. Their propaganda allegedly created a "hypermnnesia of antifascism that the Communists claimed a monopoly of, and an amnesia of the Soviet-Nazi alliance, and more broadly of the totalitarian dimension of Communist regimes" (Platform 2013b:13).

with a few words that “draw the lessons” of those individual fates. This symmetrical presentation of the victims of the Nazi and Communist regimes, including some people successively persecuted by both regimes, is also meant to assert the equivalence between the crimes committed by those dictatorships.

## Conclusion

Cutting across the sociology of memory and the sociology of European integration, this article has investigated the awareness-raising activities carried out by MEPs to demand political recognition and legal settlement of Communist crimes during the EP’s 7th and 8th terms. It provides new insight on the often overlooked non-legislative initiatives through which memory entrepreneurs lobby for the cause of the “victims of Communism” both inside and outside the European Parliament. Some of them use parliamentary channels of influence such as the informal group Reconciliation of European Histories to try to keep this issue on the EU’s agenda. Others are involved in the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, a transnational network located in interstitial fields between national and European, and academic and political, spheres. Participation in these intertwined networks allows the mobilized MEPs to pool individual and collective political resources and to combine them with policy-oriented historical and legal knowledge provided by like-minded academics. They are thus able to circulate, within the European political space, normative and cognitive frames in line with a totalitarian interpretation of Communism that equalizes Soviet and Nazi crimes and sets both dictatorships apart from other non-democratic pasts.

Although they use the repertoires of scandalization and expertise that are most efficient in the European political space, anti-communist memory entrepreneurs have largely failed to juridify and judicialize the treatment of the mass violence of the Socialist regimes at the European level. In line with the “practice” turn in EU studies and the increased attention paid to the issue of agency in mnemopolitics, this article has shown that, besides the ideological polarization over Communism at the EP, the conditions of production of this narrative of indictment account for its relative lack of success. These networks lack a broad national and ideological representativeness and are limited to a narrowly defined segment of the EP: the Conservative representatives from the former Eastern bloc. MEPs from other ideological orientations criticize their staunch anti-communist rhetoric, which is moreover characterized by mimetic rivalry with the Holocaust and collides with established Western patterns of remembrance. The memory entrepreneurs’ impact on the general public via a travelling exhibition and a reader for high school students are likewise limited to the former Eastern bloc. The lack of symbolic resonance of the commemoration of the 23 August outside the countries that were directly affected by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact shows that the Holocaust remains the “negative founding myth for Europe” (Leggewie 2008: 219), whereas the “Velvet Revolutions” of 1989-1991 have failed to mark the beginning of a new era for the whole continent. It is therefore highly probable that despite their ongoing mobilizations, the vision of history put forward by anti-communist memory entrepreneurs will remain of a regional, rather than pan-European, significance.

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