**Z. Vojko Kunaver**

**“Integrimi i mësimdhënies për regjimet totaliatre në kurrikula dhe material mësimore të historisë: Mundësitë dhe sfidat”**

I’m also here in my capacity as Vice chair of the scientific advisory Council of the observatory on history teaching in Europe. I was very happy today to her observatory mentioned several times because I think its work is extremely important. Today it’s although I’m repeating something that many speakers have said already I will say this because I believe it is especially important and it’s especially important to the observatory’s work as well history education is essential to building but not only building but maintaining democracy and I’m emphasizing maintaining because this I think is especially important in times like these. When the question is no longer developing democracy as it was for post-socialist state when I was growing up in 1990s Romania but rather preventing its backsliding and for post-socialist countries the recent history of the communist regimes is particularly important for a number of reasons. One because it is recent and for most students it’s still personal, even in if students in primary and secondary education today unlike myself have not lived through communism but their parent’s grandparents or relative would have and this is a lived experience that I’m sure is omnipresent in conversations at home. Second because it is of public interest we heard a lot about this already the history of the totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe are a subject of debate in the media and public debates more generally in commemorations and so on and third it’s important to teach history of the communist regimes because it was often in counter distinction to the former communist dictatorships that the new democratic identities if I may call them so of post-socialist states were developed after 1989 or after 1991 in some cases.

Along these lines opening up the archives of the former secret police or political police whatever you want to call it is extremely important without such access on of the most infamous branches of the repressive state apparatus of communist regimes would remain a black box and the black box is always subject to suspicion to speculation. It arises fears feelings of fear alongside curiosity and opening these archives is instead indicative as Professor Denis Deletant said this morning as well of a commitment to transparency in public life. The primary example of the is the GDR of the East German Republic in 1990 when people stormed the Stasi offices as we heard this morning and already in 1990 access to the former Stasi archives was open to the public and this calls into question the very existence of these archives the reason why it existed and why they were so why the surveillance was so extensive and intrusive in people’s private lives was that socialists did not trust their citizens. They were afraid of their citizens because they suspected and often with good reason. That the citizens themselves did not trust and were afraid of them own states which again was true and this is of course also a legacy through which young democracies need to work through in order to build or rebuild this trust between the state and citizens as a Romania citizen who lives in Ireland. Now one of the things that strikes me when I traveled to Western Europe is that citizens tend to trust their state whereas where I come from to this day people are mostly suspicious and don’t trust their state and I think that opening up these archives showing this dark legacy of the communist period is extremely important in building this relationship of trust between the citizens and the state but also going back to what really concerns us how to use this in the classroom.

This opening of archives connects to our emphasis as historians on the use of primary sources as one of the building blocks of the discipline and this is absolutely key to a quality history education. The general report on the state of history teaching in Europe of the Observatory recently released makes that very clear and this is I believe all the more so a priority in an age when us students do not suffer from a lack of resources as someone who grew up under communism I know very well how hard it was to find reliable information in about the country’s history. Today students suffer from the opposite they suffer from information overload and the more controversial a topic is the more likely it is that there is a problematic historical content of available especially online what in recent years have come to be known as alternative facts or fake news and the problem with such content is that it’s often very nice packaged it makes use of the latest technologies uses social media for dissemination etc. so the job of history teacher is perhaps more difficult than ever and becomes even more difficult when it comes to dealing with very recent past. Now there are two words that are important in the title of this panel opportunities and challenges and I think there are great opportunities in using material from secret police archives in history teaching one because there is fascination of the students with the secret in secret police archives. I know this from my own personal experience in 15 years of teaching such stories of repression, of intrusion into people’s personal lives but also of spies as many students understand them in many ways definitely for the period of the Cold War this is attractive to students using such archival sources is potentially attractive to students. They have a feeling of accessing what was previously forbidden knowledge of tasting the forbidden fruit which is ultimately what I think knowledge is all about a second reason why there are opportunities because showing documents and gain I find this in my classroom experience. Showing archival sources as they actually were is always interesting for students it’s more interesting more engaging than reading historians description of those sources and in this particular case it also helps dispel this aura of mystery and suspicion which surrounded such repressive institutions as the secret police. A third reason is that as I was saying already earlier this is directly relevant to their life worlds and I found time and time again that students relate to history when that history relates to them rather than being some impersonal story about events that happened. Something that happened that somehow involved them and like I said they would have heard stories about this communist period in their families over Christmas dinner since they we are closed to the holidays now and this relates to that it relevant and as Mr Villiano Qiriazi said this morning archival documents have the power to transform abstract historical events into real human stories and there are real human stories in secret police archives I know because I’ve worked with this files and these real human stories can help us connect to students better and finally another opportunities that we heard a lot today about how relevant these documents are for understanding the workings of the state and of the repressive apparatus of the state. Which is of course very important we out of both historical curiosity and out of respect and responsibility towards the victims we need to look into the repression practiced by the communist regimes but they’re important for much more than they’re also important for social history. For the history of everyday life be you know unfortunately this extensive surveillance was an extremely important part of every life under socialism. So there is material in these archives about much more than just repression.

 One of the things I will give you as an example there were extensive files in the archives about people who grew homing pigeons these pigeons that you can send somewhere to deliver a letter or something and come back because these pigeons crossed borders and anything that crossed borders in Romania was suspicious in socialist Romania. So there are extensive material about pigeon growers there are extensive files on jokes about the regime which tell you something about the mindset of the people in the 1980s. So there’s more in there than just a story of repression of course there are also challenges and the main challenge is an issue of privacy especially concerning people named in archival documents whether as victims or as perpetrators or as collaborators we’ve heard a lot about lustration. So I’m not going to go into that but especially when it comes to the names and the memory of victims some of the may want to be named and some of them might not so there’s an issue in terms of the ethical dimension of using such material in the classroom.

Another challenge is the fact that this is a political issue which is likely to be polarizing in class but I teach things that are complicated and complex and I think we shouldn’t shy away from such topics because they are difficult we should engage with them precisely because they are difficult and even if they’re an emotional subject. Another challenge is the question of how to translate or integrate such arrival sources into teaching materials and the type of sources that we should be focusing on but I think here the work that has been done by previous National Institutions from Germany through Czech Republic or Slovakia to Romania or Poland in terms of these institution that are in charge of these archival holdings and their educational activities there is a lot to learn and there’s a Slovak calling college attendance and I know of a project in Slovakia which was doing something that I also do in my courses I it sent secondary school students in their neighborhoods to try to find victims of the communist regime such as you know former prisoners of conscience and so on and prepare a story of their lives which could be in the form of an essay or but also alternative media. In Poland there’s a very popular initiative of The Institution of National remembrance the commission for the prosecution of crimes against the polish nation has been the development of board games one of them has come to be internationally popular it’s called k or q and it deals with the hardships of daily life in the last years of communist Poland basically makes you play the difficult ways in which people obtained basic goods in communist Poland and of course in the communists eastern block and it was released initially in Poland and following its success it had versions with international versions with translations in English, German, Spanish, Japanese, French, the Romanian version was released in 2013. The German the federal commissioner for the records of the state security service of the former Democratic Republic long name I know but this commission that deals with the secret police archives in Germany organized events, exhibitions but also has created materials using excerpts from archival documents which are accompanied by worksheets by handouts for teacher’s educational DVDs and audio files. So they’ve already made into teaching material that can go into a history lesson they also provide all of these institution from Poland to Germany to Romania or the Czech Republic they provide teacher trainings where they teach history teachers how to overcome the challenges associated with the use of such archival resources and make the best out of opportunities available and I think Albania has taken a major step forward in terms of providing access to these archives and I’m sure that in cooperation between you know the Ministry of Education the Authority in charge of the archives and the teachers themselves because I think it’s very important to involve the teachers themselves because they know the students best and they know what will work and will not work in the history classroom. I’m sure there are plenty of opportunities to develop interesting educational materials using these recall resources.

Thank you!