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CULTURAL POLICIES, SOCIAL PRACTICES, IDENTITY EXERCISES:
SCHOOL FESTIVITIES IN TWENTIETH CENTURY ROMANIA
(Summary)

Keywords: school festivity, commemoration, cultural identity, civic culture.

Commemorative practices in the school environment are part of what we could call, in the discourse of the recent decades, the “hidden curricula” – a form of learning at least as dense as the formal courses or examinations, but with apparently insignificant stakes. They do not implement verifiable information, but emotions, affections, attitudes, identity options and recommendable, consensual forms of expressing them. The “scientific” knowledge that is circulated on this occasion does not usually exceed the regular content of a “classical” history lesson, but just summarizes it and confirms it socially. Conceived with a view to educating the pupils, these events actually start by imposing discipline to the educators and have the ultimate target of providing the whole community with a model of civic conduct. The convictions that they display and they feed, the public opinions they exploit and the social exercise that they regularly introduce in the school’s life are the real motivations of the celebrations, and not the historical event by itself.

School has been insistently requested, since the 19th century, to participate in such commemorative events, as it provided massive contingents of both docile audience and actors, present in all the sequences of a “national” festivity. Furthermore, each school community could generate, at a small scale, but observing the institutional hierarchy and local prestige, its own festivity. Such arrangements, meant for a limited audience, insisted, on the other way, on stage rigour and on the civic educational message. The school managed to preserve thus the essence of the tribute-paying act due to memorable events and characters, even under the most difficult conditions. The typology of these festivities proved to be extremely attractive, surviving quite upsetting historical developments.

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