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DISTORTION, NEGATIONISM, AND MINIMALIZATION OF THE HOLOCAUST IN POSTWAR ROMANIA

Introduction

This chapter reviews and analyzes the different forms of Holocaust distortion, denial, and minimalization in post-World War II Romania. It must be emphasized from the start that the analysis is based on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's definition of the Holocaust, which Commission members accepted as authoritative soon after the Commission was established. This definition¹ does not leave room for doubt about the *state-organized* participation of Romania in the genocide against the Jews, since during the Second World War, Romania was among *those allies and a collaborators of Nazi Germany* that had a *systematic plan for the persecution and annihilation* of the Jewish population living on territories under their unmitigated control. In Romania's specific case, an additional "target-population" subjected to or destined for genocide was the Romany minority.

This chapter will employ an adequate conceptualization, using both updated recent studies on the Holocaust in general and new interpretations concerning this genocide in particular. Insofar as the employed conceptualization is concerned, two terminological clarifications are in order. First, "distortion" refers to attempts to use historical research on the dimensions and significance of the Holocaust either to diminish its significance or to serve political and propagandistic purposes. Although its use is not strictly confined to the Communist era, the term "distortion" is generally employed in reference to that period, during which historical research was completely subjected to controls by the Communist Party's political censorship. It is therefore worth noting that while the definition of the Holocaust refers to a state-sponsored genocide, more recent studies on the ways in which the Holocaust was ignored and/or

¹ "The Holocaust was the state-sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi Germany." www.ushmm.org/museum/council/mission.php.

distorted as a function of political interests under Communist regimes refer to “state-organized forgetting.”²

An additional warranted clarification pertains to the use of the concept of *denial* or negationism, rather than the far more widely used term of revisionism. The choice stems from the fact that most of those who falsify, distort, and relativize the reality of the Holocaust label themselves “revisionists” in order to gain respectability; after all, historical revisionism is a legitimate act that is always warranted in reexamining what predecessors have produced. Negationism, by contrast, is not a reexamination of established facts or a well-founded critique of prior interpretations; rather, it is a more-or-less explicit attempt to deny the Holocaust. “Revisionism” is, therefore, only an alibi, a euphemism used to counter charges of negation. Thus, this chapter relies on the critique of “revisionism” developed by such scholars as Deborah Lipstadt, Michael Shermer, and Alex Grobman.³ These authors believe that while “denial” is a more accurate term than “revisionism,” the term “negationism” best reflects the true intentions of a revisionist rewriting of history.

Negationism is defined as the denial that the Holocaust took place and/or the denial of participation of significant numbers of members of one’s own nation in its perpetration. The negation may be outright and universal or deflective and particularistic.

The specter of negationism is large, but several categories and sub-categories can be distinguished among its forms. The first category is *integral* or *outright* denial, which rejects the very existence of the Holocaust. In Romania, just as in other former communist countries, integral denial is a wholesale Western “import,” with no traces of local originality whatsoever.⁴ However, influences of this Western import can be traced not only in their Romanian counterparts, but also in other categories of local negationism. It should be emphasized that the distinctions made between the different forms of negationism are, above all, of heuristic value. In

² For example, see Shari J. Cohen, *Politics without a Past: The Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 85-118, for the case of Slovakia.

³ See Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Plume, 1994); Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). See also Michael Shafir, “*Ex Occidente Obscuritas: The Diffusion of Holocaust Denial from West to East*,” *Studia Hebraica* 3 (2003): pp. 23-82, particularly pp. 23-63.

⁴ See Shafir, “*Ex Occidente Obscuritas*,” and Shafir, *Între negare și trivializare prin comparație: negarea Holocaustului în țările postcomuniste din Europa Centrală și de Est* (Iași: Polirom, 2002), pp. 33-47.

practice, one would find the same type of argumentation employed in several categories used here.

The second conceptual category is *deflective negationism*. Unlike integral negationism, the proponents of deflective denial admit the existence of the Holocaust, but channel the guilt for its perpetration in several possible directions. One may distinguish several subcategories of deflective negationism, based on the target onto which guilt is deflected. The first subcategory is the most predictable: placing blame solely on the Germans. The second subcategory adds to the former groups depicted as being marginal in their own society, alleged insignificant accidental occurrences or unrepresentative aberrations in one's nation—the Legionnaires, for example. Finally, the Jews themselves are the targets of deflection in the third subcategory. Within this third subcategory, further distinctions are possible, depending on the main argument being used: (1) the deicidal argument, according to which the Holocaust was the price paid by the Jews for having killed Jesus Christ; (2) the conspiratorial argument, according to which Hitler himself was brought to power by the Jews; (3) the defensive argument, according to which Jews forced Hitler to resort to legitimate measures of self-defense; (4) the reactive argument, according to which the disloyalty manifested by Jews toward the country in which they lived triggered a backlash against them; and finally, (5) the vindictive argument, which charges the Jews with having planned and implemented the Holocaust themselves.

The third conceptual category is *selective negationism*, which is a hybrid of outright and deflective negationism. Its proponents deny the Holocaust, but only *in their own country's specific case*. In other words, selective negationism acknowledges that the Holocaust occurred *elsewhere*, but denies *any* participation of one's compatriots in its perpetration. In this case, one is consequently facing a combination in which selective negationists share denial with outright negationists, insofar as their own nation's involvement, and share particularism with deflective negationists when it comes to members of other nationalities. If one were to look for a specific Romanian note, one is likely to find it in this particular form of selective negationism. Although not singular in postcommunist East Central Europe, this note is so predominant in Romania that it becomes remarkable.

Since the category of *comparative trivialization*, which is a form of Holocaust minimalization, stands apart from the rest, it shall be dealt with in the special section treating this phenomenon.

Distorting and Concealing the Holocaust under Communism

Despite the antifascist rhetoric of the official propaganda, the history of the Holocaust was distorted or simply ignored by East European Communist regimes. There are several explanations for this. First, communist ideology was structurally incapable of analyzing the character and evolution of fascist regimes. Almost to their collapse, Communist regimes continued to abide by the definition of “fascism” formulated by Georgi Dimitrov in his 1935 report to the Komintern. Fascism, according to this definition, was “the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital.”⁵ As historian István Deák observed, “an ideology that regards ethnic and religious problems as mere cover-ups for class conflict cannot deal adequately with a historical process that had as its goal the extermination of all members of a particular group, whether progressive or reactionary, whether exploiters or part of the exploited.”⁶

Second, communist “antifascism” did not construe any precise critique of fascist ideology and its regimes, but, as amply demonstrated by François Furet, it was merely a power-strategy employed in the communization of Eastern Europe.⁷ The purpose of Dimitrov’s definition was to place fascism at the opposite pole of communism, and the imprint left on the collective imagination by World War II (at least on the continent’s eastern part) was a simplistic ideological binary of communist-fascist confrontation. The victory of the Soviet Union consecrated this logic, military victory being interpreted as the victory of communism over fascism; one of the effects of this logic would be that communists would refuse to acknowledge anyone else’s right to call themselves either an adversary or a victim of fascism.⁸

Third, in the postwar years it became obvious once more that communism and fascism had been conniving. It is well known today that while in the Soviet Union antisemitism was

⁵ Georgi Dimitroff, *The United Front Against War and Fascism: Report to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International 1935* (New York: Gama, 1974), p. 7.

⁶ István Deák, “Antisemitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary,” in *Antisemitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. Randolph L. Brahm (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 99-124. Quotation at p. 118.

⁷ François Furet, *Trecutul unei iluzii. Eseu despre ideea comunistă în secolul XX* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), *passim*. For the case of Romania, see Ovidiu Buruiană, *Antifascism și naționalism ca pretexte în strategia de comunizare a României, Xenopoliana 7* (1999), 1-2, pp. 1-16.

⁸ François Furet, *op. cit.*, pp. 377, 389, 417.

officially outlawed, it was unofficially encouraged and disseminated by the authorities. Those authorities went as far as to prohibit any mention of the massacres of Russian, Belorussian, or Ukrainian Jews on monuments erected in the memory of the crimes committed by the Nazis on Soviet territory. *The Black Book*, a collection of testimonies on the Holocaust compiled by Ilya Ehrenburg and Vassily Grossman with the aid of the Jewish Antifascist Committee, was banned in the Soviet Union shortly after it was finalized in 1946 and (partially) translated into Romanian and English.⁹ Indeed, though the Soviets liberated the Auschwitz camp in January 1945, for several months they kept silent about what they had found there. In response to questions by their British allies, they went out of their way to hide the racial dimension of the atrocities, officially replying that four million “citizens” had died at Auschwitz.¹⁰

For the communists, when Jewish martyrdom was not blended in with the general martyrdom of mankind, it vanished into the martyrdom of specific nations. The Soviets encouraged the forgetting of the Shoah in Eastern Europe, particularly since some of these states had been involved in the perpetration of the genocidal project.¹¹ Their discourse on the Holocaust avoided charging tones, partly to eschew arousing the hostility of populations about to undergo communization, and partly to channel whatever sentiment of guilt existed in their own direction.

Postwar Romania shared in these attempts to bring about the concealment and/or the distortion of the Holocaust. As early as 1945, the new regime signaled that it was unwilling to acknowledge the role played by state institutions and by the ethnic Romanian majority in the perpetration of anti-Jewish atrocities. In July 1945, the local branch of the Iași Communist Party organization unsuccessfully tried to stop the commemoration of the Iași pogrom.¹² The communist authorities also opposed the dissemination of Matatias Carp’s three-volume book, *Cartea neagră* (The Black Book), on the suffering of Romanian Jews between 1940 and 1944; all the way to the regime’s fall in 1989, Carp’s would remain the only serious scholarly work on the Jewish genocide to have been printed in communist Romania.¹³ The book was published in a

⁹ Bernard Wasserstein, *Dispariția diasporii. Evreii din Europa începând cu 1945* (Iași: Polirom, 2000), p. 92.

¹⁰ Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), pp. 175-176.

¹¹ François Furet, *op. cit.*, pp. 405, 417.

¹² Liviu Rotman, “Memory of the Holocaust in Communist Romania: From Minimization to Oblivion,” in *The Holocaust and Romania: History and Contemporary Significance*, ed. Mihail E. Ionescu and Liviu Rotman, (Bucharest, 2003), p. 206.

¹³ Matatias Carp, *Cartea neagră. Fapte și documente. Suferințele evreilor din România în timpul dictaturii fasciste 1940-1944*, vols. 1-3 (Bucharest: Socec, 1946-1948).

small edition and was soon after withdrawn from bookshops, and no subsequent editions were authorized after 1948. Moreover, the communist authorities subsequently kept it in the secret sections of the public libraries.¹⁴

The trials of Romanian war criminals began in 1945 and continued until the early 1950s, yet they benefited from public attention for a brief period of time only. The more consolidated the Communist regime became, the fewer the reports on the trials carried by the media. As historian Jean Ancel observes, as early as the end of the “local” trials that followed the “Trial of the Great National Treason”—the trial in which Antonescu and his collaborators were indicted—a tendency to distort the nature of the crimes being prosecuted was already discernable, and Jews began to be eliminated from the role of main victims.¹⁵

At the end of the war and in its immediate aftermath the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) was internally divided over how to address recent Romanian history. Two main opposing trends could be noted. The first approach was advocated by Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, who implicitly supported a Romanian acknowledgement of guilt. Pătrășcanu’s study entitled *Fundamental Problems of Romania* (which the author began working on in 1942, was published in 1944, and reprinted several times up to and including the year 1946) had a special chapter on “state antisemitism” and “the mass, systematic, and methodical extermination of the Jewish population” in Antonescu’s Romania. Proceeding from Marxist perceptions of the “Jewish problem,” Pătrășcanu nonetheless did not hesitate to mention the Romanian state’s responsibility for a “long and horribly cruel series of antisemitic crimes”:

Individual and collective assassinations committed by the Legionnaires were followed by the systematic and methodical mass-murder of the Jewish population. Pogroms were officially organized, with soldiers and state organs being charged with carrying them out. Thousands and tens of thousands of people, men, women, children, the elderly, were sent to death by hunger and frost, being deported beyond

¹⁴ Information provided by the U.S. editor of Carp’s book, Andrew L. Simon (Matatias Carp, *Holocaust in Romania: Facts and Documents on the Annihilation of Romania’s Jews, 1940-1944*, [Safety Harbor, Florida, 2000]), pp. 1-2.

¹⁵ See Jean Ancel, “Introduction,” in *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986), vol. 11: pp. 13-19; see also the chapter on the war criminals’ trials in this report.

River Dniester to wastelands under the harsh winter conditions. When all the deeds committed in Moldova and beyond the Prut River after June 1941 would be made public, when the thousands of mass executions without trial and without any other guilt of those thus liquidated but that of being born Jewish would be revealed, when all these crimes would come to justice, then not only the dictatorship's people who ordered them [and] not only those who implemented them would have to answer, but so would the regime in whose name they acted.¹⁶

According to Pătrășcanu, while Germany did indeed exert an influence on Romania, “*Antisemitism nonetheless remains a Romanian phenomenon that must be investigated not only in what it emulates, but also in what is intrinsic to it.*”¹⁷

His approach was never heeded. The study sold well (it was printed in three editions), yet it was reviewed unfavorably by Stalinist ideologues.¹⁸ After a power struggle at the top of the PCR, Pătrășcanu was arrested in 1948 and executed in 1954. Although he would be officially rehabilitated in 1968, *Fundamental Problems of Romania* would never be reprinted.¹⁹

It was the alternative approach of coping with the country's recent past that would be canonized. Its normative model was provided by the famous *History of Romania* (soon to be called *History of the Romanian People's Republic*), an obligatory textbook whose editor-in-chief was Mihail Roller.²⁰ Roller's textbook embraces Dimitrov's definition of fascism, presenting autochthonous Romanian fascism as little else than embodying “monopoly capital”—a movement allegedly lacking popular support, strictly controlled by Nazi Germany, and intent on plundering the Romanian economy and terrorizing political adversaries. The textbook only rarely

¹⁶ Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Probleme de bază ale României* (Bucharest: Socec, 1944), p. 211.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 171, author's emphasis.

¹⁸ Lavinia Betea, *Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. Moartea unui lider comunist. Studiu de caz* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2001), pp. 37, 62-63.

¹⁹ *Probleme de bază ale României* was often quoted in works about fascism published in the 1970s and 1980s, but the chapter on the Jewish question was systematically eschewed. See, for example, Gh. I. Ioniță, “Un strălucit analist al procesului de naștere și evoluție a mișcării fasciste în România—intelectualul moldovean Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu,” in *Intelectuali ieșeni în lupta antifascistă*, Gh.I. Ioniță, A. Karețchi (Iași: Institutul de studii istorice și social-politice de pe lângă CC al PCR–Sectorul din Iași, 1971), pp. 58-86.

²⁰ Mihail Roller, et al., *Istoria României. Manual unic pentru clasa a VIII-a secundară*, (Bucharest: Editura de Stat, 1947).

mentions the regime's antisemitic policies, and the few references to them are ambiguous and lack any explanation. The most blatant distortion emerges whenever reference is made to the victims of fascism, among whom Jews are never mentioned. Instead, for Roller the "advent of the Legionary-Antonescu dictatorship signified the aggravation of terror measures directed against popular masses and their leaders. Concentration camps were set up, in which thousands of democratic citizens were locked." The textbook *does* mention the camps in Transnistria, but nowhere the ethnic identity of its Jewish or Romany inmates. Students can only conclude that the "organized" evacuation to, and assassination in the camps targeted the regime's political adversaries, especially communists. Roller concludes, "[by] these cruel acts, the Legionary-Antonescu dictatorship proved its affinity with the crimes committed by the German Hitlerites in the death camps of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Mauthausen, etc."²¹ Elsewhere, the textbook mentions "racial injustices," "racial repressions," and "measures intended to bring about the enslavement of co-inhabiting nationalities."²²

In contrast to Pătrășcanu, then, Roller's *History of Romania* replaced Jews and Roma with communists and Romanians, in general, as the main victims of fascism and ignored antisemitism as a defining trait of Antonescu's dictatorship. This approach came to prevail in all subsequent history textbooks,²³ even after Roller fell into disgrace in the late 1950s, as well as in official communist histories on the interwar period and on the Second World War.²⁴ The distortion was in no way hindered by the Jewish ethnic origin of many prominent historians in the first two decades of the postwar years. These Jewish historians were first and foremost disciplined party soldiers devoted to communism who viewed their Jewishness as secondary at best.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, a revitalization of socio-political antisemitism occurred.²⁵ Soviet "anti-Zionism" and "anticosmopolitanism"—two catchphrases that concealed an antisemitic campaign serving the purpose of political and institutional purges—spread throughout the Eastern bloc during the late 1940s and 1950s and were used in power struggles at

²¹ Ibid., pp. 767-768.

²² Ibid., pp. 805-808.

²³ Alexandru Florian, "Treatment of the Holocaust in Romanian Textbooks," in Randolph L. Braham, ed., *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 237-285.

²⁴ Victor Eskenasy, "The Holocaust in Romanian Historiography: Communist and Neo-Communist Revisionism," in *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*, ed. Randolph L. Braham, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-236.

²⁵ Gheorghe Onișoru, *România în anii 1944-1948. Transformări economice și realități sociale* (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 1998), pp. 156-162.

the top of Communist parties. Massive Jewish migration also triggered political problems.²⁶ In this context, to which one should add the tension of the Cold War and the problems posed by postwar reconstruction, the issue of the Holocaust was systematically avoided in both academia and politics. Historiography underwent a process of enforced Marxization. Issues such as nationalism and the situation of ethnic minorities were not priorities under Stalinist research guidelines. The marginalization of the Holocaust was also the result of strict censorship, limited access to World War II documents, purges in the community of historians, and the simultaneous promotion of “militant historians” educated at the PCR’s Institute of History, established in 1951.²⁷

Beginning in the 1960s, the official discourse and historiography signaled a renewed focus on nationalist themes. This was made possible by the efforts of PCR leaders to distance Romania from the USSR and to mobilize elite and popular support for the party. In general, as in the case of all East-Central European countries, there was a return to the prewar focus on national history in Romania, with a bias for the ethnic majority. This ethnocentrism dismissed scholarly interest in the history of ethnic minorities as irrelevant even in extreme cases, such as mass deportations and massacres. It also resulted in continual avoidance of the topic of the Holocaust.

While Rollerism was denounced in the late 1950s and while the historical discourse was re-nationalized in the 1960s, the approach to the Holocaust remained the same, although fascism was re-interpreted. Roller’s textbook was criticized for, among other complaints, proclaiming too radical a break with pre-communist historiography. Ideological guidelines issued in the late 1960s required the integration of communism into the national history in order to illustrate that communism was the outcome of an organic evolution.²⁸ As a consequence, the problematic past was no longer entirely dismissed, but was selectively retrieved through discursive strategies that

²⁶ Robert Levy, *Gloria și decăderea Anei Pauker* (Iași: Polirom, 2002), p. 168 ff and *passim*.

²⁷ On the Communist distortion of Romanian history in general, see Michael J. Rura, *Reinterpretation of History as a Method of Furthering Communism in Rumania*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1961); Dionisie Ghermani, *Die kommunistische Umdeutung der rumänischen Geschichte unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Mittelalters* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1967); Vlad Georgescu, *Politică și istorie: cazul comuniștilor români 1944-1977* (Munich: Jon Dumitru-Verlag, 1981); Al. Zub, *Orizont închis. Istoriografia română sub dictatură* (Iași: Institutul European, 2000).

²⁸ Andi Mihalache, *Istorie și practici discursive în România “democrat-populară”* (Bucharest: Albatros, 2003), pp. 110-111.

constituted a genuine “grammar of exculpation.”²⁹ These transformations are seen best during the reign of Ceaușescu (1965-1989), when the Communist regime fell back on a local version of national-communism, which combined extreme nationalism and neostalinism.

In order to examine the main traits of the communist discourse on the recent past, a content analysis on a representative sample of authoritative information in the 1970s and 1980s has been carried out: two synthetical volumes on Romanian history; the only books published during the Communist regime on the Legion, the Antonescu dictatorship, and the Iași pogrom; and several military histories on Romania’s participation to the Second World War.³⁰

This analysis shows:

- a) Fascism is presented as being primarily an imported product (“alien to the Romanian people” and “organically rejected” by it), as devoid of popular support (fascism was not “the expression of a mass trend”). It is argued that fascism was “imposed from abroad” in spite of the “ever growing opposition of popular masses” to it, in an “unfavorable” international context, that it was “transplanted” into Romania by foreign imperialist circles and transformed at their pressure into an “out-post” supported by a local “retrograde minority.”³¹
- b) Romania is presented as a victim and found innocent of any wrongdoing or crimes. While highlighting the topic of “Western treason,” which “left Romania alone,” and “pushed Romania into the arms of Germany,” the authors blame Nazi Germany exclusively or predominantly for Romanian political developments (e.g., Germany brought the Iron Guard and Antonescu to power and strictly controlled political, social, and economic life

²⁹ The term refers to the means employed in attempts to avoid coping with the difficulty of the past in postwar Germany. See Jeffrey K. Olick, Daniel Levy, “Collective Memory and Cultural Constraint: Holocaust Myth and Rationality in German Politics,” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 62, no. 6 (December 1997), pp. 921-936.

³⁰ Miron Constantinescu, et al., *Istoria României. Compendiu* (Bucharest: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1969) (henceforth Compendiu); Constantin C. Giurescu, Dinu C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor din cele mai vechi timpuri până astăzi* (Bucharest: Albatros, 1971) (henceforth Giurescu); Mihai Fătu, Ion Spălățelu, *Garda de Fier, organizație de tip fascist*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1980) (henceforth Garda de Fier); Mihai Fătu, *Contribuții la studierea regimului politic din România. (septembrie 1940-august 1944)* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1984) (henceforth Contribuții); A. Karetki, M. Covaci, *Zile însângerate la Iași (28-30 iunie 1941)*, cu Prefață de Nicolae Minei (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1978) (henceforth Iasi); *Marea conflagrație a secolului XX* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1974) (henceforth Marea conflagrație); Gheorghe Zaharia, Ion Cupșa, *Participarea României la înfrângerea Germaniei naziste* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1985) (henceforth Participarea); *România în anii celui de-al doilea război mondial*, vol.I (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1989) (henceforth România în război); *Istoria militară a poporului român*, vol.VI (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1989) (henceforth Istoria militară).

³¹ Compendiu, p. 526 ff; Garda de Fier, pp. 31, 37, *passim*; Contribuții, pp. 9, 11, 14, 19, 27, 38, 86, 91; Iași, pp. 20, 33, 76, *passim*; Marea conflagrație, p. 139 ff; Participarea, p. 39 ff; România în război, p. 308 ff; Istoria militară, pp. 367-376.

in Romania), for Romanian decisions (e.g., Germany made Romania enter “the adventure of the War” and forced it into implementing “terrorist policies”) as well as for atrocities committed by Romanians.³²

- c) The Romanian population is absolved of any guilt. The authors argue that the establishment of the dictatorship, its decisions, and the Romanian atrocities were not the outcome of “mass will,” as they stood in “blatant and irreconcilable opposition to the overwhelming majority of the Romanian people.” The Romanian population could not formulate its opposition at the beginning, yet it gradually expressed its “unmitigated hatred” and “active opposition” to the dictatorship and its indignation in regard to “excesses” by building an “insurmountable wall of humanitarianism.”³³ Even when these positions are difficult to uphold, as in the case of the Iași pogrom, where the Romanian army, police, and local population participated in the atrocity,³⁴ the authors find a means of evasion: the blame is either deflected on the German troops and thus externalized and extra-territorialized; or, alternatively, the blame is diverted to the “periphery”: Romanian participation is said to have been limited to “a few isolated soldiers,” deserters, “degenerate elements in the police force,” Legionnaires and “inebriated civilians.”³⁵
- d) Unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, the 1970s and particularly the early 1980s mark a qualitative separation of the Legionary and Antonescu regimes respectively, with a severe bias against the former. The Legionnaires are depicted through the usage of adjectives that evoke marginality and unrepresentativeness: “bandits,” “hooligans,” “robbers,” “murderers,” “terrorists,” “traitors,” “fifth column of Hitlerism.” The authors insist that for the Legionnaires ideology was nothing but an “excuse” for their reprehensible deeds.³⁶ By contrast, Antonescu appears less bloodthirsty and irresponsible, although

³² Compendiu, pp. 522, 524, 528; Giurescu, p. 652 ff; Garda de Fier, pp. 31, 258, 288, *passim*; Contribuții, p. 86, *passim*; Iași, *passim*; Marea conflagrație, p. 120, 150; Participarea, p. 39 ff.; România în război, p. 308 and *passim*; Istoria militară, p. 363 ff.

³³ Compendiu, p. 529 ff; Giurescu, p. 658; Garda de Fier, pp. 37, 86, 130 ff; Contribuții, pp. 19, 91, 112; Iași, pp. 18, 20, 71, 106 ff; Participarea, *passim*; România în război, pp. 312, 316; Istoria militară, pp. 361, 372.

³⁴ Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României. Problema evreiască* (Bucharest: Hasefer, Yad Vashem, 2003), vol. 2, part 2, 1933-1944: pp. 83-124.

³⁵ Iași, p. 25, 73, 75, 89, *passim*.

³⁶ Compendiu, p. 527; Giurescu, pp. 650-653; Garda de Fier, *passim*; Contribuții, pp. 53-57; Participarea, pp. 39-50; România în război, pp. 309-314; Istoria militară, pp. 372-373.

mention is made of some of the crimes committed under his command.³⁷ While the deeds of Legionnaires are depicted as being committed out of a gratuitous propensity to kill, the crimes committed during Antonescu's dictatorship are placed in the context of the state of emergency, which intimates that the Conducator had limited freedom of action and that his decisions were motivated by the war as well as domestic and international circumstances.³⁸

- e) Antisemitism is only seldom presented as an ingredient of fascism. For example, in the book on the Legion, antisemitism is mentioned last among a long list of other defining features of fascism; it is listed only after anticommunism, hostility to democracy, irrationality, mysticism, anti-national character, hostility to the working class, the cult of death, anti-intellectualism, and the apology of war. Even when mention *is* made of antisemitism, the trait is depicted as being aimed at “concealing the real causes of the economic, social, and political crises of those years” and at “diverting the attention of the working class from its struggle against exploiters.”³⁹ In the book on the Iași pogrom, the two authors claim that it is “simplistic” and “mystifying” to speak of “Romanian antisemitism” at all; then, in a sententious note, they conclude that “unlike in many parts of East-Central Europe, the Romanian land did not prove fertile to the poisoned seeds of hate.”⁴⁰ On most occasions, even when mentioned antisemitism is not explained, but only inserted into an enumeration of other traits of fascism. Among the books surveyed, only one analyzes antisemitism as a form of racism and lists the antisemitic measures of that time. This volume also admits that antisemitism “became state policy as early as the times of Carol II.”⁴¹
- f) Just as they strive to diminish the importance of antisemitism in the fascist credo, the authors minimize Jewish suffering and narrow the scope of Jewish tragedy. For example,

³⁷ See, for example, Giurescu who makes no mention whatever of the crimes of Antonescu's regims; *Garda de Fier*, p. 275, p. 280, *Contribuții*, p. 19, p. 313 etc; *Iași*, pp. 61, 73, *passim*; *Participarea*, p. 51 ff; *România în război*, p. 315; *Istoria militară*, p. 374 ff.

³⁸ The following two examples are telling: “The institutional framework within which Antonescu exercised his dictatorship between January 1941-August 1944 had been established by the emergency legislation passed under wartime conditions...;” (*Participarea*, p. 51); “General Ion Antonescu took over the helm of power in circumstances of an extremely difficult internal and external situation; as most of his rule was exercised in a state of war, the legislation made use of was repressive, extremely harsh.” (*România în război*, p. 370).

³⁹ *Garda de Fier*, p. 85; on p. 37, the authors emphasize that antisemitism is not an important trait of fascist movements.

⁴⁰ *Iași*, pp. 17-18.

the *History of Romanians* mentions only the Legion's "pressures and brutalities against Jews."⁴² After first referring to the fate of imprisoned or executed communists and antifascists, *The Compendium* notes: "To the series of murders committed during the Antonescu dictatorship one can add the pogrom organized in Iași, in which 2,000 people, most of them Jews, were murdered. Many other citizens of various nationalities, most of them Jews, were interned in labor camps [and threatened with] extermination through various means."⁴³ In *Garda de Fier*, mention is made of a well-known and well-documented incident in January 1941, during which 200 Jews were locked in a Legionary headquarters in Bucharest during the Iron Guard's uprising, and ninety of them were later shot in the nearby Jilava forest. The two authors, historians Mihai Fătu and Ion Spălățelu, cite Carp's *Cartea neagră*, but in their version the 200 Jews are turned into "200 citizens." A few pages on, however, Fătu and Spălățelu cite Carp correctly, mentioning the number of the pogrom's victims as 120.⁴⁴ The *Contributions* offers the most information about the regime's antisemitic policies and mentions the Transnistria deportations, which is rare. Still, the terminology employed for this purpose remains ambiguous and is inaccurate: "One of the forms of repression used against the Jewish population was the internment of the people regarded as 'dangerous to the security of the state,' which usually meant communists or antifascists, in concentration camps in Transnistria (Râbnița, Vapniarca, and others)."⁴⁵ In *Bloody Days*, the authors cite one of Ceaușescu's well-known references to the Iași pogrom: "Immediately after the beginning of the anti-Soviet war, a true pogrom was organized against antifascist forces, during which 2,000 people were killed in Iași."⁴⁶ The authors conclude that 3,233 Jews died during the pogrom, although the documents cited (to which the authors had privileged access at a time when such access was strictly supervised) indicate much higher figures.⁴⁷

⁴¹ *Contribuții*, pp. 41, 157 ff.

⁴² Giurescu, p. 653.

⁴³ *Compendiu*, p. 527.

⁴⁴ *Garda de Fier*, pp. 337, 341.

⁴⁵ *Contribuții*, pp. 145, 157 ff, 161.

⁴⁶ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975), vol. 11: p. 570; cited in Iași, p. 16.

⁴⁷ Iași, pp. 16, 105, *passim*. Some Communist party historians go as far as to admit a figure as high as 8,000 victims, albeit they do so only in publications targeting foreign readers. See: Ion Popescu-Puțuri, et al., *La Roumanie pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale. Etude* (Bucharest: Editions de l'Academie de RPR, 1964), pp. 419-450; Gheorghe Zaharia, *Pages de la résistance antifasciste en Roumanie* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1974), p. 45.

In the preface to the book, Nicolae Minei inserts a footnote on the Transnistria deportations, yet the purpose of the footnote is to distort reality and deflect guilt.⁴⁸ Finally, *The Participation of Romania in the Victory over Nazi Germany* offers information unavailable elsewhere in the volumes examined. First, the involvement of Romanian troops in atrocities committed on “territories where combat occurred” is acknowledged. It is furthermore stated that “Romanian gendarmerie units that participated in combat and some troops from the Second and Fourth Armies joined the acts of cruelty begun by the German Fourth Army, led by Colonel General Ritter von Schobert, as well as by SS troops.” The volume also lists several “labor camps in Chişinău, Făleşti, Limbienii Noi and Bălţi, in which about 5,000 Jews were interned in early July 1941.”⁴⁹ Mention is also made of 115,520 Jews “deported eastward,” of which just 50,741 survived; the rest, it is stated, were murdered by the Nazis, by epidemic, by malnutrition, and by harsh work conditions. Finally, the authors acknowledge that nomadic Roma were subjected to the same measures.⁵⁰ In brief, although Gheorghe Zaharia and Ion Cupşa underestimate the number of victims and the depiction of events is inaccurate and distorted, this book is an exception to Communist-era historiography.

Zaharia and Cupşa’s example was not heeded by others. The three-volume study on Romania during the Second World War has only two paragraphs on the victims of the Antonescu regime, and even those provide meager information. The first paragraph argues that the PCR was the main target of repression by Antonescu’s regime, that “numerous” communists were executed, and that other communists were “interned in camps, in order to isolate them from society.” The other paragraph states only that Jews were subjected to “discriminating policies.” When the third volume addresses Nazi

⁴⁸ “The deportations beyond the Dniester carried out by the Antonescu authorities were never motivated, explicitly or secretly, by the intent to exterminate those affected. That some would nevertheless perish was due to three main reasons: abuses committed by some representants of the authorities, who embezzled funds allocated for food purchasing; criminal excesses by degenerate elements belonging to the surveillance and supervision organs; the intervention of the Nazi *Einsatzkommando* assassins who, while withdrawing from the East, forced their way into the camps and exterminated the inmates.” See Iaşi, p. 25. It is worth noting that a Jewish historian, Nicolae Minei, was tasked with writing the preface and thereby legitimize the official version on those events.

⁴⁹ In actual fact, in Chişinău there was a ghetto, while in Făleşti, Limbienii Noi and in Bălţi transit camps were set up ahead of the deportation to Transnistria. See Jean Ancel, *Contribuţii la istoria României. Problema evreiască* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001), vol. 1, part 1, 1933-1944: pp. 143-229; Radu Ioanid, *Evreii sub regimul Antonescu* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1998), pp. 157-191.

⁵⁰ *Participarea*, p. 53 and *passim*. The authors do not source the information provided.

concentration and extermination camps, Jews are not identified as their victims.⁵¹ Neither does *The Military History of the Romanian People* do a better job. Readers would never learn from this volume that during the war Jews perished at the hand of the Antonescu regime. Its sixth volume mentions only “the policy of systematic reprisals against the Romanian Communist Party.”⁵² *The Great Conflagration* exacerbates this type of historic distortion. After enumerating the Nazi labor camps, its authors claim that: “In these camps there were communists and other antifascists, partisans and [French] Resistance fighters, Polish, French, Yugoslav, Dutch, Belgian and Soviet war prisoners, in all several millions of people. Their fate was sealed: exhausting labor, starvation, misery, filth, followed by the gas chamber and mass graves.” Surprisingly, the volume mentions the Odessa massacre, which all other texts reviewed here avoid. Not even now, however, are the Jews depicted as its victims: “The Field Gendarmerie executed civilians. Romanian public opinion was outraged and rejected with disgust and with anger such criminal acts. This was also the mood of a majority among the Romanian military.”⁵³

- g) The books analyzed insist on the differences between Nazi Germany and Antonescu’s Romania as well as on the alleged Romanian exceptionalism in the implementation of the Final Solution. A section in *Contribution to the Study of the Romanian Political Regime* reads: “Historical reality has sanctioned the truth that insofar as Romania is concerned, the regime established in September 1940 did not elevate political violence to the same level of intensity as that encountered in Nazi Germany, Horthy’s Hungary, or in other countries...After the January 1941 [Iron Guard] rebellion, physical violence and terror did not become the main practice and means of exercising state power; the regime’s primary instruments of rule were the dictatorial and military methods, as well as political, judicial, and economic repression stemming from, and determined by the fascist ideology.” Mihai Fătu furthermore claims that “Antonescu was not prepared to follow the

⁵¹ România în război, pp. 315; see also vol. 3, p. 528; vol. 3 includes two pages dealing with the “danger of revisionism,” but the formulations used are ambiguous, and it does not clearly transpire from them that it is the Holocaust as subject of “revisionism” that the authors have in mind; see p. 532 and *passim*.

⁵² Istoria militară, p. 375.

⁵³ Marea conflagrație, p. 140 [In the captions under the photographs of camps reproduced on page 141, the Jews were replaced with “people”]; for Odessa, see p. 167.

Nazi model of repression of the Jewish population” and deems the Marshal’s policy toward that population to have been “a lot more moderate” than that of the Nazis.⁵⁴

Herein apparently lies the key for understanding the terminological shift that would occur in the 1970s, which turned Antonescu’s “fascist dictatorship” (as his rule was designated in the first communist documents) into a “military-fascist” one. The authors here scrutinized strive to argue that the acts of repression by Antonescu’s regime were not based on either an antisemitic ethos or on ethnocentric policies, which would have associated Romania with Nazi Germany; instead, preference was given to presenting those acts as politically-motivated repressive measures or as measures imposed by military circumstances.⁵⁵ In the late 1980s, the linguistic construct “military-fascist dictatorship” was in turn sidelined, as it suggested an involvement of the army in politics and its support of the dictatorship. Antonescu’s regime would henceforth be labeled either a “personal dictatorship” or a “totalitarian regime,” and military historians would insist on the fact that the Marshal took all decisions himself and responsibility for their outcome rests only on his shoulders.⁵⁶ Yet the effort to absolve the army of any responsibility is encountered not only among military historians.⁵⁷ As is well known, nationalist ideologies (and Ceaușescu’s brand of national communism was one of them) perceive the army as being the epitome of statehood.

Deflective and selective negationism are both reflected in the claim that is made to an alleged Romanian exceptionalism. According to the authors of *Romania during World War II* (a collective volume), “Romania was the only country in Nazi Germany’s sphere of influence where the so-called Final Solution adopted by Hitler for exterminating the European population of the Mosaic rite was not implemented.”⁵⁸ Similarly trenchant statements about Romanian exceptionalism can be found in *Bloody Days in Iași*, especially in the preface signed by Nicolae Minei, who makes the argument, “The Holocaust did not occur in Romania precisely because—with few and rather insignificant exceptions—the swastika-wearing executioners not only did not enjoy self-

⁵⁴ Contribuții, p. 18 ff, 42, 73, 157.

⁵⁵ Compendiu, p. 526 ff; Giurescu, p. 652 ff; Garda de Fier, pp. 275, 350, 353 ff; Contribuții, *passim*; Iași, p. 35; Marea conflagrație, p. 122.

⁵⁶ România în război, p. 313 ff; Istoria militară, pp. 361, 367, 374.

⁵⁷ Garda de Fier, *passim*; Contribuții, p. 23 ff., 69 ff.; Iași, p. 73, 75, 89; Marea conflagrație, *passim*.

⁵⁸ România în război, p. 315.

volunteered local cooperation, but also encountered outright refusal when they attempted—officially or otherwise—to recruit accomplices in the organization of deportations or other genocidal actions.” Minei goes on to argue that “of all countries under Nazi occupation Romania distinguished itself as the only country that had no ghettos or extermination camps and [as the only country that] did not deport [Jews] to the ovens of Auschwitz or Majdanek, the only country that offered asylum to foreign Jews.”⁵⁹ It is worth noting that Minei was the first in communist Romania to argue that during the war Romania did not exterminate Jews, but massively saved them.⁶⁰ Interestingly, this is precisely the argument made by representatives of the Antonescu regime in the postwar trials of criminals of war.

- h.) The quotations above demonstrate that terms such as “Holocaust,” “Final Solution,” or “genocide” are systematically avoided when reference is made to the fate of Jews under Romanian administration, but are perfectly in order when used to designate the actions of others. For example, according to *Contributions to the Study of Political Regimes*: “The exacerbation of violence by some fascist regimes, such as those in Germany and Hungary, up to the point of [the perpetration of the] Holocaust was an expression of their aggressive, expansionist and annexationist policies directed at other countries and peoples.”⁶¹ Similarly, the contributors to *Romania during the Second World War* write: “From the very outset of the Horthyist occupation [of Northern Transylvania], the measures taken by authorities bore the incontestable mark of a genuine ethnic genocide that had been prepared in detail in order to change the ethnic realities of the area.” In the chapter where this quotation appears, the term “genocide” is used to describe the Horthyist policy toward the Romanian population.⁶²

One notices that Hungary is paid particular attention and is depicted as being associated with Nazi Germany’s systematic policy of physical destruction of Jews; one also remarks that Hungary is presented as pursuing the same type of policies toward the ethnic Romanian population in occupied Transylvania. This is a specific trait of

⁵⁹ Iași, pp. 20, 24 ff; see also p. 39, *passim*.

⁶⁰ Iași, p. 20. “In order to fully comprehend what the salvation of a massive (some 350,000) population from an apparently ineluctable destruction really meant, one must take into consideration the context of the times and the Hitlerites’ exterminatory obsessions.”

⁶¹ *Contribuții*, p. 16.

⁶² *România în război*, 295-306; citation on p. 297.

Romanian historiography under Ceaușescu: while atrocities perpetrated on Romanian territory or Romanian-administered lands are either ignored or minimized, the antisemitic policies of Horthy's Hungary are thoroughly scrutinized. An emblematic example is *The Horthyist-Fascist Terror in North-Western Romania*, edited by Mihai Fătu and Mircea Mușat, which would also benefit from translation into English. The volume places side by side Hungary's participation in the Holocaust and the anti-Romanian policies of the Horthy regime.⁶³ Blatant as it might seem, this discrepancy in treatment may be explained by the anti-Hungarian nationalist policies practiced by the Ceaușescu regime, particularly during the 1980s. A considerable number of history journals from those years⁶⁴ as well as the official media were mobilized to take part in the "image war" against the neighboring country. The Chief Rabbi of Romania, Moses Rosen, became involved in the campaign, the more so as his anti-Hungarian resentments were perfectly in line with the regime's policies on this particular issue.⁶⁵ The same anti-Hungarian policies of the regime help explain the special status enjoyed at that time by Oliver Lustig, a Holocaust survivor from Hungarian-occupied Transylvania, who is allowed to publish several books on the Nazi extermination policies because they also contain anti-Hungarian undertones.⁶⁶ Taking advantage of their special status with the regime, Moses Rosen and Oliver Lustig on several occasions managed to mention publicly or in print atrocities committed against the Jews under the Romanian administration, yet the impact of their gesture was limited.⁶⁷

⁶³ Mihai Fătu, Mircea Mușat (coord.), *Teroarea horthysto-fascistă în nord-vestul României (septembrie 1940-octombrie 1944)* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1985) and *Horthyist-Fascist Terror in Northwestern Romania. September 1940-October 1944* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1986).

⁶⁴ Remarkable among them is the popularized history journal *Magazin istoric*, launched in 1967 with support from the Institute for Historical and Social and Historical Studies affiliated to the PCR's Central Committee. This institute replaced the former Institute of [Communist] Party History.

⁶⁵ See, for example, "Remember. 40 de ani de la masacrarea evreilor din Ardealul de Nord sub ocupația horthystă" (Bucharest: Federația Comunităților evreiești din România, 1985).

⁶⁶ For example, Oliver Lustig, *Jurnal însângerat* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1987), translated into English as *Blood-Bespotted Diary* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988).

⁶⁷ As of June 1986, Moses Rosen received permission to commemorate the Iași pogrom within the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities (FCER). However, information on the commemorations would be allowed to appear in print only in the FCER publication *Revista culturii mozaic*, whose distribution in Romania itself was very small, but which benefited from a large distribution abroad. The publication had English and Hebrew summaries, thus managing to create outside Romania a cosmeticized image of how the Holocaust was being treated under Ceaușescu's regime. Oliver Lustig managed to slip into an article published in 1986 one of the rare references to Antonescu's responsibility for "the death of between 70,000-80,000 Jews in Transnistria," but the article in which he did that could easily be considered as belonging to the category of selective negationism. See "Excepție?... Da, a fost o excepție," *România literară*, November 7, 1986.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this content analysis. First, given that the contributions reviewed were made by different authors living in different time periods, it is striking how uniformly distorted were the discussions on the Holocaust, on fascism, and, in general, on the events that occurred during World War II. This is evidence that historiography was, on one hand, strictly controlled and, on the other hand, it respected PCR-issued ideological blueprints.⁶⁸ Besides, all the historians authorized to write on such sensitive topics as the Holocaust were well positioned in the PCR as affiliated researchers of the PCR Institute of Historical and Socio-Political Studies or of the Center for Research on Military History and Theory headed by the president's brother, Ilie Ceaușescu.

Second, it is obvious from these texts that the ideological message prevails over science and that the historiography on the Second World War is fully mobilized in the service of Romania's self-victimization, self-lionization, or acquittal of guilt. As a consequence, it is not surprising that the undertones of historical discourse changed with shifts in the regime's profile: as the 1980s progressed and official nationalism and the cult of personality became more strident, historiography became even more nationalist and selective.⁶⁹

Third, the way fascism was approached continued to be heavily influenced by Dimitrov's definition of the phenomenon. Romanian historians would distance themselves from Dimitrov only when necessary to embellish Romanian history even further.⁷⁰ They did not perceive antisemitism as crucial for the characterization of fascism or as relevant to Romanian political culture. Subsequently, the Jews are not perceived as the main victims of Nazi-like murderous policies. The volumes scrutinized reveal a clear intention to distort the specificity of the Holocaust by positing that communists and ethnic Romanians in general were its main victims. This pattern is contemporaneous with the revival of antisemitism—a development tolerated by Ceaușescu—in the works of various “court writers” who, after 1989, would become leading

⁶⁸ Compare Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Istoria poporului român. Texte selectate* (Bucharest: Editura militară, 1988), pp. 337-608; *Împotriva fascismului. Sesiunea științifică privind analiza critică și demascarea fascismului în România*, Bucharest, March 4-5, 1971 (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971); *Comitetul antifascist român*, (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1985) etc.

⁶⁹ Vlad Georgescu, “Politics, History and Nationalism: The Origins of Romania's Socialist Personality Cult,” in *The Cult of Power. Dictatorship in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joseph Held (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1983), pp. 129-142; Michael Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985).

⁷⁰ For example, see *Contribuții*, p. 15 ff.

figures of postcommunist Romanian negationism.⁷¹ In general, the policy of communist Romania vis-à-vis its Jewish citizens was extremely ambiguous, as communist Romania offered, in the words of B. Wasserstein, “one of the most paradoxical blends of tolerance and repression in Eastern Europe.”⁷² Unlike all other Communist bloc countries, Romania entertained good relations with Israel. This policy was generally motivated by considerations of foreign policy as well as by the economic benefits of Jewish migration to Israel. Ceaușescu’s concern for his image abroad meant that antisemitism was formally repudiated and the Jewish community was granted a certain degree of autonomy.⁷³ The same considerations prompted the signing of an agreement on cooperation (involving the exchange of documents and holding joint symposia) between PCR historians and Yad Vashem historians in 1980s. Yet powerful ideological constraints prevented Romanian historians from taking advantage of the agreement, and its impact on Holocaust research in Romania was minimal.⁷⁴ Foreign policy considerations again, explain why a few studies admitting in low-voice that Antonescu’s regime was responsible for some atrocities against Jews were presented by Romanian historians at international colloquia abroad and in languages of international circulation. But it is just as relevant that these studies were never published at home, in Romanian translation.⁷⁵

Fourth, a distinction was gradually introduced between the National Legionary State and the Antonescu dictatorship as part of a quasi-official strategy to discreetly rehabilitate Marshal Antonescu. The marks of this strategy emerged in the 1970s and become more obvious in the 1980s.⁷⁶ There were several identifiable reasons for the emergence of this strategy: the immersion of PCR-affiliated historians in the exoneration of the Romanian state and society of involvement in antisemitic atrocities; the concern of military historians to absolve the Romanian army and its command responsibility for wartime involvement in crimes; and the romanticizing of Antonescu by some writers who were gravitating around the party leadership.⁷⁷ Also

⁷¹ Michael Shafir, “The Men of the Archangel Revisited: Antisemitic Formations among Communist Romania’s Intellectuals,” *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol. 16, no. 3 (Fall 1983): pp. 223-243.

⁷² B. Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁷³ Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu și Securitatea. Constrângere și disidență în România anilor 1965-1989* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), pp. 200-205.

⁷⁴ Victor Eskenasy, *loc.cit.*, p. 187, 191.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

⁷⁶ Randolph L. Braham, *Romanian Nationalists and the Holocaust: The Political Exploitation of Unfounded Rescue Accounts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 49 ff; Victor Eskenasy, *loc.cit.*, p. 184 ff.; Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 185 ff.; Liviu Rotman, *loc.cit.*, p. 209 ff.

⁷⁷ For example, Marin Preda, *Delirul* (Bucharest: Editura Cartea românească, 1975).

important was the role of Iosif Constantin Drăgan, a former Iron Guard sympathizer, who became a millionaire in the West and later a *persona grata* with Romania's dictator. Having metamorphosed into Antonescu's most fierce advocate, Drăgan contributed to the campaign waged abroad by the regime to rehabilitate the Marshal and recruited domestic and foreign historians into the rehabilitation drive. Among them were Mihai Pelin, Gheorghe Buzatu, and Larry Watts. Four volumes of documents portraying Antonescu positively were published in the West under Drăgan's supervision, at a publishing house he owned in Italy.⁷⁸ Before 1989 and long after, these documents were inaccessible to the great majority of Romanian researchers, but Drăgan obtained them due to his excellent rapport with the regime in general, and with Mircea Mușat and Ion Ardeleanu, censors of the history department of the PCR's Central Committee in particular.⁷⁹

Fifth, it is evident that all the authors discussed in this section strived to minimize the scope of atrocities committed on Romanian territory or in the territories administered by the Romanian government and to deny Romanian participation in the Holocaust. Most postcommunist Romanian negationism has roots in Communist-era historiography on the Holocaust. The victimization and lionization of Romanians, their substitution of Jews in the posture of main victims of Nazism, the deflection of responsibility, the minimization of the real scope of atrocities, self-flattering exceptionalism, the rehabilitation of Antonescu as well as many other manifestations were to reproduce themselves in various forms in postcommunist negationism.

Holocaust Denial in the Postcommunist Public Discourse: Examples

In postcommunist Romania, Holocaust denial has been a diffuse phenomenon, which has manifested itself in politics, in academia, and in the mass media. The Greater Romania Party (GRP) and its affiliated publications have yielded the most consistent "database" of negationist statements and actions during the past 15 years of transition. Yet, Holocaust denial is not the exclusive monopoly of anti-democratic Romanian extremists. Individuals, groups, and

⁷⁸ Iosif Constantin Drăgan, ed., *Antonescu. Mareșalul României și războaiele de reîntregire*, vols. 1-4 (Veneția: Nagard, 1986-1990).

⁷⁹ Victor Eskenassy, "Istoriografii și istoricii pro și contra mitului Antonescu," in *Exterminarea evreilor români și ucraineni în perioada antonesciană*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2002), pp. 313-346; Michael Shafir, "Reabilitarea postcomunistă a mareșalului Ion Antonescu: *Cui bono?*" in Randolph L. Braham, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 400-465.

organizations with centrist and democratic credentials have also contributed to this phenomenon. It is emblematic that ideological differences among parties suddenly vanish when reference is made to Marshal Ion Antonescu.

In 1991 the Romanian Parliament observed a minute of silence to commemorate forty-five years since the execution of Marshal Antonescu. On the initiative of Petre Țurlea, a member of the National Salvation Front, the government party of those years, legislators bowed their heads in memory of Antonescu's "service" to his country.⁸⁰ Eight years on, when the parliamentary majority in the legislature had changed, National Peasant Party Christian Democratic (NPP) Senator Ioan Moisin submitted to the upper house a draft resolution in which Antonescu was described as a "great Romanian patriot who fought for his country until death." According to Moisin, Antonescu did not participate in the Holocaust and, furthermore, he had "saved the lives of millions of Jews when he refused to carry out Hitler's order to deport them to Germany."⁸¹ This time around, the resolution was, however, rejected. Yet, during the 1996-2000 coalition of the CDR (which included the PNTCD and the PNL) with the USD and the UDMR, Attorney General (*Procurorul General*) Sorin Moisescu filed an extraordinary appeal (*recurs în anulare*), against sentences passed after the Second World War on six members of the Antonescu government found guilty of crimes against peace.⁸² Eventually, Moisescu withdrew the appeal and the controversial procedure, which allowed the Attorney General to appeal sentences even after judicial procedure had been exhausted, has been since rescinded.

Nor is this admiration for the Marshal confined to politicians. In 1990s the mainstream daily *România Liberă* (Free Romania) published an op-ed entitled "Tear for a National Hero;" the authors, Ion Pavelescu and Adrian Pandea, were gratified that, "after forty-four years, history finally allows Romanians to shed a tear and light a candle for Ion Antonescu."⁸³ In turn, the popular daily *Ziua* launched a campaign in 1995 to name one of Bucharest's main boulevards after Ion Antonescu, claiming that Antonescu was "no Hitler, Mussolini, or Horthy. He did not kill Jews but saved Jews."⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Monitorul oficial al României*, no. 132, May 31, 1991; Michael Shafir, "Marschall Ion Antonescu: Politik der Rehabilitierung," *Europäische Rundschau*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1994): 55-71, reference at page 59; William Totok, *Der Revisionistische Diskurs* (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 2000), p. 91.

⁸¹ Mediafax, June 14, 1999.

⁸² Michael Shafir, *Reabilitarea postcomunistă a mareșalului Ion Antonescu*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 410-413; Randolph L. Braham, *supra.*, p. 68.

⁸³ *România Liberă*, June 22, 1990.

⁸⁴ *Ziua*, August 12, 1995.

The dismantling and/or restructuring of Communist-era research institutions—the PCR CC’s Institute of Historical and Socio-Political Studies, the Center for Research on Military History and Theory, or the Social and Political Sciences Academy—did not lead to the disappearance of the negationist discourse practiced under their aegis during the dictatorship. On the contrary, former PCR-affiliated historians established new networks based on informal relationships in politics, the press, or civil society that provided new forums for expressing old ideas. Gheorghe Buzatu, for example, became the head of the Iași-based Center for History and European Civilization with the Romanian Academy (*Academia Română*), where he and others would publish several pro-Antonescu and antisemitic tomes. In 2000, Buzatu was elected senator for the Greater Romania Party, where he joined former PCR colleagues: Communist-era military historians, nationalist writers, PCR activists, members of the Communist secret police, the Securitate and others who shared sympathy for Antonescu and the antisemitic imagery. (After 1989, many of these people joined the PRM. For example, the former Communist-era censor of historical research, Mircea Mușat, was PRM deputy-chairman until his death in 1994.)

Buzatu also joined the Marshal Ion Antonescu Foundation, set up in 1990 by Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Iosif Constantin Drăgan, as was a Marshal Ion Antonescu League. The two bodies merged in September 2001, but the new organization was eventually renamed League of Marshals; the change came in the wake of Emergency Ordinance 31/2002, which prohibits the cult of personalities found guilty of war crimes and of crimes against mankind. Eventually, Buzatu would take over the league’s chair from Drăgan. League members included numerous negationists, such as Radu Theodoru and Ilie Neacșu, who at that time was chief editor of the antisemitic review *Europa*. Numerous negationists with roots in the communist past would contribute articles to *Europa* and/or the C.V. Tudor-owned *România mare*. Among them one found Maria Covaci and Aurel Kereki, the authors of the book on the Iași pogrom discussed earlier in this chapter. Many other examples could be provided, and all lead to the same conclusion: after 1989, historians and nationalist activists educated by the Communist regime maintained some degree of solidarity. Above all, they kept alive and even enhanced the pro-Antonescu negationist political discourse.

Paradoxically, one of the side-effects of the year 1989 might be called the “democratization” of negationism. Beyond the hard-core nucleus just discussed, numerous other voices advocate negationism in one way or another, groups are taking positions in defense of its

propagation and publications disseminate negationist views. This is a heterogenous world and motivations are just as varied, ranging from nationalism, xenophobia, a penchant for conspiracy theories and authoritarianism, antidemocratic inclinations, ignorance, nostalgia, fascination with interwar intellectuals affiliated with the radical right to the anticommunist version of antisemitism. The sociological profiles of Romanian negationists are even more varied and complex. For this reason, this chapter will discuss categories of negationist discourse as an analytical starting point, rather than proceeding from groups or individuals. What follows are but a few examples from among a huge amount of negationist manifestations.

A.) Integral Negationism

Ten years ahead of his 2004 “conversion to philosemitism,” PRM leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor wrote that recently he had “learned that English and American scholars⁸⁵ are contesting the Holocaust itself, providing documentation and logical arguments proving that the Germans could not gas six million Jews, this being technically and physically an impossibility.” The Holocaust, he added, was nothing but “a Zionist scheme aimed at squeezing out from Germany about 100 billion Deutschmarks and to terrorize for more than 40 years all those who do not acquiesce to the Jewish yoke.”⁸⁶

In Romania, no author embraced more eagerly and more fully the negationist argument than Radu Theodoru. A former air force pilot, he became a founding member of the PRM and a deputy chairman of that party, yet after a conflict with Tudor, Theodoru was expelled from the party. In 1995 Theodoru published an article in *Europa*, in which he bluntly stated: “I am a supporter of the revisionist historical school led by the French scientist, R. Faurisson.” Faurisson, he added, was “the victim of disgusting moral and physical pressure for the simple fact that he doubted the existence of gas chambers.”⁸⁷ He went on to list Western negationists, starting with Leuchter and ending with Leon Degrelle, leader of the Belgian fascist movement, on whose infamous “open letter” to Pope John Paul II Theodoru insisted at length.⁸⁸ Degrelle, Theodoru

⁸⁵ In order to boost credibility, the negationists often refer to “demonstrations” by “scholars,” “scientists” and “authoritative specialists” who either remain anonymous or prove at the end of the day to have acquired notoriety precisely because of their negationist postures. Often enough, the negationists parade scientific rigor by making use of footnotes, bibliographies, documentary annexes, indexes, citations from documents or from the works of established historians.

⁸⁶ *România mare*, March 4, 1994.

⁸⁷ *Europa*, a weekly launched in May 1991 is no longer in print.

⁸⁸ Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

wrote, had produced two “comparative columns” that demonstrate that the “real genocide was that committed by the British-American bombings, by the two American A-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, by the mass assassinations in Hamburg and Dresden” and not at Auschwitz, “which is used by Zionist propaganda to squeeze out of defeated Germany fabulous amounts of money.” It was “Zionist propaganda” that had “imposed on [international] public opinion the fabulous number of six million assassinated Jews.” The “revisionist school,” however, “demonstrates,” according to Theodoru, that the number of victims packed into a gas chamber could not have physically fit to reach the number of gassed victims attributed to the Nazis. This, as is well known, is one of French negationist Robert Faurisson’s main claims. The “revisionist school” Theodoru wrote, is nothing short of “an A-bomb thrown by conscientious historians on the propagandistic construct put in place by the craftsmen of the Alliance Israélite Universelle” for, “having demonstrated that at Auschwitz and the other camps no genocide by gassing had occurred, [they implicitly] pose the problem of revising the Nuremberg trials.” In turn, that revision calls for “revising the trial of Third Reich Germany” as a whole and hence questions “‘the tribute’ paid by postwar Germany to Israel and world Jewish organizations—from pensions to all sorts of subventions.”⁸⁹ The article in *Europa* was said to be the first in a serialized new book by Theodoru, whose title was announced as *Romania, the World and the Jews*. The book itself was published in 1997, but under the title *Romania as Booty*, and it apparently sold well enough for a second, enlarged version, to be brought out by a different publisher in 2000, with the article in *Europa* serving as the volume’s introduction.⁹⁰

Theodoru’s steadfastness in emulating Western negationist models was once again displayed in his 2000 volume, *Nazismul sionist* (Zionist Nazism), whose title is inspired from the work of French negationist Roger Garaudy. In this tome, he claimed that the Holocaust has been turned into “the most lucrative Jewish business ever,” becoming a business that has “enriched the so-called witnesses, who fabricated series of aberrant exaggerations and pathological descriptions of life in Nazi camps.” The managers of that “business” had “introduced the Holocaust in school curricula, PhDs are being written on the subject, writers engaged in fiction on the topic make a nice profit from it,” and “so-called documentary movies such as [Claude Lanzmann’s] Shoah—in fact nothing but subtle or gross mystification” are constantly produced,

⁸⁹ Radu Theodoru, “Lumea, România și evreii,” *Europa*, no. 189, May 3-17, pp. 1, 11.

⁹⁰ Idem, *România ca o pradă* (Oradea: Alma, 1997) and (Bucharest: Miracol, 2000).

alongside the holding of “so-called scientific conferences” and articles in the mass media. The combination managed to “set in place a complex system of misinformation, of brain-washing, of psychological pressure” and “succeeded in imposing forgery as an emotional reality.” Theodoru exhorted the reader to display “human dignity” and adopt the ideas of “*historical revisionism*” and the positions of its advocates, who became the “target of Zionist Nazism,” a movement that “uses physical and legal terror, press lynching, attacks, social isolation and economic persecution against them.” According to Theodoru, the importance of the revisionist approach resides in its capacity to “analyze the entire Nuremberg trial and evidence; it was a trial of revenge staged by winners against losers.” Theodoru’s own characterization of the Nuremberg trials was: “a trial organized by Zionist Nazism against German Zionism, more specifically a trial staged by Judaic Nazism against Aryan Nazism. Nothing but a scuffle among racists.”⁹¹

B.) Deflective Negationism

This category of Holocaust denial is widespread, both in statements made by politicians after the demise of communism and in history books. As early as 1990, former National Liberal Party (NLP) Chairman Radu Câmpeanu called for Antonescu’s rehabilitation, describing the Marshal as “a great Romanian.” In support of his appeal, Câmpeanu shifted the blame for the atrocities committed during the Holocaust on Germany and Hungary. He claimed that during the war Romania had been a Nazi-occupied country for all practical purposes. Nonetheless, he said, nowhere else in the Nazi sphere of influence had there been fewer crimes against Jews than in Romania. At most, one could count 60,000 victims, but by no means were there between 300,000-400,000 victims in Romanian-administered territories. The only Romanian province where it would be justified to speak of a Holocaust was Hungarian-occupied Northern Transylvania, from where Jews were deported by the Horthy authorities. As for Antonescu’s role, he tried and was partially successful in defending Romania’s Jewish community, he said.⁹²

One should note that Antonescu’s transmogrification into a defender of Romanian Jewry is also shared by the selective negationists.⁹³ Magnate Iosif Constantin Drăgan, who is the main financier of Antonescu’s selective negationist cult, was claiming in 1993 that a statue in

⁹¹ Radu Theodoru, *Nazismul sionist* (Bucharest: Miracol, 2000), pp. 23-24. Author’s emphasis.

⁹² Interview with William Totok, November 2, 1990. Fragments of the interview were broadcast on Totok’s radio show, “Rumäne erwache! Nationalistische Tendenzen im postkommunistischen Rumänien,” RIAS-Berlin, February 5, 1991.

Antonescu's memory had been erected in Haifa to honor the "protector and savior of Romanian Jews, of whom nearly 500,000 live happily in Israel."⁹⁴ In his memoirs, Drăgan claimed that forced labor was a means designed by Antonescu "in order for the Jews to be better protected and to place them under the shield of the military code and military legislation." Driven by this noble purpose, "Marshal Antonescu decreed the mobilization of all Jews in Romania for civil duties put *on par with military ones*, in the service of the motherland, which was in war. Thus, over 500,000 Jews were saved (according to official statistics, but in actual fact maybe as many as 700,000) of which 400,000 contributed to the establishment of today's State of Israel and making up a quarter of their country's current population...I am told that in Israel, in Tel Aviv, a street has been called after Marshal Antonescu. However, historical justice is yet to produce the names and the confession of those who wore [Romanian] military uniforms in the firing squad that shot the Marshal."⁹⁵

Prominent members of the Ceaușescu historians' corps continued to display their deflective interpretations after the change of regime. In 1991, at the time of the commemoration marking fifty years since the Iași pogrom, Maria Covaci wrote in *Europa* that the massacre had been "perpetrated by the Hitlerite troops." As for those who perished in the Transnistria camps, the blame for their death should be placed on the war itself, epidemics, and (again) on the Hitlerite troops. One thing was clear for Covaci: the Romanian army had "perpetrated no massacres or pogroms."⁹⁶ The pogrom's anniversary was a good opportunity for Aurel Karețki (joint author with Covaci of the controversial *Bloody Days in Iași*) to sing the praise of the solidarity with Jews said to have been displayed by the entire Romanian people.⁹⁷ In a volume published in 1992, Mircea Mușat dubbed the Iași massacre a "Hitlerite-Legionary pogrom."⁹⁸

Attempts to deflect the guilt for the Holocaust on the Jews are not missing from Romanian negationism. Before his "conversion" to philosemitism, Corneliu Vadim Tudor was unhesitatingly employing deicidal arguments. In 1996, he was convinced that he was chosen to fulfill a messianic task: "Gracious God has a plan with me, namely, to remind them [the Jews] that they cannot infinitely crucify Jesus." One year later, Tudor was confessing to "love Jesus

⁹³ See Shafir, *Între negare și trivializare prin comparație*, *op. cit.*, pp. 72, 110.

⁹⁴ *România mare*, January 7, 1994.

⁹⁵ Iosif Constantin Drăgan, *Europa Phoenix* (vol. 3 in a 4-volume memoir whose joint title is *Through Europe*) (Bucharest: Europa Nova, 1977), pp. 562-563. Author's emphasis.

⁹⁶ Maria Covaci, "Un adevăr restituit istoriei," *Europa*, no. 34, July 1991.

⁹⁷ A. Karețki, "A existat un întreg popor solidar cu suferința evreilor," *Europa*, no. 26, July 1991.

Christ so dearly as to be unable not to think every day of who had mocked Him, who spat on Him, who stoned Him, who placed Him on the cross and who nailed Him. The Jews did it. The Jews of 2000 years ago and the Jews of all times.”⁹⁹

Conspiracy theories, which are widespread in Romania,¹⁰⁰ apply to the treatment of the Holocaust, too. In the eyes of Theodoru, Hitler was nothing but a puppet in Jewish hands to scare Jews into running to Palestine,¹⁰¹ while in the respectable Writers’ Union weekly *România literară*, writer Ion Buduca was claiming in April 1998 that antisemitism was a Zionist ploy to advance the purpose of Jewish emigration.¹⁰² In a tract published one year later, Buduca switched to the defensive argument, insinuating that the Jews had forced Hitler into self-defense. They were not only “historically guilty” for Germany’s defeat in World War I, but also of having started a war on Hitler in 1934, by declaring a boycott of Nazi German goods.¹⁰³

The same defensive argument abounds in negationist literature. As early as 1993, *Europa* editor-in-chief Ilie Neacșu (who would eventually become a PRM parliamentarian), was writing: “Hitler did not butcher Jews from the Valley of Jordan, but from his own courtyard in Berlin, where after World War I Judas’s descendants had become masters over German economy, culture, and politics.”¹⁰⁴ To this category also belongs the argument developed by journalist Vladimir Alexe. In a 2002 article published (by coincidence or not) on Hitler’s birthday—April 20—in the “Ultra-secret Files” supplement of the daily *Ziua*, Alexe purports to not only bring “evidence” that international Jewry had declared war on Hitler, but also that the famous Kristallnacht was nothing but a provocation engineered by world Jewry. Its purposes are alleged to have been twofold: to provoke mass emigration from Germany to Palestine and to obstruct British plans for dividing Palestine between Jews and Arabs.

While some negationists are ready to admit that repressive measures were applied against Jews “of necessity,” they go out of the way to emphasize that these were little other than punitive reactions to the lack of loyalty displayed by Jews toward Romania. The main argument rests on the large-scale support allegedly rendered by Jews to the Soviet occupation forces in Bessarabia

⁹⁸ Mircea Mușat, *1940: Drama României Mari* (Bucharest: Fundației România Mare, 1992), p. 217.

⁹⁹ *România mare*, no. 302, 1996 and 356, 1997, cited in Andrei Oișteanu, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română: Studiu de imagologie în context est-central european*, 2d ed., (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), pp. 366-367.

¹⁰⁰ George Voicu, *Zei cei răi. Cultura conspirației în România postcomunistă* (Iași: Polirom, 2000).

¹⁰¹ Radu Theodoru, *România ca o pradă*, 1997, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁰² Ioan Buduca, “Care-i buba?” *România literară*, no. 15, April 22-28, 1998.

¹⁰³ Idem., “Vișelul de aur,” *Contemporanul-Ideea europeană*, no. 37, September 30, 1999.

¹⁰⁴ Ilie Neacșu, “Rabinul suferă de hemoroizi,” *Europa*, April 6-13, 1999.

and Northern Bukovina in 1940 and on the alleged Jewish participation not only in humiliating or torturing the retreating Romanian army, but in the physical liquidation of Romanian military personnel. Viewed from this perspective, the June 1940 Dorohoi and Galați pogroms, the pogrom in Iași, the atrocities committed in Transnistria (whenever they are acknowledged, even in minimalist terms) can all be explained in terms of self-defense and/or spontaneous revenge on the Jews for their deeds in 1940.

This reactive argument has several versions. In some, Jewish guilt is total; in others it is only partial, yet amplified by what the argument's proponents call the "complex" and "tense" circumstances specific to the war. This second scenario would have the responsibility for atrocities remain indeterminate by switching the focus from the regime's own criminal project to the unfortunate general context of the war. Typical of this scenario is the work of Alex Mihai Stoenescu, an employee of the Defense Ministry's public relations department. In his book *Armata, mareșalul și evreii* (The Army, the Marshal and the Jews) despite minimizing the scope of the Iași massacre, Stoenescu unequivocally deplores the fact that people lost their lives. But instead of pointing out the planned nature of the atrocities, he argues that the deaths of thousands of civilians in the death trains were the outcome of negligence rather than a consequence of deliberate action. He claims that the Jews crammed into cattle cars were suspected of being communists, and the process of selection occurred in a "tense" atmosphere that led to the death of so many innocent people. He concludes that this was not the first time in history that "hundreds or even thousands of innocents" had paid for the deeds of "a handful of [Jewish communist] culprits."¹⁰⁵

A similar argument was propounded by Adrian Păunescu, one of the authors of the cult of Ceaușescu turned post-communist politician (Păunescu was a senator for the Romanian Labor Party and then for the Romanian Social-Democratic Party). In an article published in 1994, he argued that "None of the Romanians who fought for the restoration of the Nation's unity (starting from Marshal Antonescu down to the last soldier) has acted in the blood-stained manner in which wars force people to act against enemies because they were acting against Jews. The only—and fearsome—rationale for the terrible crimes in Bessarabia was to administer punishment to the Bolsheviks...Romania did not kill Jews [just] because they were Jews."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *Armata, mareșalul și evreii* (Bucharest: RAO, 1998), p. 280.

¹⁰⁶ Adrian Păunescu, "Nici jidani, nici profitori," *Totuși iubirea*, no. 184, April 7-14, 1994.

Jewish guilt for the war and its outcome is prominent in the works of historian Gheorghe Buzatu. His views on the Holocaust and his admiration of Antonescu were on record long before 1995, when Buzatu published a booklet at the Iron Guardist Majadahonda publishing house. In a noticeable performance, Buzatu's booklet reverses the perspective: rather than being a perpetrator of the Holocaust, Romania had been its victim. This time around, the discourse is no longer on Romania as a victim of Nazi Germany, as used to be the case in communist historiography. Romania underwent a Holocaust at the hand of the Jews, and the year 1940 marked its beginning.¹⁰⁷

The booklet would eventually make it as a separate chapter in a 1996 volume based on research Buzatu conducted in Soviet archives. Although this tome purports to deal with Romanians in the Kremlin's archives, most of its "heroes" were either Jews or had Jewish spouses, and all served Soviet power, becoming prominent leaders in post-World War II Romania.¹⁰⁸ In its book version, the brochure underwent significant changes. For example, it is no longer stated that the Jewish attacks on the Romanian army in summer 1940 "*undoubtedly influenced*" Antonescu's "*ulterior behavior vis-à-vis the Jewish problem.*"¹⁰⁹ Implicitly, in 1995 Buzatu was acknowledging that Antonescu had ordered in 1941 that Jews be deported from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to Transnistria. This is now vanishing. But Buzatu keeps in the quotation that shows Antonescu as stating on October 19, 1941, that the crimes perpetrated in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in 1940 against the Romanian army had been "essentially of Jewish inspiration and execution."¹¹⁰ Buzatu himself referred to those events as "a [Jewish] crime against the Romanian people." More important, in both versions one finds the assertion that July 1940 is the date marking "*the Holocaust [directed] against the Romanian people during the 1939-1945 World War II and later on.*"¹¹¹

The last form of deflective negation—and by far the most insulting to the memory—casts the Jews in the role of perpetrators of the Holocaust. Ion Coja, a Bucharest University philology professor whose sinuous political career took him from one political party to another, was a candidate for the position of Bucharest mayor in the local elections of 2004. The main point on his electoral platform was the rehabilitation of Marshal Antonescu. In 1996 he was close to being

¹⁰⁷ See Gheorghe Buzatu, *Așa a început Holocaustul împotriva poporului român* (Bucharest: Majadahonda, 1995).

¹⁰⁸ Gheorghe Buzatu *Românii în arhivele Kremlinului* (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1996).

¹⁰⁹ Idem, *Așa a început Holocaustul*, *op. cit.*, p. 40. Author's emphasis.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. and *Românii în arhivele Kremlinului*, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

designated a candidate for Romania's presidency. In an "open letter" addressed to the late president of the FCER, the late professor Nicolae Cajal, Coja wrote in February 1997 that the January 1941 Bucharest pogrom had never taken place. Its 120 victims, some of whom were hanged on hooks at the slaughter house with the inscription "Kosher meat" on them were all an invention—the best proof being that when the Communists took power nobody had been put on trial, although so many Jews were then in the party leadership. Jews may have died during the January uprising against Antonescu, Coja claimed in another letter to Cajal, but nobody has ever proved that the Iron Guard committed the crimes.¹¹² The Iron Guard did not commit the assassination of historian Nicolae Iorga either, Coja would claim in a book published in 1999. That assassination was part of a plot ordered by the KGB, which had infiltrated the movement. And—Coja is heavily hinting in the book—it is a well-kept secret that the KGB was in the hands of the "occult." The same "occult" would eventually order the assassination of Nicolae Ceaușescu, as indeed it would commission the liquidation of Romanian-born scholar Ioan Petru Culianu in the United States in May 1991—knowing that the scholar had discovered the secrets of its world domination.¹¹³ By September 2003, building on another absurdity published by journalist Vladimir Alexe the same month (in the daily *România Liberă*¹¹⁴) claimed that before the 1941 Bucharest pogrom Antonescu had sealed a secret pact with the underground Communist Party, Coja would conclude that the Jewish victims of the pogrom had been liquidated by their own co-religionists (dressed in the green shirts of the Legionnaires) who were communists serving the Soviet interest: to compromise the Iron Guard and end its partnership with Antonescu.¹¹⁵ Just a few months later, however, Coja turned the tables once again on his never-ending tales, now claiming to be in the possession of a notarized testimony of a nonagenarian witness to the events, according to whom the bodies hanged at the slaughter house were of Iron Guardists massacred by Jews.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 29 and 222, respectively. Author's emphasis.

¹¹² Ion Coja, *Legionarii noștri* (Bucharest: Kogaion, 1997), pp. 156-169. Citation on p. 167.

¹¹³ Idem, *Marele manipulator și asasinarea lui Culianu, Ceaușescu, Iorga* (Bucharest: Miracol, 1999).

¹¹⁴ *România liberă*, September 3, 2003.

¹¹⁵ *România mare*, no. 689, 26 September 2003.

¹¹⁶ Idem, no. 706, January 23, 2004.

C.) Selective Negationism

Nowhere in East Central Europe is this type of Holocaust denial (which acknowledges the perpetration of the Shoah provided that it is not extended to compatriots' participation in the genocide) more widespread than in Romania. It rejects any state (Romanian), regime (Antonescu and his governmental team and army) or Legionnaire responsibility for the Holocaust. As deflective negationism does, this discourse stems from a self-exonerating nationalist strategy.

Throughout the 1990s, Buzatu edited or prefaced a number of volumes presenting the Iron Guard and its leader in a favorable light.¹¹⁷ Until only recently, Buzatu was still willing to admit that the Guard had indulged in crime, although he exonerated it by depicting the offense as an autochthonous reaction to Bolshevism and its crimes, in which Jews had been allegedly prominently involved. As he formulated it in an article published in *România mare* on December 22, 1995, "Crime Begets Crime." More recently, however, he fully embraced the postures of selective negationism that Coja has been displaying from the start.

In July 2001, Buzatu and Coja organized in Bucharest a symposium whose title—"Has there been a Holocaust in Romania?"—was telling in itself. The symposium was divided into two panels. The first examined the "questionable" occurrence of the Shoah in Romania, while the second focused on the reasons for the existence of a "powerfully-institutionalized anti-Romanianism." At the conclusion of this conference, Coja established the League for the Struggle against Anti-Romanianism (LICAR) and appointed himself chairman. The symposium's resolution was published, among other places, in the Iron Guardist journal *Permanențe* in both Romanian and "pigeon English."¹¹⁸ The document was signed "pro forma" by Coja and emblematically assumed the selective negationist posture. Its authors, it was stated, "want to make clear that we have nothing to do with those people and opinions contesting as a whole the occurrence of the Jewish holocaust [sic!] during World War II." It said that Jews "have suffered almost everywhere in the Europe [sic!] of those years, but not in Romania," and it added that "testimonies of trustworthy Jews" prove that "the Romanian people had in those years a behavior honoring human dignity [sic!]."

¹¹⁷ For example, Kurt W. Treptow, Gheorghe Buzatu, *Procesul lui Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (May, 1938)*, (n.p.: Iași, 1994), or Gheorghe Buzatu et al., *Radiografia dreptei românești* (Bucharest: FF Press, 1996). When the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the Legion was marked in Iași—the "Movement's Capital"—Buzatu delivered a conference videotaped and marketed by Timișoara Iron Guardist publisher Gordian. See Gordian, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail. 70 de minute împreună cu Mișcarea legionară. Iași, 24 iunie 1997*.

¹¹⁸ See *Permanențe*, No. 7, July 2001.

In support of their affirmations, the participants raised several “arguments.” They started by presenting excerpts from what they claimed was the 1955 testimony of the former leader of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, Wilhelm Filderman, before a Swiss court. The document has never been produced and whether it really exists is doubtful.¹¹⁹ The alleged testimony had been mentioned for the first time in a 1994 volume in an editor’s note written by American historian Kurt Treptow, who was residing in Romania.¹²⁰ Treptow, whose pro-Legion and pro-Antonescu sympathies were well known, had long benefited from support on the part of the Romanian authorities.¹²¹ Coja wrote that it was from this tome that he had first learned about the existence of the Swiss “testimony.”¹²² According to Treptow, the document could be found in the archives of the Buzatu-managed Iași Center for European History and Civilization. However, Buzatu was eventually forced to admit that the alleged “testimony” had been simply lifted from an article published in the tabloid *Baricada*. The tabloid’s editors claimed to have received it from Matei Cazacu, a historian of Romanian origins born in France. Upon being contacted by the Theodor Wexler, the vice president of the Filderman Foundation, Cazacu declined any knowledge of the “document”¹²³

In his address to the symposium, as well as in an article published in the recently-launched *Revista Mareșal Ion Antonescu* (Marshal Ion Antonescu Review), Coja brought another “witness” to the stand of “Romanian innocence”: former Romanian Chief Rabbi Alexandru Șafran.¹²⁴ The nonagenarian Jewish leader was said to have offered the son of Gheorghe Alexianu, (the governor of Transnistria executed in 1946 together with Antonescu) a book with a dedication exonerating his father of any crimes.¹²⁵ Political scientist Michael Shafir investigated the allegation by contacting Dan Șafran, the grandson of the former Chief Rabbi. From his

¹¹⁹ See Shafir, *Între negare și trivialisare prin comparație*, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-95.

¹²⁰ The volume is Sabin Manuilă, Wilhelm Filderman, *Populația evreiască în timpul celui de-al doilea război mondial*. Treptow cites the “testimony” on pp. 8-12. He would again cite *from* it (while avoiding indicating the source) in *A History of Romania*, ed. Kurt Treptow (Iași: The Center for Romanian Studies, The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1995), pp. 485, 499-500. This tome was massively disseminated abroad by the Romanian Cultural Foundation, which enlisted the help of Romanian embassies for the purpose.

¹²¹ Several Romanian officials and some historians were forced to face an embarrassing situation in 2002, when Treptow was put on trial and sentenced for pedophilia.

¹²² Coja, *Marele manipulator*, *op. cit.*, pp. 298-299.

¹²³ See *Baricada*, no. 26, July 1991, and Lya Benjamin, “Considerații pe marginea pretinsului testament,” *Societate și cultură*, no. 4, 1995, pp. 39-43.

¹²⁴ For details see Shafir, *Între negare și trivialisare prin comparație*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

¹²⁵ Ion Coja, “Simpozion internațional: ‘Holocaust în România?’” (1-7), *România mare*, August 13-24, 2001.

hospital bed, Șafran directed Șafir to his memoirs, in which Alexianu is mentioned only once and is described as “famous for his cruelty.”¹²⁶

The resolution of the Coja-Buzatu symposium also embraces Coja’s position on the Iron Guard’s non-participation in the Bucharest 1941 pogrom. As Coja had already done in the past, the resolution claims that the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal had investigated “all [wartime] crimes against humanity” and that the Legionary movement has also been investigated. Prosecutors, however, are said to have reached the conclusion that the movement cannot be charged with “any wrong doing, any genocidal crime.” The legend about the movement’s acquittal of charges has been created and disseminated by exiled Iron Guardists (see *infra*), while Coja has diligently promoted it in Romania.¹²⁷ As is well known, the Nuremberg International Tribunal never dealt with crimes other than those committed by Nazi Germany.¹²⁸

In 2001, Buzatu endorsed the publication by the Center for History and European Civilization, which he headed, of a foul brochure authored by the young PRM parliamentary deputy Vlad Hogeia. Entitled *The Nationalist*, the brochure is a collection of articles previously published in *România mare* or the PRM weekly *Politica*. It also includes some pamphlets published in the Iași tabloid *Atac la Târgu’ Ieșilor*, which are called by Hogeia “studies.” One of these “studies” is titled “What Holocaust?” with the subtitle “Marshal Antonescu protected Romania’s Jews.” Hogeia, too, is citing Filderman’s “testimony” alongside historians who, he says, treated the 1940-1944 period with objectivity. Among the names mentioned are Buzatu, Ioan Scurtu, Valeriu-Florin Dobrinescu, Iosif Constantin Drăgan, Mircea Mușat, General Ion Gheorghe, and Colonel Gheorghe Magherescu. These historians, he claims, relied on documents that clearly demonstrate that the Jews in Romania were not subjected to extermination by the Antonescu regime.”¹²⁹ The brochure’s anti-Jewish rhetoric is shrill, and the author does not hesitate to rely on the authority of Julius Streicher, the infamous Nazi Jew-hater executed in Nuremberg as a war criminal. It is hardly surprising, then, to find Hogeia writing that “the Jewish-Khazar anti-Christians tried to overcome their complex of spiritual inferiority by fully bestializing their affective experiences;” or that “Both Bolshevik Marxism and savage capitalism

¹²⁶ Alexandru Șafran, *Un tăciune smuls flăcărilor: Memorii* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), p. 86.

¹²⁷ Coja, *Legionarii noștri*, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-111, as well as his polemic with Zigu Ornea in *Dilema*, August 11-17 and August 25-31, 1997.

¹²⁸ I. Deák, J. T. Gross, T. Judt, eds., *Procese în Europa. Al doilea război mondial și consecințele lui* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2003), *passim*.

were invented by the same bearded rabbis and money-changers who at secret meetings would endlessly bumble words and devise ever and ever newer protocols to enslave the ‘goyms’ [non-Jews].”¹³⁰

Hogea’s book triggered a press scandal, but the politician did not lose his parliamentary seat, although his writings were in clear breach of the Romanian Penal Code. Buzatu submitted a formal resignation from the directorship of the Iași Center, yet continued to maintain a de facto control over the institution.

As illustrated by the implementation of governmental Emergency Ordinance no. 31 of March 13, 2002, selective negationism is sometimes encountered not only among extremist intellectuals or politicians, but also among state officials. Approved by the cabinet under international pressure prior to Romania’s joining NATO, the ordinance bans the activity of fascist-like organizations and the display of racist and xenophobic symbols, as well as the cult of personalities found guilty in court of “crimes against peace and humanity,” as Antonescu had. The ordinance also prohibits the erection in public space (with the exception of museums or research institutions as part of research activities) of statues or memorial plaques commemorating such persons, and the naming of streets and other public places after them. Finally, Ordinance 31/2002 prohibits publicly denying the Holocaust and its consequences. Penalties ranging from fines to fifteen years in prison are stipulated for these offences.¹³¹

Before the decree went into force, between six and eight statues had been erected in Antonescu’s memory, and twenty-five streets or squares as well as the Iași military cemetery of Lețcani, had been named after him. Other memorials dedicated to the Marshal had an ambiguous status, as it was not clear whether the space where they stood was public or private.¹³² Two years

¹²⁹ Vlad Hogea, *Naționalistul* (Iași: Academia Română, Centrul de istorie și civilizație europeană, 2001), pp. 60-66. Author’s emphasis.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 56, *passim*.

¹³¹ Mediafax, March 18, 2002, *Monitorul oficial al României*, March 28, 2002, www.indaco.ro.

¹³² According to the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, since 1993 six statues have been erected in the memory of the Marshal—in Bucharest, Iași, Jilava, Slobozia, Piatra-Neamț and Târgoviște (Mediafax, March 18, 2003). The memorial in Jilava, on the place of Antonescu’s execution, is a large cross (*troița*).¹³² Two more statues—in Sarmas and Călărași—were mentioned in an U.S. Helsinki Committee protest letter (Idem, June 28, 2002). The mayor of Călărași denied that the statue in his town was displayed on “public space,” saying that the bust was on the grounds of the Marshal Ion Antonescu League and therefore on private ground (*Jurnalul național*, July 2, 2002). According to the information of this chapter’s authors, at the time Emergency Ordinance 31/2002 was issued, there were three statues displayed in “public space,” namely, in Slobozia, Piatra-Neamț, and the Iași military cemetery of Lețcani. Four monuments were arguably in “public space:” the cross in Jilava, on prison grounds administered by the Justice Ministry, a bust in the courtyard of a Bucharest church built by Antonescu, an additional bust on the grounds of a church in Sarmas, Mureș County, and the Călărași monument. Attempts to erect statues in

after the decree went into force there were still streets named after Antonescu in major cities such as Cluj-Napoca, Câmpulung-Muscel, or Târgu-Mureș.¹³³ In Timișoara, it took internal as well as international pressure to convince the municipal council to change the name of the Antonescu Boulevard, and another street was named after Iron Guardist Spiru Blănaru.¹³⁴ Soon after the decree was approved, Coja published yet another negationist booklet, yet prosecutors did nothing.¹³⁵

Moreover, the Romanian government was in breach of its own decree soon after its issuance, when Ion Antonescu's portrait was put on display at the government's official seat (Palatul Victoria), as part of an exhibition of portraits of Romania's former heads of government. The U.S. Helsinki Commission promptly denounced the act, and it used the opportunity to criticize delays in the dismantling of Antonescu's statues.¹³⁶ In defense, the Minister of Culture, Răzvan Theodorescu, retorted that all statues had been demolished, with the exception of Antonescu's bust placed in the yard of a church he built in Bucharest. With regard to the portrait, the minister argued that the government headquarters do not qualify as "public space," as access to the building is restricted.¹³⁷ This was a weak argument because the government is a public institution par excellence.

The fate of Ordinance 31/2002 remains uncertain. After it was submitted for approval to Parliament, MPs proposed various amendments that, if adopted, would dilute its effects. Thus, headed by former party chairman Mircea-Ionescu-Quintus, MPs of the center-right PNL in the Senate's Defense Committee were joined by colleagues from the extreme-right PRM in proposing several substantial amendments. They claimed that the Holocaust was a diffuse concept that needed clarification; and it was also claimed that the article in the ordinance

Antonescu's memory had been filed by either prefects or local administration authorities in Târgu-Mureș, Pitești and Drobeta Turnu-Severin. A plan to erect a statue to Antonescu initiated by former Cluj Mayor Gheorghe Funar was approved by the town council, foiled by the prefect, and was pending before the courts, with the trial being moved from Cluj to Iași. For the number of streets named after the Marshal see Mediafax, March 18, 2002.

¹³³ See Mediafax, November 18, 2003 (Târgu-Mureș) and Rompres, February 9, 2004 (Cluj-Napoca). Oradea was also among the Romanian towns that kept a street called after the Marshal long after the ordinance was issued (see William Totok, "Mistificări și falsificări," *Observator cultural*, no. 156, January 21-27, 2003), but eventually renamed that street.

¹³⁴ Interview with William Totok in *Divers*, no. 10, March 18, 2004.

¹³⁵ *** *Holocaust în România (?)*. *Suită de documente și mărturii adunate și comentate de Ion Coja în folosul parlamentarilor și al autorităților implicate în elaborarea, aprobarea și aplicarea Ordonanței de Urgență nr. 31/2002 a guvernului României* (Bucharest: Kogaion, 2002). The title cited here is that on the interior cover. The outer cover displays no question mark, which made the brochure's marketing possible.

¹³⁶ *Adevărul*, June 29-30, 2002.

¹³⁷ *Cotidianul*, May 28, 2002, and Mediafax, June 29, 2002.

prohibiting Holocaust denial infringes on human rights in general and on the right to freedom of expression in particular.¹³⁸ This position was also embraced by a prominent member of the Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Romania-Helsinki Committee.¹³⁹ Subsequently, although the PNL leadership distanced itself from the opinions of its representatives on the Defense Committee,¹⁴⁰ the Judicial Committee of the Senate endorsed the amendments approved by the Defense Committee. More significantly, the Judicial Committee unanimously adopted an amendment proposed by Senator Gheorghe Buzatu.

The amendment defines the Holocaust as the “the systematic massive extermination of the Jewish population in Europe, organized by the Nazi authorities during the Second World War.”¹⁴¹ In other words, by definition there was no Holocaust in Romania, since the extermination of Jews there had not been “organized by the Nazi authorities,” but by Romania’s authorities themselves.¹⁴² The amendment thus fits hand-in-glove into Buzatu and his supporters’ selective negationist conceptual framework, according to which the Holocaust was perpetrated elsewhere. If Parliament approves the ordinance under this formulation, the legislation becomes irrelevant.

Finally, it must be stressed that the Wiesel Commission itself was set up as a consequence of a long controversy with international echoes, stirred up by a governmental communiqué that may itself be viewed as an exemplification of selective negationism. On June 12, 2003, at the end of a brief communiqué concluding a cooperative agreement between the National Archives of Romania and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, a sentence stated that Romania’s government “encourages research concerning the Holocaust in Europe—including documents referring to it and found in Romanian archives—but strongly emphasizes that between 1940–1945 no Holocaust took place within Romania’s boundaries.”¹⁴³ The statement triggered numerous domestic and international protests, including

¹³⁸ *Cotidianul*, April 15, 2002.

¹³⁹ See Gabriel Andreescu, “Contra extremismului, nu împotriva libertății,” *Observator cultural*, No. 111, April 9-15, 2002, and “Necesitatea amendării Ordonanței de urgență no. 31 privind organizațiile și simbolurile cu caracter fascist, rasist sau xenofob,” *Revista română de drepturile omului*, no. 23, 2002, pp. 8-19.

¹⁴⁰ Mediafax, April 17, 2002.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, June 5, 2002.

¹⁴² For a pertinent criticism of this amendment see Andrei Oișteanu, “Holocaust: Încercare de definire,” *Dilema*, no. 518, February 28, 2003.

¹⁴³ Rompres, June 12, 2003.

an official protest from Israel.¹⁴⁴ President Iliescu commented that the statement “should have never been made.”¹⁴⁵

The government promptly acted to undo the damage. On June 17, 2003, it stated that the Antonescu regime, which at that time “represented the Romanian state” had been “guilty of grave war crimes, pogroms, deportations to Transnistria, mass dislocations of a sizable part of Romania’s Jewish population to territories occupied and controlled by the Romanian army, employing discrimination and extermination, which are part of the sinister mechanism of the Holocaust.” Consequently, the statement said, the Romanian government “assumes its share of responsibility” for the crimes initiated by the Antonescu regime.¹⁴⁶

Influences of Western Negationism

Western negationism made a substantial contribution in the emergence and spreading of a similar trend in Romania by supplying the ensemble of arguments used by integral negationism and also by influencing deflective and selective negationism. Radu Theodoru, the only well-known Romanian advocate of integral negationism, closed one of the chapters of his *Nazismul sionist* by welcoming the publication in Romanian of *The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*, the “revisionist” book written by “the brilliant philosopher, sociologist, and political scientist Roger Garaudy.”¹⁴⁷ Theodoru recommended for further reading the works of other “revisionist” historians such as David Irving, Arthur Butz, Robert Faurisson, Jürgen Graf, Carl O. Nordling, and Carlo Mattogno.¹⁴⁸ Mattogno’s *The Myth of the Extermination of Jews* had been already serialized in 1994–1995 by *Mișcarea*, the publication of the Movement for Romania, and Graf’s works would soon be printed in far-right publications as well as in volume format (in 2000).¹⁴⁹

Negationist articles published in the West were translated in numerous Romanian extreme-right publications throughout the transition period. In 1995, the PRM weekly *Politica* published in sequels in eight consecutive issues, various articles from the French review *Annales*

¹⁴⁴ For further details see Michael Shafir, “Negation at the Top: Deconstructing the Holocaust Denial Salad in the Romanian Cucumber Season,” *Xenopoliana*, vol. 11, no. 3-4 (2003): pp. 90-122.

¹⁴⁵ *Evenimentul zilei*, June 18, 2003.

¹⁴⁶ Mediafax, June 17, 2003.

¹⁴⁷ Roger Garaudy, *Miturile fondatoare ale politicii israeliene* (Bucharest: ALMA TP, 1998). For the reception of the book in Romania, see George Voicu, *op. cit.*, pp. 160, 166; George Voicu, *Teme antisemite în discursul public* (Bucharest: Ars Docendi, 2000), pp. 132-139; and Michael Shafir, “The Man They Love to Hate: Norman Manea’s «Snail House» Between Holocaust and Gulag,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 30, no. 1: pp. 60-81.

¹⁴⁸ Theodoru, *Nazismul sionist*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁴⁹ Jürgen Graf, *Martori oculari sau legile naturii?* (Bucharest: Samizdat, n.d. [2000]).

d’histoire révisionniste. In 1994, *Mișcarea* published a review signed by Silviu Rareș on the work of such negationists as David Irving, Maurice Bardèche, Paul Rassinier, Pierre Guillaume, Richard Harwood, Udo Walendy, Ernst Zündel, R. Faurisson, and Arthur Butz. Larry Watts¹⁵⁰ and Mircea Ionițiu¹⁵¹ turned Irving into a legitimate and respectable scholarly authority by citing his work in arguments meant to exonerate Antonescu. In 1994 *Mișcarea* also published the text of a lecture Irving gave at the notorious negationist Institute for Historical Review in the winter of 1990/1991. The text was titled “Let the Auschwitz Ship Sink.”¹⁵²

It is worth noting that many of the books in translation that popularize negationist literature are published by the Bucharest printing house Samizdat, subsidized by Iosif Constantin Drăgan.¹⁵³ The name of the printing house is identical with the name German-born Canadian negationist Ernst Zündel gave to his Holocaust-denying commercial enterprise (a cynical “borrowing” of a word that became synonymous for intellectual resistance under the totalitarian Soviet regime). Samizdat is only one of the many printing houses that specialize in this kind of topic, with Antet as its fiercest competitor. Among other books, Samizdat published *Hitler’s Political Testament* and Garaudy’s *Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*. The latter book ended up in a criminal ruling against Garaudy in a French court. Yet the translation of the book was well received in Romania, not only by extreme-right publications, but also by mainstream figures, which defended the book in the name of free speech.

Romanian negationists and antisemites in general are very fond of publications dealing with the “international Jewish conspiracy,” a category appropriate for the books mentioned in the previous paragraph. Autochthonous or translated literature on the Jewish conspiracy is far too large to be discussed here at length.¹⁵⁴ Yet, it was unusual to witness—aside from the predictable

¹⁵⁰ See Larry Watts, *O Casandă a României: Ion Antonescu* (Bucharest: Fundației Culturale Române, 1993), p. 379.

¹⁵¹ See Mircea Ionițiu, *Amintiri și reflecțiuni* (Bucharest: Editura enciclopedică, 1993), pp. 118, 160.

¹⁵² See *Mișcarea*, no. 8-9 and 10, May and June 1994.

¹⁵³ See the anonymously-authored book *Marea conspirație mondialistă: Hitler contra Iuda* whose inside cover reveals that the tome was in fact printed by the Drăgan Group Print. Although the name “Drăgan” is not uncommon in Romania, there is no room for mistaken identification—the name of the Drăgan-owned Butan Gas Company appears alongside. The book is said to be a translation from French and the author feared the consequences of revealing his true identity because of the Fabius-Gayssot legislation in France. He therefore uses the cynical nickname of “Sam Izdat,” which has a Jewish sound. The volume ends with the words: “Hitler is dead. *Heil Hitler!*” (p. 344, author’s emphasis).

¹⁵⁴ See for example: Jan van Helsing, *Organizațiile secrete și puterea lor în secolul XX* (Bucharest: Samizdat, 1997), 2 vols.; Nicolae Trofin, *Strategia diabolică a forțelor oculte pentru instaurarea noului ordin mondial* (Cluj-Napoca: Risoprint, 1997), vol. 1; Serge Monaste, *Protocoloalele de la Toronto: Națiunile Unite contra creștinismului*

applause with which the publication in Romanian translation of Garaudy's book was met by the Sibiu-based pro-Legionary *Puncte cardinale*—intellectuals of liberal persuasion coming to Garaudy's defense in the name of free speech. Literary critic and university professor Nicolae Manolescu (at that time also a prominent member of the PNL leadership) was joined by journalist Cristian Tudor Popescu, the editor-in-chief of the mainstream daily *Adevărul*. For Popescu, the sentencing of Garaudy was on par with “convicting Descartes.”¹⁵⁵ If the book's Romanian defenders could argue, as Manolescu did, that Garaudy did not entirely negate the Holocaust in *The Founding Myths*, having only objected to “some exaggerations,” the claim could no longer be made for a 1999-published translation of his volume *The Trial of Israeli Zionism: Unmasking the International Zionist Conspiracy*, where the negationist argument is embraced full-scale.¹⁵⁶ Yet none of his defenders in Romania saw it necessary to distance themselves from the positions they had earlier displayed.

Western influence is also felt in the case of deflecting negationism. When writer Ion Buduca and journalist Vladimir Alexe cast the blame for the beginning of the Holocaust on the Jews (see *supra*), they in fact reproduce the “revisionist” argument first made by Bardèche and later by Verrall, Harwood, Faurisson, Irving, and Ernst Nolte.¹⁵⁷ The controversial Nolte¹⁵⁸ was last among the “revisionists” to adopt this position, and his influence on Romanian selective negationism is particularly powerful.

Influences of the Romanian Exile

Romanian expatriates played a crucial role in reproducing and spreading negationist arguments both before and after 1989. Before delving into the argument, it is important to note

(Bucharest: Samizdat, n.d.); David Duke, *Bazele antisemitismului și sionismului ca rasism: Tezirea la realitate* (Bucharest: Antet XX, n.d.).

¹⁵⁵ See N. Manolescu, “Holocaustul și Gulagul,” *România literară*, no. 9, March 11-17, 1998, and Cristian Tudor Popescu, “Cazul Garaudy: libertatea gândirii taxată drept antisemitism,” *Adevărul*, December 12, 1996; “Condamnarea lui Descartes,” Idem, March 2, 1998; see also Totok, *Der Revisionistische Diskurs*, *op. cit.*, p. 109, fn. 44, for a full listing of Romanian intellectuals of otherwise democratic persuasion who came to Garaudy's defense on this occasion.

¹⁵⁶ Roger Garaudy, *Procesul sionismului israelian: Demascarea conspirației sioniste mondiale* (Bucharest: Samizdat, 1998). See also Voicu, *Teme antisemite*, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

¹⁵⁷ See Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, *op. cit.*, p. 50 (Bardèche), p. 110 (Harwood) and p. 213 (Irving); Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory. Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 38-42 (Harwood and Faurisson); Ernst Nolte, “Standing Things on Their Heads: Against Negative Nationalism in Interpreting History,” in *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust* (translated by James Knowlton and Truett Cates) (Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993), pp. 149-154.

the distinction that should be made between intellectual and political exiles on one hand and the “masses” of refugees on the other hand, i.e., between the active minority and the diaspora caught in processes of assimilation in host countries. Between the two, there is not necessarily a relationship of representativeness. The politically mobilized Romanian exile has had, in general, a “right-wing” orientation, and it is notorious that the extreme Right has been over-represented among its ranks when it came to publishing.¹⁵⁹

It must be stressed, however, that the “exile” is not a compact and homogenous group whose main distinctive feature, as it were, would be found in negationism. Rather, one deals in this case with a kind of “interface” between the world of those who live in the country and the world of those who live abroad; hence, what forms of negationism are encountered is largely dependent on the type of links existing between different social environments as well as on the personal history of each expatriate. In addition, it should be mentioned that although “exile” is a historical phenomenon similar to that encountered in the case of other East European “exiles” and is thus doomed to disappearance, the Romanian exile has displayed both before and after the Communist period a remarkable capability of self-reproduction. In fact, the demise of the Communist regime has acted as a stimulating factor in the dissemination of negationist outlooks. The ascribed symbolic value of the exile and its acknowledged “elite” status make possible for it to exert on the home country an influence far superior to the relatively modest social status of its members in the host countries. Finally, it should also be emphasized that the exile produced not only negationism-prone personalities, but also intellectuals whose contribution to revealing the true dimension of the crimes of the Legionnaires and Antonescu’s regime has been remarkable. Suffice it to mention here the works of Dr. Ion Solacolu and William Totok, both living in Germany.

A.) Integral Negationism

Although the advocates of integral negationism were peripheral to the Romanian diaspora, they played a crucial role in linking domestic supporters of Romanian national-communism with the networks of the exiled Romanian extreme-right, whose texts they managed

¹⁵⁸ Richard E. Evans, *Hitler’s Shadow*, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

¹⁵⁹ See Vasile Dumitrescu, *O istorie a exilului românesc (1944-1989): În eseuri, articole, scrisori, imagini, etc.* (Bucharest: Victor Frunză, 1997); Florin Manolescu, *Enciclopedia exilului literar românesc (1945-1989)*

to popularize in the country. One such agent of integral negationism was the expatriate group that ran a Romanian bookshop in Paris (*Librairie roumaine du savoir, antitotalitaire*). The owner, George Dănescu-Pișcoci, is also the distributor and editor of Romanian Iron Guard literature as well as French negationist literature (of the *La Vieille Taupe* circle). He is notable for having been the main promoter of Garaudy's *Founding Myth*. As Bernard Camboulives has shown, the group associated with this bookshop is not much of a former "center of anticommunist struggle." Rather, it is more of a "a den for spreading revisionist and negationist outlooks directed against the "dominant Western beliefs." Even just a superficial examination of the library's "anti-totalitarianism" shows that it is nothing short of "a means serving those who question the gas chamber to give vent to their ideas," Camboulives wrote.¹⁶⁰

Integral negationism was also "imported" from the West with the help of exiled Iron Guard members. For a while, the main publication embracing Legionary positions was the Timișoara-based *Gazeta de vest* whose editor-in-chief was Ovidiu Guleș—a supporter of the Horia Sima wing of the movement.¹⁶¹ *Gazeta de vest*—as well as the Gordian publishing house, which specialized in Iron Guard literature and its dissemination—was financed by the Iron Guardist Zaharia Marineasa. After the death of Horia Sima in 1993, and until his own death in 1997, Marineasa was a member of the Interior Command Group of Legionary veterans, whose chief was Mircea Nicolau.¹⁶² Marineasa, who spent twenty-one years in jail under both Antonescu and the Communists, also financed several other publishing outlets specializing in the dissemination of the movement's propaganda in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Sibiu and Chișinău. He died shortly before the January 1998 launching of the Bucharest-based publication *Permanențe*. The publication—also a Sima-wing outlet—has Nicolau as editor-in-chief.¹⁶³ While *Gazeta de vest* and the rival Codreanu-wing *Mișcarea* have since ceased publication, the Legionary Sibiu-based monthly *Puncte cardinale* continues to appear regularly. In the meantime, one more Iron Guardist monthly, *Obiectiv legionar*, is being printed in Bucharest. Its editor-in-chief is Șerban Suru, to whom the veterans of the movement deny the status of authentic Legionnaire.

(Bucharest: Compania, 2003); Silvia Constantinescu, *Exil. Oameni și idei* (Bucharest: Curierul românesc, 1995), as well as the special issue of the journal *Secolul XX*, 1997/1998 on the Romanian exile.

¹⁶⁰ Bernard Camboulives, "Un scandal: librăria română din Paris," 22, no. 735, April 6-12, 2004, p. 16.

¹⁶¹ Ovidiu Guleș, *Cum am cunoscut Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail* (Timișoara: Gordian, 1992), pp. 13-22.

¹⁶² Idem, *Zaharia Marineasa, Prezent! Garda de Fier după Horia Sima* (Timișoara: Gordian, 1998), pp. 4 and 19.

¹⁶³ See *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 54-55.

The importance of these publications must not be exaggerated, but their local and international influence should not be ignored. When it was still active, *Gazeta de vest* sold 2,000 copies and *Puncte cardinale* was distributed mainly abroad.¹⁶⁴ The neo-Legionary group in Timișoara developed important connections with extreme-right parties abroad or with the extremist International Third Position (ITP). Moreover, Gordian used to publish a Romanian edition of ITP's main publication, *Final Conflict*,¹⁶⁵ and the ITP adopted the Legion's forms of organization (the "nests"),¹⁶⁶ as did the Portuguese National Revolutionary Front.¹⁶⁷ The Timișoara Legionnaires were in contact with the British extreme-right League of Saint George as well as with the youth organization of the German extreme-right National Democratic Party. The German Office for the Protection of the Constitution took note of these meetings.¹⁶⁸ The group went on pilgrimage to Spain several times, to Majadahonda, where the Guard's "martyrs" Ion Moța and Vasile Marin died fighting in the Spanish civil war.

International links, in particular with extreme-right Western anti-globalization circles and notably with French groups of Alain de Benoist persuasions are also maintained by Noua Dreaptă (The New Right; ND), an extremist group set up in 1994 by Bogdan George Rădulescu.¹⁶⁹ (This group must not be confused with the 2000-established Noua Dreaptă led by Tudor Ionescu, which publishes a journal with the same name on the Internet,¹⁷⁰ nor with Partidul Dreapta Națională (PDN), led by Radu Sorescu and Cornel Brahaș, which used to publish the journal *Noua dreaptă*).¹⁷¹ Rădulescu's *Noua dreaptă* publishes the magazine *Măiastra*, and some of its members have published in *Generația drepteii*—a publication close to the Union of Right-Wing Forces (Uniunea Forțelor de Dreapta), until that party merged with the National Liberal Party. ND follows in the footsteps of the PDN on the issue of the Roma. Even

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 26 and interview with Gabriel Constantinescu in *Puncte cardinale*, April 1999.

¹⁶⁵ In 1999, *Gazeta de vest* published ITP's "Declaration of Principles," and the ITP in return let the group headed by Guleș use its web site for disseminating Legionary propaganda. See "Declarație de principii: Poziția a Treia Internațională," *Gazeta de vest*, no. 149, March 1999, pp. 22-27 and the 1999 site dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/third-position.

¹⁶⁶ See "Noile structuri ale poziției a Treia engleze," *Gazeta de vest*, no. 36, December 1997, p. 54.

¹⁶⁷ See Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 166.

¹⁶⁸ See the photos published in *Gazeta de vest*, no. 125, September 1996 and no. 128, December 1996, as well as <http://www.verfassungsschutz.de>.

¹⁶⁹ On the group's international contacts see "Noua dreaptă europeană a fost reprezentată și de România," *România liberă*, September 23, 1997.

¹⁷⁰ See "Cine suntem"?, <http://www.nouadreapta.org>.

¹⁷¹ On the PDN and its antisemitism see Michael Shafir, "Marginalization or Mainstream? The Extreme Right in Post-Communist Romania," in *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, ed. Pal Hainsworth (London: Pinter, 2000), pp. 247-267, notes on pp. 255-258.

by extreme-right standards, the anti-Roma racism displayed by the Noua Dreaptă group is shrill. This attitude is also reflected in the manner in which the group treats the issue of the Romany Porrajmos (Holocaust). A review of historian Viorel Achim's book on the history of the Roma in Romania grossly distorted his findings about the deportation and the extermination of the Roma under the regime of Marshal Antonescu.¹⁷² As for Tudor Ionescu's ND, it is revealing that the first Romanian negationist sentenced under Ordinance 31/2002 came from the ranks of this organization (He was pardoned shortly after, though). The man, Gheorghe Oprea,¹⁷³ had started his career as a "historian" of the Iron Guard at the Gordian publishing house and in the pages of *Gazeta de vest*.¹⁷⁴

B) Selective and Deflective Negationism

Defying geographic distance, exiled Iron Guardist Traian Golea, who lived in Florida, USA (he died in September 2004), has had far more influence in his country of origin than Dănescu-Pișcoci. In 1996, Golea published a pamphlet¹⁷⁵ disseminated in Romania, in what may be considered a good illustration of the "circulation of ideas" between the exile and autochthonous selective negationists. Golea's booklet embraces positions which, in the Romanian context, may be traced back to the former regime's nostalgics, such as Pavel Coruț, a former Securitate officer turned best-selling thriller writer. Golea describes President Iliescu's entourage as former Communists now serving the "New World Order." Antonescu, he claims, cannot be considered to have been a war criminal "just because he forged an alliance with Hitler's Germany in the war for Bessarabia's recuperation." To do so would be tantamount to "accusing Roosevelt and Churchill of being communists because they allied themselves with the dictator Stalin." Golea proceeds to absolve the Iron Guard of charges of "fascism," claiming—in line with the myth mentioned above—that the Legion of Archangel Michael "was discharged by

¹⁷² Bogdan-Ioan Matei, review of Viorel Achim, *Țigani în istoria României* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1998), *Măiastra*, vol. 3, no. 4 (2001): pp. 61-63.

¹⁷³ See *Evenimentul zilei*, July 17, 2003. Oprea was sentenced to two years and six months for nationalist-chauvinist propaganda and received a similar 30-month sentence for selling, disseminating, producing, and possession of artifacts carrying fascist, racist, and xenophobic symbols. The tribunal also suspended him from exercising his civic rights for a five-year period. However, Oprea promptly defied the sentence by publishing an article on the website managed by Tudor Ionescu. See "Neostalinism în România: apariția infracțiunii de a studia și reapariția proceselor politice," <http://nouadreapta.org>

¹⁷⁴ See Grigore Oprea, *Garda de fier: o carte pentru tânărul roman* (Timișoara: Gordian, 1994).

the International Nuremberg Tribunal.” The accusation of participation in the Holocaust laid at Antonescu’s door, he writes, is nothing but a malevolent exaggeration invented by late Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen and similar statements by Elie Wiesel can only be attributed to a “sick fantasy.” His argument emulates Faurisson’s model.¹⁷⁶ Embracing the deflective-reactive argument, Golea goes on to show that the repressive measures taken by Antonescu against the Jews were the result of their philo-communist and anti-Romanian attitudes. He repeatedly cites Buzatu as the main authoritative scholar. Predictably, Golea concludes that there has been no Holocaust in Romania.

The Comparative Trivialization of the Holocaust

The category of “comparative trivialization” is complex, but it basically refers to the abusive use of comparisons with the aim of minimizing the Holocaust, of banalizing its atrocities, or conditioning the memory of this tragedy. Here, several additional clarifications must be made. First, the comparative methodology has been, and remains, a basic instrument in historical studies, and is naturally a legitimate methodology in the study of the Holocaust, as well. As early as the 1950s, and with increasing frequency over the past twenty years, numerous studies were published comparing the Holocaust with other genocidal phenomena—the Communist atrocities in Ukraine and other parts of the former USSR and Asia, the Armenian Genocide perpetrated at the order of the Turkish authorities during World War I, as well as more recent genocides.¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, postwar historiography has paradigmatically treated the Holocaust as an essentially unique phenomenon. There is by-and-large a consensus among important historians on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, although the criteria for this uniqueness are not the same for every scholar. Most of these historians agree that the specific difference between the Holocaust and other genocides rests in the “intended totality”¹⁷⁸ of the Final Solution, which aimed at all Jews wherever they lived, and made no exceptions (e.g., through

¹⁷⁵ Traian Golea, “Regizarea unei condamnări a poporului român: Personalități politice americane și internaționale atacă România pe baza unor minciuni și calomnii,” *Romanian Historical Studies* (Florida, 1996). See also the Neo-Legionary Nationalist Romania Page edited by Nicolae Nița at <http://pages.prodigy.net/nnita/garda.html>.

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, <http://www.abc.com/zundel/index.html>.

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, Alan S. Rosenbaum, ed., *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives On Comparative Genocide* (Boulder Colorado, Oxford: Westview Press, 1996); Yves Ternon, *Statul criminal. Genocidurile secolului XX* (Iași: Institutul European, 2002).

¹⁷⁸ Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 49.

collaboration or conversion of the “enemy” into a “New Man,” which was possible in the case of Communist repressions).

During the past two decades, the uniqueness of the Holocaust has been subjected to intense debates.¹⁷⁹ Suffice it to mention that in their proximity, a trend was born that hijacked the legitimate use of comparisons for the purpose of minimizing the Holocaust. A valuable and legitimate cognitive instrument used for improving historical knowledge and for the delimitation of similarities and differences between comparable phenomena has thus been turned into a strategy of denial, of minimalization, and of banalization of the Holocaust.

The negationists and those promoting trivialization by comparison abuse the multi-layered meanings of the term “uniqueness” to accuse Jews of trying to build a “monopoly on suffering” for lucrative purposes.¹⁸⁰ They engage in these allegations despite the fact that experts on the Holocaust have repeatedly shown that its uniqueness is not argued in order to transform the tragedy of the Jews into the only collective suffering that should be paid attention or into a tragedy incomparable to any other, but in order to draw attention to the extreme specificity of the Nazi collective project.¹⁸¹ The theme of the “monopoly on suffering” is sometimes present in academic studies too. In his famous introduction to *The Black Book of Communism* (1998), Stephane Courtois wrote:

After 1945 the Jewish genocide became a byword for modern barbarism, the epitome of twentieth-century mass terror...More recently, a single-minded focus on the Jewish genocide in an attempt to characterize the Holocaust as a unique atrocity has also prevented the assessment of other episodes of comparable magnitude in the Communist world. After all, it seems scarcely plausible that the victors who had helped bring about the destruction of a genocidal apparatus might themselves have put the very same methods into

¹⁷⁹ Wulf Kansteiner, “From Exception to Exemplum: The New Approach to Nazism and the ‘Final Solution,’” *History and Theory*, vol. 33, No. 2 (May 1994): pp. 145-171.

¹⁸⁰ The theme was recently resurrected in the wake of the publication of Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London and New York: Verso, 2000).

¹⁸¹ Yehuda Bauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 39 et al.

practice. When faced with this paradox, people generally preferred to bury their heads in sand.¹⁸²

Courtois's final remarks are a charge against the Jews. He further added that "Communist regimes have victimized approximately 100 million people in contrast to the approximately 25 million of the Nazis"¹⁸³ The remarks triggered numerous controversies, including among contributors to the *Black Book*—some of whom distanced themselves from Courtois's calculation of victims as well as from some of his presumptions in the "Introduction."¹⁸⁴ This dispute is beyond the focus of this study, but it is important to note that Courtois's controversial propositions have had a great impact in Eastern Europe, where prominent politicians and intellectuals have uncritically embraced them.¹⁸⁵

The comparison to the Gulag has trivialized the Holocaust in three ways. The first was described by Alan S. Rosenbaum and Vladimir Tismăneanu as "competitive martyrology."¹⁸⁶ Based on the number of victims, this argument contests the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the special attention it has benefited from; second, the argument also attributes the absence of a proper memorialization of the Gulag to the alleged "monopoly" exerted over international collective memory by the Holocaust; finally, the same argument often accuses the Jews of having been instrumental in establishing the Communist regimes—a charge aimed at "explaining" and retroactively justifying the Holocaust.

But, as already mentioned, the Holocaust's uniqueness does not rest in the number of victims it produced. Furthermore, if the memorialization of communism in Eastern Europe is on shaky grounds, this is neither due to an alleged "monopoly" exercised by the memorialization of the Holocaust, nor is it so because of some Jewish "complicity" in obstructing its exercise. Rather, the phenomenon is due to the absence of social, political, and academic inclination in

¹⁸² Stéphane Courtois, "Introduction: The Crimes of Communism" in *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 23.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁸⁴ Ronald Aronson, "Communism's Posthumous Trial," *History and Theory*, vol. 42 (May 2003): pp. 222-245.

¹⁸⁵ Shafir, *Între negare și trivialisare prin comparație*, *op. cit.*, p. 115 et al.; for Romania's case see also *infra*.

¹⁸⁶ Alan S. Rosenbaum, "Introduction," in Alan S. Rosenbaum, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 2; Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Martiologie competitivă? Reflecții asupra Cărții negre a comunismului," in *Încet spre Europa. Vladimir Tismăneanu în dialog cu Mircea Mihăieș* (Iași: Polirom, 2000), pp. 201-211.

these countries to study, assume responsibility for, and properly memorialize communism.¹⁸⁷ Finally, studies undertaken thus far as well as this report¹⁸⁸ demonstrate that the stereotype that would have the Jews as having played a key role in the process of Communist East European takeovers is lacking any empirical basis and is little other than a political myth with antisemitic undertones. Fascist political formations and political regimes of fascist type had incessantly fostered the theme of Judeo-Bolshevism in their propaganda, and after 1989, the focus of attention on Jewish PCR members and leaders had been widely used in Eastern Europe in order to obfuscate the contribution of the ethnic majority.¹⁸⁹ It is accurate to assert that Jewish adherence to Communist parties has been relatively elevated in the initial phase of communism. Yet the assertion must be amended by several caveats. The anti-fascist, egalitarian, and humanist communist message transformed the Communist parties into a refuge for ethnic minorities. Against the background of the political atmosphere of the mid-twentieth century, these parties alone appeared to offer opportunities for salvation and social mobility to the marginalized or those persecuted on ethnic grounds.¹⁹⁰ Jews did not adhere to communism due to their Jewishness; on the contrary, they did so in the name of internationalism, as a sort of identity-strategy that would, they hoped, reduce the burden of ethnicity.¹⁹¹ After the Communist advent to power, the number of Jews in Communist parties as well as in the newly established government institutions mattered less than the “visibility” of Jews in authority positions, which was something difficult to accept by the local masses and elites, imbued as they were with antisemitic stereotypes.¹⁹² The situation of the Jews in the Communist bloc changed dramatically

¹⁸⁷ Helga A. Welsh, “Dealing with the Communist Past: Central and East European Experiences after 1990,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 48, no. 3 (May 1996): pp. 413-428; for Romania’s case see Adrian Cioflâncă, “Politics of Oblivion in Postcommunist Romania,” *Xenopoliana* 9 (2001), 1-4: pp. 107-114.

¹⁸⁸ See chapter 1.4.

¹⁸⁹ Leon Volovici, “Antisemitism in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: A Marginal or a Central Issue?” *Acta. Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism*, no. 5 (1994), pp. 16-17; Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation. Democracy, Nationalism and Myths in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton University Press, 1999), *passim*.

¹⁹⁰ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003), p. 77, *passim*; Jan T. Gross, “Pânza încălțită: analiza stereotipurilor legate de relațiile dintre polonezi, germani, evrei și comuniști,” in István Deák, Jan T. Gross, Tony Judt (coord.), *Procese în Europa. Al doilea război mondial și consecințele lui* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2003), pp. 102-171.

¹⁹¹ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *op. cit.*; Robert Levy, *Gloria și decăderea Anei Pauker* (Iași: Polirom, 2002), p. 156, *passim*; Ion Ianoși, *Prejudecăți și judecăți* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2002), p. 74, *passim*; Paul Johnson, *O istorie a evreilor* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2003), p. 352 ff.

¹⁹² Historian Jan T. Gross notes that the persistence of the “Judeo-Bolshevik” myth after 1945 does not tell much about the role played by Jews in the Communist regime, but much about “how unseemly, how jarring, how offensive it was to see a Jew in *any* position of authority;” Jan T. Gross, “Pânza încălțită,” *loc cit.* p. 133. Author’s emphasis. For a similar interpretation see Gheorghe Onisoru, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

in the 1950s, once Stalinist antisemitism became official policy.¹⁹³ Finally and most importantly, it must be emphasized that the advent of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe has been a complex process made possible in the first place by the Soviet military occupation and political pressure, by the support or the passivity of majorities in local populations (irrespective of their ethnic background), and by the international context.

This is the background against which the Holocaust-Gulag comparison is employed—not for a better understanding of Nazi and communist crimes, but in order to avoid the memorialization of the Holocaust or to condition assuming responsibility for it on the (chronological and pathological) primacy of the Gulag. Quite frequently, Nazi policies are being justified as a response to communism. This type of argumentation penetrated academic debate during the so-called *Historikerstreit* (Historians’ Quarrel) in the second half of the 1980s. Several German historians, of whom the most prominent was Ernst Nolte, argued that Nazism both emulated communism and was a reaction to it. Viewed from this perspective, the Holocaust was also deemed to have been inspired by communist criminal practice, whereas Nazi atrocities were said to be explainable by wartime conditions, to have nothing specific about them when compared with other twentieth-century atrocities.¹⁹⁴ The attempt to “normalize” the Holocaust and to lessen the indictment against Nazism was promptly amended at the time by many important historians, who showed that Nolte had no evidence to back up his hypotheses.¹⁹⁵

As early as the 1970s, in response to Nolte’s *Germany and the Cold War*, American historian Peter Gay forged the concept of comparative trivialization, which is also used in this chapter, to describe an attempt to bring about the “humanization” and the elaboration of a “sophisticated apology” of Nazism by “pointing, indignantly, at crimes committed by others.”¹⁹⁶ Unlike Gay, however, the concept of comparative trivialization as here employed applies also to non-German (including Romanian) wartime and postwar depictions of the Holocaust.

A distinction is made among several categories of comparative trivialization: (1) *the competitive comparison*, which holds that atrocities worse or at least equal to the Holocaust have been committed, and that, consequently, the Holocaust does not merit special status; in the

¹⁹³ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, *op. cit.*, p. 127 ff.

¹⁹⁴ Geoff Eley, “Nazism, Politics and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German *Historikerstreit* 1986-1987,” *Past and Present*, no. 121 (November 1988): p. 171-208.

¹⁹⁵ Richard E. Evans, *In Hitler’s Shadow. West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (London, 1989).

Romanian case, for example, reference is made to atrocities committed against Romanians by Nazis, Hungarians, and Jews, to atrocities committed against communists by Antonescu, and others; (2) *the banalizing comparison* which “normalizes” the Holocaust by assimilating it to violent events that regularly occur in the history of the mankind, such as wars; the Holocaust is presented as a regrettable, yet unsurprising outcome of war; (3) *the parochial comparison* in which the situation of the Jews in Romania is depicted as having been better than their situation in Nazi Germany or in states subject to similar circumstances; (4) *the deflective comparison*, which considers fascism and the Holocaust to be the outcomes of communism, with the latter, in turn, often being a synonym for Jews according to negationist logic; (5) *the transactional comparison* in which acceptance of the past and fascist crimes is predicated on accepting the assumption by Jews of responsibility for communist and other crimes perpetrated in Romania and elsewhere in the world.

The intellectual and political profile of those who engage in comparative trivialization is very diverse. One finds in the same category strange bedfellows: negationists and extremists alongside personalities whose profile is democratic and whose reputation is otherwise excellent. This heterogeneity warrants a separate analysis. For now, suffice it to note that it is an illustration of the exceedingly confused ideological and cultural makeup of postcommunist transitions. This sub-chapter merely attempts to depict the situation as it stands at the moment of the study’s writing; in other words, it is an inventory listing the different forms of comparative trivialization by conceptual categories as well as reviewing as fully as possible the variety of social actors engaged in one form or another of comparative trivialization. This may explain why personalities of high reputation who are on record having deplored the Holocaust, yet at other times have made hazardous and self-contradicting statements are mentioned here. It must be emphasized that their inclusion is not in any way geared at presenting a global evaluation of either their intellectual work or personality; rather it is aimed at drawing attention to the negative impact that risky formulations might have on public opinion and the Romanian cultural and political environment.

Our scrutiny begins with those negationists who also indulge in Holocaust trivialization. Once more, Professor Coja’s profile is imminently prominent. He makes use of banalizing and

¹⁹⁶ Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. XI-XII.

parochial comparisons to claim that the situation of Jews under Antonescu was not as grave as people might believe. In 2002, Coja denounced as “a lie” that Jews were sent to the camps in Transnistria “just because they were Jews.” Only two categories of Jews ended up in Transnistria: those who were not “Romanian citizens” and had “illegally crossed the border,” which was “normal due to wartime conditions,” and “the Bessarabian and Bukovinian Jews, who were suspected of pro-Soviet sympathies or proved to entertain them.” But such camps, according to Coja, had also existed in the United States during the war for Japanese suspected of non-loyalty to the nation. Detainment conditions in Transnistria, according to a letter sent by Coja to former U.S. First Lady Hilary Clinton as representative of LICAR and of the Vatra Românească (Romanian Hearth) Union, had been “by far superior to those the U.S. and Canadian Japanese had in concentration camps set up by the Roosevelt administration.”¹⁹⁷ It might be true, Coja conceded that the “identification” of “traitor-Jews” had been carried out “with a certain amount of approximation.” It may have led to the inclusion of Jews who had been loyal to Romania among those deported, while possibly leaving out non-loyal Jews. The explanation, however, ought to be sought in the abnormal wartime conditions: “À la guerre comme à la guerre!”¹⁹⁸ The camps in Transnistria, Coja claimed, “never were extermination camps, since practically any Jew could leave for whatever destination, except Romania proper.”¹⁹⁹ Or, as he put it at the 2001 symposium, “those concentration camps (how lugubrious this denunciation sounds!)...were nothing but villages. No barbed wire, no military watch. They only had a few gendarmerie, patrolling only during the night, *in order to defend the Jews* against Ukrainian civilians, who, for various reasons, could have acted violently against the Jews.”²⁰⁰

The parochial comparison is widespread due to the myth that makes Antonescu and his regime into “saviors of Jews.” The argument is based on deliberate misinterpretation (dating back to the Communist regime and largely popular in the 1990s²⁰¹) of the reasons that forced the regime to change its policies towards Jews and Roma as of late 1942. The change, however, was but a tactical and opportunist attempt of adaptation to the altered conditions on the front line. Yet, the change is depicted as reflecting a humanitarian gesture. The negationists retroactively

¹⁹⁷ *România mare*, July 26, 2002.

¹⁹⁸ Coja, “Simpozion internațional,” *loc. cit.*

¹⁹⁹ Coja, *Marele manipulator*, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

²⁰⁰ Coja, “Simpozion internațional,” *loc. cit.*, author’s emphasis.

project policies toward Jews in the second part of the war to the first period of Antonescu's dictatorship, while minimizing or ignoring the pogroms and the deportations. It is even claimed that Jews in Transnistria were protected by Antonescu, who offered them refuge in Romania and allowed them to continue on to Palestine.²⁰² In fact, Antonescu was apparently unaware of the Hungarian Jews' presence in Romania.²⁰³ As Randolph L. Braham has shown, the explanation for this unusual act of the Romanian authorities lies elsewhere.²⁰⁴

The Romanian negationists claim that in Transnistria the Jews benefited from living conditions superior to those Romanians at home had to endure during the war. For example, one of the most terrible camps in Transnistria, Vapniarka, was described by Tudor Voicu in an article published in *România mare* in August 2002 as having a movie-house. Antonescu, Tudor Voicu wrote, had been the "savior" of Romanian Jewry, only to find himself after the war accused by the ungrateful Jews of antisemitism.²⁰⁵ Radu Theodoru also mentions the alleged Vapniarka cinema, but he does so using a deflective negationist explanation, which is unusual for him—an integral negationist. The blame for atrocities committed at Vapniarka and elsewhere, Theodoru claims, should be laid at the door of "The Jewish inmate Kommissars" and of "communists whom the authorities had failed to identify as such."²⁰⁶ In 1999, Coja admitted that Jews in Transnistria had died of hunger or illness, because Antonescu rightly saw no reason to spend the country's war-strained budgetary resources on Jews who were not Romanian citizens, at a time when hundreds of thousands of Romanians were "confronting hunger and a lack of medicine on the Eastern front."²⁰⁷ Păunescu has also contributed to the banalization of the Holocaust. According to the poet-turned-politician, it would have been impossible for Jews not to be among the victims of such a tremendous war; but Păunescu takes a step further: Antonescu, he claims, deported

²⁰¹ Michael Shafir, "Reabilitarea postcomunistă a mareșalului Antonescu," *loc. cit.*

²⁰² For the first instance in postcommunist times when the claim was made see "Mareșalul Antonescu i-a salvat pe evreii din România. Un dialog Raoul Șorban-Adrian Păunescu, Bucharest, January 17, 1996," *Totuși iubirea*, nos. 3, 4, 5 (January-February 1996).

²⁰³ According to Radu Lecca, had Antonescu been aware of the presence of Hungarian Jews on Romanian territory, "he would have ordered the law to be implemented and they would have been shot." See Radu Lecca, *Eu i-am salvat pe evreii din România* (Bucharest: Roza vânturilor, 1994), p. 289.

²⁰⁴ Randolph L. Braham, *op. cit., passim*; Idem, "Naționalistii români și viziunea disculpabilizantă a istoriei. Folosirea Holocaustului în scopuri politice," in Randolph L. Braham, ed., *Exterminarea evreilor români și ucraineni, op. cit.*, pp. 73-88.

²⁰⁵ *România mare*, August 18, 2000.

²⁰⁶ Radu Theodoru, *Mareșalul* (Bucharest: Miracol, 2001), p. 38.

²⁰⁷ Coja, *Marele manipulator, op. cit.*, p. 184.

Bessarabia and Bukovina Jews to Transnistria in order to save them from the starvation that ethnic Romanians were enduring back at home.²⁰⁸

Nor have only Romanians embraced the argument. According to Larry L. Watts, a U.S. historian who resides in Bucharest, the Marshal had been the “de facto” protector of Jews against plans to implement the “Final Solution,” because he shared the “Western standards...concerning human and fundamental civic rights.”²⁰⁹

The transactional comparison is often intertwined with deflection: indulging in semantic abuse, the negationists employ “Holocaust” as a linguistic construct to call for recognizing “the Holocaust against the Romanian people” perpetrated by Jews or the “Red Holocaust” inflicted by them on mankind. In 2001, GRP leader C.V. Tudor stated that Romanians “are awaiting the time when the holocaust (sic!) perpetrated against Romanians, by no means a lesser one than the holocaust (sic!) perpetrated against the Jews, will be officially acknowledged.”²¹⁰ As early as 1991, Tudor was telling his readers that “the Jews brought Bolshevism and terror to Romania”²¹¹ A full decade on, he had not changed opinion: interviewed on a private television channel, he said that Stalinist Romania had been “led by Jews.” In what was purported to be a display of bravery, he continued: “Are people scared of saying this? I shall tell it; let them shoot me, let them lock me up because I dare tell the historical truth.”²¹² In 1992–1993, PRM Senator Mihai Ungheanu published a long serial in *România mare* on “The Holocaust of Romanian Culture,” which was eventually turned into a volume attributing to Jews and only to Jews the plight of imposing the *jidanoviste* line and of destroying physically and spiritually the postwar Romanian intelligentsia.

As has been mentioned, the discourse of prominent political personalities entails formulations that raise the suspicion of indulging in comparative trivialization. In an interview with the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, President Iliescu said in 2003 that the Holocaust was not singular to the Jewish people and that “many others, including Poles, perished in the same way.” Iliescu asserted that, in the course of the war, Jews and communists were evenly treated by the Nazis and used the example of his own father who died at the age of 44, only one year after liberation

²⁰⁸ *Totuși iubirea*, no. 12, April 2-9, 1992.

²⁰⁹ Larry L. Watts, *op. cit.*, pp. 392-393.

²¹⁰ *România mare*, June 22, 2001.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, October 25, 1991.

²¹² Interview on the OTV channel, July 31, 2002. In the same interview, Tudor questioned the death of six million Jews in the Holocaust.

from a concentration camp. The interviewing journalist pointed out that only Jews and Roma were targets of Nazi extermination, but the President did not change his statement at that time.²¹³ However, the President's speech of October 12, 2004, on the occasion of the first commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day in Romania, demonstrated that the President has fully grasped and internalized the dimensions of the Holocaust and the role played by Romania in it.

According to our conceptual categories, Iliescu had engaged in a competitive comparison. Predictably, the interview sparked criticism in Israel and the United States.²¹⁴ The controversy stirred by the presidential interview had among its consequences the establishment of the Wiesel Commission.

The position of Romania's other post-communist president was also somewhat ambiguous. On one hand, in a 1997 message to the FCER, President Emil Constantinescu emphasized that "the planners of this unforgivable genocide were not Romanians;" on the other hand, he acknowledged that the Romanian authorities had "organized deportations, set up concentration camps and promulgated racial legislation" and that "the death of innocents can be neither forgiven, nor undone, nor forgotten....As president of all Romanian citizens...it is my duty to keep alive the memory of Jews who fell victim of the genocide."²¹⁵

Constantinescu's statement had only a minor echo in Romania. Except for the FCER's publication *Realitatea evreiască*, no media outlet carried it in full—not even the national radio and television. Among the few who reacted was historian Floricel Marinescu. He published in *Aldine*, a nationalist and fundamentalist weekly supplement of the democratic opposition daily *România Liberă*, a highly critical article on Constantinescu's statement, where he indulged in both competitive and deflective comparative trivialization:

From a strictly quantitative perspective, the crimes perpetrated in the name of communist ideology are far larger than those perpetrated in the name of Nazi or similar ideologically-minded regimes... Yet no prominent Jewish personality [from Romania] has

²¹³ *Ha'aretz-English edition*, July 25, 2003, www.haaretzdaily.com. Romanian transcript of the interview in the daily *Evenimentul zilei*, August 26, 2003.

²¹⁴ Michael Shafir, "Negation the Top," *loc. cit.*

²¹⁵ *Realitatea evreiască*, nos. 49-50, April 16-May 15, 1977.

apologized for the role that some Jews have played in undermining Romanian statehood, in the country's Bolshevization, in the crimes and the atrocities committed [by them]...Proportionally speaking, the Romanians and Romania suffered more at the hands of the Communist regime, to whose oncoming the Jews had made an important contribution, than the Jews themselves had suffered from the Romanian state during the Antonescu regime....The Red Holocaust was incomparably more grave than Nazism.²¹⁶

Surprisingly enough, shortly thereafter, Marinescu was appointed a presidential councilor. His ideas were shared by many Romanian intellectuals close to the center-right political parties that were at the country's helm during Constantinescu's presidential term (see *supra*).²¹⁷

Influences of the Romanian Exile

Three influential personalities of the Romanian exile display recurrent usage of comparative trivialization formulations in essays and books published in Romania: Paul Goma, Monica Lovinescu, and Dorin Tudoran.

One of the few anti-Communist dissidents forced into exile in the late 1970s, in recent years Goma has produced several tracts²¹⁸ in which he demands that the "Red Holocaust" perpetrated on the Romanian people with a significant Jewish contribution be acknowledged and assumed by them. The leitmotif of his well-publicized latest book, *The Red Week*, is rendered by the following quote: "The Red Holocaust, planned by them too, began for us, Romanians, *one year earlier than theirs*: [it started] *on June 28, 1940*—and it is not over even today."²¹⁹ Goma argues that after the cession of Bessarabia and Bukovina to the Soviet Union, Jews (adults and

²¹⁶ *România liberă*, March 7, 1998.

²¹⁷ See Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Fascisme et communisme en Roumanie: enjeux et usage d'une comparaison*, in *Stalinisme et nazisme: Histoire et mémoire comparées*, coord. Henry Rousso, (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1999), pp. 201-246.

²¹⁸ Paul Goma, "Basarabia și «problema»," *Vatra*, nos. 3-4 (2002): pp. 43-41 and nos. 5-6 (2002): pp. 32-46, as well as *Jurnalul literar*, nos. 5-10 (March-April-May 2002): pp. 1, 8-9; Idem, *Basarabia* (Bucharest: Editura "Jurnalul literar," 2002); Idem, *Săptămâna roșie 28 iunie—3 iulie 1940 sau Basarabia și evreii* (Chișinău: Museum, 2003 and Bucharest: Editura Vremea XXI, 2004); This latter book was also serialized in *România liberă's* supplement *Aldine*. For a well-informed reply see Radu Ioanid, "Paul Goma între Belville și București," *Observator cultural*, no. 177, June 15-21, 2003.

²¹⁹ P. Goma, *Săptămâna roșie*, 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 20, author's emphasis.

children) committed many acts of aggression against, and humiliation of the Romanian army. They are said to have acted both on Soviet orders and out of “racial hatred” and “hate of Romanians.” “Nearly all Jews” in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, he writes, acted “in that Red Week against all Romanians” (p. 171). Goma unequivocally and repeatedly acknowledges Romanian responsibility and even a “collective guilt” for what he calls “the abominable pogrom in Iași,” as well as for the deportations to Transnistria (pp. 20, 240, 248, 319),²²⁰ yet he argues that “the truth forbidden for half a century” (p. 256) is that those atrocities were exclusively committed out of an urge to avenge, in circumstances specific to wartime, the earlier murders committed by the Jews. He makes no mention of Antonescu’s antisemitic policies and denies the existence of Romanian antisemitism. Goma vows “everlasting gratitude” toward “the Liberating Marshal” (p. 244). On nearly every page, he dwells on the alleged Jewish culpability for bringing communism to Romania (for several pages he lists names of Jewish communists), for having made money out of monopolizing suffering (pp. 10, 115, 183-199) and for having committed murders that “darkened and drew blood from the entire 20th century.” As a consequence, Goma demands that these “unpunished executioners” be tried by a “Nuremberg II” tribunal (pp. 95, 170, 217, 274).

This book illustrates a discursive register typical of trivialization through comparison and constitutes a synthesis of negationism and antisemitism that can hardly be found in a Romanian-language publication. On the other hand, if Goma excels through radicalism, he is not very original. Similar ideas in different formulations traveled in the right-wing circles of the Romanian diaspora and were echoed in Romania proper. Thus, on April 27, 1993, columnist Roxana Iordache wondered in the daily *România Liberă* when Jews will “kneel down” before Romanians and ask for pardon for what they had done to them. The huge *Red Holocaust* of German-based Romanian author Florin Mătrescu circulated similar ideas. The book received a positive review in January 1996 in the respectable weekly *România literară*.

The “monopoly of suffering” topic became even more prominent in Romania and in the Romanian diaspora after the publication of Stephane Courtois’ *Black Book of Communism*. Thus, in the second half of the 1990s, two Romanian exiles, Dorin Tudoran (a courageous

²²⁰ One can find also deflectional accents in Goma’s book, the author claiming, like Ion Coja, that the Legionnaires that killed Jews during the Iron Guard rebellion were, in fact, Jews dressed in Iron Guard uniforms. Goma cites, in Antonescu’s defence, “normal Jews” such as N. Minei and Al. Șafran. On this occasion, he mentions Filderman’s

anticommunist dissident who lives in the United States) and Monica Lovinescu (who has lived in Paris since the immediate aftermath of the war) apply to Romania the critique that Stephane Courtois and J.F. Revel aim at the refusal of the Western political and intellectual Left to condemn and critically explore communism with the same energy with which the Left denounces fascism. Thus, in a string of articles he wrote for *România literară*,²²¹ Tudoran blames “the Jewish lobby” for its “suspect,” “indecent,” “counterproductive monopoly over this century’s suffering.” He wonders “why the Jews have the right to an international lobby that would spare us from amnesia, while we, the rest, are doomed to remain ‘merely’ the victims of the Gulag and have no right to indict the Red Holocaust” (No. 12/1988). In one of these articles, Tudoran quotes a problematic statement by Courtois (who speaks of “a single-minded focus on the Jewish genocide in an attempt to characterize the Holocaust as a unique atrocity,” which, Courtois claims, has “prevented the assessment of other episodes of comparable magnitude in the Communist world”) to conclude: “This is how it was possible to have this indecent monopoly over tragedy and over pain. This is how it was possible, this arrogant exclusivity over memory, remembrance, and commemoration. This is what made possible the blackmail, this is how debate was repressed, this is how taboos were declared” (No. 29/1998). Like Courtois, Tudoran never charges the Jews directly as accomplices in instituting an amnesia on the “Red Holocaust.” Rather, he only hints at it in the rhetorical questions that litter his articles.

The same incriminating inference based on the Courtois model is to be found in articles published by two remarkable intellectuals and friends of Tudoran and Lovinescu—Nicolae Manolescu, editor-in-chief of *România literară*, and Gabriel Liiceanu, philosopher and director of the Humanitas publishing house. After deploring the sentence passed on Garaudy in France, Manolescu writes: “Is anyone afraid of losing the monopoly over unveiling crimes against humanity? Well, it seems that the loss of such a monopoly is of concern to some people. Yet it is

“testimony,” which in Goma’s version turns into a document legalized in New York in 1956 (p. 22)—thus displaying Coja’s influence on him.

²²¹ Dorin Tudoran, “Nepoții gorniștilor” (I-II), *România literară*, no.12, April 1–7, 1998 and no. 13, April 8-14, 1998; “Mitologii recurente,” Idem, no. 16, April 29-May 5, 1988; “Șantajul” (I-II-III), Idem, no. 19, May 20, 1998, no. 20, May 27-June 2, 1998 and no. 21, May 3-10, 1998; “Gimnastica de întreținere sau pretextul Sebastian,” Idem, no. 22, 10-16 June 1998; “Iubești poporul?,” Idem, nos. 23-24, June 17-23, 1998; “Practica și doctrina,” Idem, nos. 26, July 1 -7, 1998; “Logica genocidară,” Idem, no. 27, July 8-14, 1998; “Chestiunea epistemologică,” Idem, no. 28, July 15-21, 1988; “Ocultarea sau Comuniunea Sovietică,” Idem, no. 29, July 22-28, 1998; “Moscova și monitorizarlâcul,” Idem, no. 30, July 22-August 4, 1998; “Lectura de rasă,” Idem, no. 32, August 12-18, 1988.

unfair and immoral to gag those who deplore the millions of victims of communism just out of fear that not enough people would be left to deplore the millions of victims of Nazism.”²²²

While Manolescu’s formulations are closer to those of Tudoran, Liiceanu’s are nearer to Courtois’s, the Romanian philosopher is more explicit than the French historian is. In a 1997 speech delivered on International Holocaust Remembrance Day at the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, Liiceanu wondered: “How was it possible for one who, at a certain moment in history had to wear the victim’s uniform, to later don the garment of the executioner?”²²³ The concern was not novel with Liiceanu. Back in 1995, in an editor’s note to the translation of a book on Romanian antisemitism published by Humanitas, he had distanced himself from “those who are ever-ready to speak up as victims, but forget to testify as executioners.”²²⁴ Later in his diary, published in 2002, Liiceanu elaborated: “Is it that difficult to understand that one first settles accounts with *the evil one has encountered*, that uprooted one’s own life, that hijacked one’s own history and whose effects one cannot rid oneself of even ten years after its departure from the scene?...Whence the vain refusal of co-habitation in sufferance? Whence this claim, admitting no counterclaim, to being a *unique victim*?”²²⁵

Monica Lovinescu has, in turn, posed questions; yet, she also has several firm answers. In the foreword to *Diagonale*, a volume comprising articles she had published over the years in *România literară*, she wrote the following: “Is it really necessary to wonder if the resurgence of the antifascist obsession is not in fact aimed at hiding the real murders of communism and their perpetrators? The question is, of course, rhetorical, and the answer is yes. Right-wing negationism is now followed by, and even more widespread than, left-wing negationism.”²²⁶ The concept of “left-wing negationism” is borrowed from J.F. Revel. In a laudatory review of Revel’s *The Grand Parade*, Lovinescu wrote that he has managed to unmask the mechanism employed for transforming “*the duty to commemorate* the victims of Nazism into an excuse to impose on us *the obligation to forget* the Gulag.”²²⁷ But Revel, in turn, relies on several

²²² Nicolae Manolescu, “Holocaustul și Gulagul,” *loc. cit.*; “Cum am devenit rinocer” (Idem, no.32, August 12-18, 1998). He adds that the monopoly is “highly comfortable.”

²²³ Gabriel Liiceanu, “Sebastian, mon frère,” in 22, April 29-May 5, 1997, reprinted in *Declarație de iubire* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2001), pp. 5-23.

²²⁴ Idem, “Nota Editorului,” in Leon Volovici, *Ideologia naționalistă și «problema evreiască» în România anilor '30* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995), p. 7.

²²⁵ Gabriel Liiceanu, *Ușa interzisă* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2002). Author’s emphasis.

²²⁶ Monica Lovinescu, *Diagonale* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2002), p. 6.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 175. Author’s emphasis.

academic sources, including Ernst Nolte²²⁸ and Alain Besançon. If Nolte's brand of "revisionism" has been discussed in the first section of this study, it must be pointed out that Revel misquotes Besançon when he writes, "according to the formula suggested by Besançon, the 'hypermnnesia of Nazism' diverts attention from the 'amnesia of communism.'" ²²⁹ Indeed, Besançon authored the two phrases, yet he never argued in his *Le malheur du siècle* that the "hypermnnesia of Nazism" diverts attention from the "amnesia of communism."²³⁰ He just noted with regret that Nazism and communism are being memorialized differently and provided several reasons for the discrepancy, yet none of those reasons may legitimately constitute a basis for Revel's interpretation. Revel's book ensured that Besançon's opus was popularized with Revel's distortion in right-wing intellectual milieux in France²³¹ (including those of the Romanian diaspora there²³²). It is worth noting that Revel's reading of Besançon is quoted on the Internet sites of extreme-right groups and publications.²³³

It is important to point out at this stage that Besançon, Revel, and Courtois do not share the same opinions. Thus, Besançon correctly pleads for comparing and commemorating Nazism and communism with the same care, whereas Revel and Courtois blame the problems with the commemoration of communism on the commemoration of the Holocaust. This is the key difference between benign comparison and comparative trivialization. Revel forces the comparison into an over-interpretation serving his anticommunist discourse, while Courtois does the same by inserting an incriminating insinuation directed at the Jews. In Romania, prestigious intellectuals such as Tudoran, Manolescu, and Liiceanu preferred to popularize the opinions of Revel and Courtois rather than that of Besançon, and they did so by using provocative concepts ("Red Holocaust," "monopoly on suffering," "Judeocentrism") that are widely popular in radical-right circles.

²²⁸ Jean-François Revel, *Marea paradă. Eseu despre supraviețuirea utopiei socialiste* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2002) published in France in 2000. The citation from Nolte is taken from the exchange of letters between the German historian and François Furet, published in Romanian translation as *Fascism și communism* (Bucharest: Univers, 2000), pp. 127-128.

²²⁹ Jean-François Revel, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

²³⁰ Alain Besançon, *Le malheur du siècle. Sur le comunisme, le nazisme et l'unicité de la Shoah* (Paris: Fayard, 1998; Romanian edition, Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999).

²³¹ For example, Jean-François Revel, "Devoir de mémoire et Communisme," *Le Figaro*, February 12, 2001.

²³² See, for example, the dialogue between Dan Culcer and Paul Goma in *Asymetria. Revista de cultură, critică și imaginație*, vol. 1, no. 2 (November 2000): <http://www.asymetria.org/culcergomafrench.html>.

²³³ Besançon is cited *via* Revel on the Internet sites of several radical-right groups and publications.

Beginning to Come to Terms with the Past

Romania is just beginning to confront its own past and assume responsibility for it. Unavoidably, ambiguities persist at this stage, but there are indications that political and intellectual elites are somewhat more inclined to start coping with the country's darker periods in its past than was the case a few years ago. The setting up of the Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania is proof in itself of a movement in that direction.

While in historiography selective negationism remains an important trait,²³⁴ a number of historians approach the Holocaust with professionalism and honesty. Șerban Papacostea and Andrei Pippidi stand out for having reacted very early against attempts to rehabilitate Antonescu.²³⁵ Lucian Boia undertook a deconstruction of the myths of the Legion and of Antonescu as well as stereotypes about Jews.²³⁶ Dinu C. Giurescu was the first Romanian historian to have dedicated an entire chapter to the fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust in his 1999 published *Romania in the Second World War*.²³⁷

Institutes specializing in research on the history of the Holocaust have been established. Among these, special mention should be made of the Center for the Study of Jewish History in Romania, which acts under the aegis of the FCER and, as of 1990, has pioneered research on the Holocaust. Thus far, this institute has published five volumes of documents on this topic.

Scientific colloquia were organized at several research institutes that function within the Romanian Academy. Remarkably, the Center for History and Military Theory Research (formerly a bastion of pro-Antonescu negationist historians) has been turned into a respectable research institution.²³⁸ Institutes or research centers specializing in Jewish history were set up at universities in Cluj, Bucharest, Craiova, and Iași, and publications specializing in Jewish history and the Holocaust came into being, as well. Professional journals edited at research institutes with an established scholarly tradition started opening their pages to the publication of articles dealing with the tragedy of Jews and Roma during the Second World War. School textbooks are

²³⁴ Illustrative is the position of Dan Berindei, president of the Romanian Academy's History Section, who said: "There was no Holocaust in Romania. There were deportations to Transnistria, an antechamber of the Holocaust, yet there was no Holocaust per se." *Jurnalul național*, May 8, 2002.

²³⁵ On Papacostea, see Shafir, "Reabilitarea postcomunistă," *loc. cit.*, and Eskenasy, *Istoriografii și istoricii, loc.cit.* Most of Pippidi's articles on Antonescu are to be found in his *Despre statui și morminte. Pentru o teorie a istoriei simbolice* (Iași: Polirom, 2000).

²³⁶ Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997); Idem, *România: țară de frontieră a Europei* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2001).

²³⁷ Dinu C. Giurescu, *România în al doilea război mondial* (Bucharest: ALL Educational, 1999).

²³⁸ For evidence see Mihail E. Ionescu, Liviu Rotman, eds., *The Holocaust and Romania, op. cit.*

undergoing a process of revision and improvement, though a great deal remains to be done in this respect, and inaccuracies still abound.²³⁹ Publishing houses are translating a relatively large number of books on Jewish history, though it must be mentioned that the bulk of these volumes are still put out by the FCER publishing house Hasefer. A young generation of historians, not yet very visible and largely concentrating for now on publishing studies on narrow topics, gradually begins to make its presence felt and to demonstrate that it is capable of tackling the Holocaust period from new perspectives.

Unfortunately, for now there is no genuine readiness to perceive the history of Jews in Romania as part of Romania's own history. This artificial division is a major obstacle on the road to a critical assessment of Romania's national past.

²³⁹ See Felicia Waldman, *Reflection of the "Jewish Problem" and the Holocaust in Romanian School Textbooks (1998-2002)*, <http://www.goethe.de/MS/buk/archiv/material/feliciawaldmanengl.doc>.