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# Political Antisemitism in Romania? Hard Data and its Soft Underbelly

MICHAEL SHAFIR

As in many other former communist countries of East Central Europe<sup>1</sup>, antisemitism in Romania resurged almost concomitantly with the demise of the former regime<sup>2</sup>. Empirical research on antisemitism, however, emerged only considerably later and did not take off as a main focus until the establishment of the National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania "Elie Wiesel" (INSHREW) in 2005. This does not imply that the subject of Jews, attitudes to Jews measured by instruments such as stereotypic perceptions and/or "social distance", or attitudes toward controversial Romanian historical figures linked to the country's antisemitic past was not tangentially or even directly tackled on occasion. What lacked until 2005, however, was an effort to systematically (among other instruments, employing a standard questionnaire capable of rendering comparative results) place under focus the phenomenon in its synchronic *and* diachronic unfolding. In other words, the task of gathering longitudinal data on antisemitism in the country permitting to forge a "perceptual map" that would select in consistent aspects and select out inconsistencies<sup>3</sup> is still in the bud.

## "Us vs. Them"

As articles in the daily press or in weeklies with direct or allusive antisemitic tones began to appear, the daily *Adevărul* on 27-28 July 1991 for the first time mentioned a poll in which Jews were subjected to scrutiny as a separate category of national minorities subjected to what the Romanian Institute for Public Opinion Polling (IRSOP)<sup>4</sup> either a "press syndrome" (i.e. reports designed to attract readership by exploiting existing prejudice) or a "social syndrome". Respondents were asked to

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<sup>1</sup> Randolph L. BRAHAM (ed.), *Antisemitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies Graduate Center / The City University of New York and Social Science Monographs. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York and Boulder, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Michael SHAFIR, "Anti-Semitism without Jews in Romania", in *Anti-Semitism in Post-Totalitarian Europe*, Franz Kafka Publishers, Prague, 1993, pp. 204-226.

<sup>3</sup> On the importance of such a map see Raluca SOREANU, "Autodefinire și heterodefinire a românilor și maghiarilor din România: O analiză empirică a stereotipurilor etnice și a fundamentelor diferite de definire a identității etnice", in Gabriel BĂDESCU, Mircea KIVU, Monica ROBOTIN (eds.), *Barometrul relațiilor etnice 1994-2002. O perspectivă asupra climatului interetnic din România*, Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturală, Cluj, 2005, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> IRSOP was set up in 1990 as a governmental institute. Not long after it was privatized and proved to be one of the most successful polling institutes in the country, though it took some time for it to shed off suspicions of serving former President Ion Iliescu and his different governments.

mention whether they agreed or disagreed that the Romanian media carry articles against any of the following ethnic groups:

**Table 1**

*Do you agree or disagree for the Romanian media to write against...<sup>1</sup>*

	Agree%	Disagree%	DK/NA%
Jews	11	78	11
Germans	4	86	10
Hungarians	24	65	11
Romanians	5	89	6
Serbs	4	85	11
Gypsies <sup>1</sup>	41	50	9

As this table shows, some two respondents in five condoned the publication of articles critical of the country's Roma minority, whereas only one in ten respondents endorsed similar articles directed at the address of Jews. Germans (alongside Serbs) occupied a privileged position, with Hungarians (soon after the infamous Târgu-Mureș [*Marosvásárhely*] clashes of March 1990) occupying a somewhat less privileged position as targets of criticism, but still considerably safer than the Roma. While subsequent surveys would show some fluctuations in attitudes towards the Hungarian minority (the general trend being that of improvement) and towards the German minority (a rather less, though still positive attitude), rejection of the Roma (measured by studies focusing on either social representation or social distance or stereotypes) has been and remains the single most consistent aspect in Romania, as indeed in the rest of the former communist countries<sup>2</sup>. For example, in a survey carried out by the Bucharest-based Center of Urban and Regional Sociology (CURS) in December 1997, 52 percent of the respondents said they had "favorable" sentiments towards Hungarians (vs. 41 percent admitting their sentiments were "unfavorable"), but no less than two in three (67%) were negatively inclined towards the Roma minority (vs. 27 percent). Jews, on the other hand were unfavorably viewed by only 15 percent, and no less than 69 percent claimed their sentiments vis-à-vis this minority were favorable<sup>3</sup>.

To what extent, however, do surveys where respondents are straightforwardly asked to depict their sentiments towards a national minority reflect reality? In a public opinion poll conducted by the Bucharest-based Institute for Marketing and Polls (IMAS) in June 2009, respondents were asked to ascribe on a 1-5 scale their perception of three pejorative words employed in reference to Hungarians (*bozgor*), Jews (*jidani*<sup>4</sup>) and Roma (*tigan*). By the time the survey was carried out, the first term had been eliminated by the Romanian Academy from its *Explicative Dictionary of the Romanian Language (DEX)*<sup>5</sup>, but the two other terms still figured in, despite protests stemming

<sup>1</sup> IRSOP poll based on a representative sample of 2,179 persons, margin of error  $\pm 2.1\%$ .

<sup>2</sup> See Ioan MĂRGINEAN (coord.), *Cercetări cu privire la minoritatea roma*, Ministerul Informației Publice, Oficiul Național pentru Romi, București, 2001, pp. 15, 18.

<sup>3</sup> See Dan OPRESCU, "Despre romi", *Revista 22*, no. 6, 10-16 February 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Best rendered in English as "kike" or "yid".

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Academia Română. Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan", *DEX. Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române*, ediția a II-a, Univers enciclopedic, București, 1996.

from Jewish and Romani NGOs. After initial attempts to justify their presence, the Academy's Linguistic Institute consented in 2012 to specify that the latter two terms were pejoratives, but left them in the dictionary<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 2**

*On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Absolutely inoffensive" and 5 "Very offensive", please tell me how offensive seems to you the term*

	Absolutely inoffensive %	2 %	3 %	4 %	Very offensive %	DK, NA %
bozgor	15.9	10.0	14.5	19.4	36.6	3.6
jidan	19.8	13.2	17.4	19.2	27.5	2.9
țigan	31.5	12.7	13.8	16.7	23.6	1.7

By and large, then, Table 2 seems to reconfirm the findings in Table 1. A significantly larger plurality of Romanians is aware of the offensiveness of the pejorative when it comes to Hungarians than the plurality of those conscious of it when Jews are concerned. More significant, when it comes to the Roma minority, the plurality switches from "very offensive" to "absolutely inoffensive". In the case of Jews, differences of gender in appraising the pejorative as "very offensive" are statistically insignificant (28.2% men vs. 26.8% women), but this is not a factor differentiating the gender division in the Hungarian case either (37.6 vs. 35.6%). Not so in the case of the Roma, where women are both more aware of the term as being "very offensive" (25.6% vs. 21.4% for men); hand in hand, a significantly lower segment of women (28.2%) than men (34.9%) responded that *țigan* was an "absolutely inoffensive" term.

Age is definitely playing a role. In the case of Jews, nearly one in four respondents aged 45-59 (24%) were of the opinion that *jidan* is an "absolutely inoffensive" term, somewhat higher than those aged 60 and over (22.3 percent). At the other end of the spectrum, the age-break 30-44 scored the largest plurality (32.1%) among those who perceived the term as "very offensive", closely followed by those aged 45-68 (30.4%) and those aged 60 and over. It can thus be concluded that the age-break 45 and over is the most opinionated at both ends of the scale. As for Hungarians, there is a statistically significant difference between the youngest group (18-29) of those saying *bozgor* is an "absolutely inoffensive" term (18.8%) and the age groups 30-44 (14.0%) and 60+ (14.5), whereas the same difference in the case of the group 45-59 (16.6%) is within the margin of error. The picture is different at the other end of the spectrum: more than two in five respondents aged 30-44 (41%) and 45-59 (40.5 percent) said

<sup>1</sup> "Academia Română somată să scoată 'jidan' din dicționar", *Ziua veche*, 8 August 2011, <http://www.ziuaaveche.ro/actualitate-interna/social/academia-romana-e-somata-sa-scoata-'jidan'-din-dictionar-46022.html>, accessed on August 8, 2011; Raluca ION, "A apărut DEX-ul corect politic. Cum a modificat Academia Română definițiile cuvintelor 'țigan', 'jidan', 'homosexualitate' și 'iubire'", *Gândul*, 25 April 2012, <http://www.gandul.info/news/a-aparut-dex-ul-corect-politic-cum-a-modificat-academia-romana-definitiiile-cuvintelor-tigan-jidan-homosexualitate-si-iubire-9572510>, accessed on April 25, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> *Sondaj Romnibus realizat de IMAS pentru LDK Consultants*, (Bucharest, June 2009). Multistadial sample of 1,249 respondents carried out between 10-15 June 2009. Margin of error  $\pm 2.7\%$ .

the term was "very offensive" and more than one in three of those aged 60 and over (35.3%) were of this opinion, the smallest score being registered among the youngest age group (28.6%). It would seem, then, that in this case the youngest group is also the most inclined to dismiss the sentiments of the Hungarian minority. In the case of the Roma, between a "low" one in four aged (25.4) 30-44 and a high 35.3 aged 45-59 perceive "*țigan*" as being an "absolutely inoffensive" term and between one in four (26.2%) aged 30-44 and roughly one in five for all other age groups responded that the term was "very offensive".

When residence is taken into consideration, a highly interesting factor emerges: in all three cases, the highest score for those believing the terms were "absolutely inoffensive" is rendered by those residing in small towns with a population of between 10-49 000 inhabitants<sup>1</sup>. Significant differences emerged in the case of the "very offensive" answers as well: in the case of the Jews, the most aware that *jidan* has a pejorative meaning were residents of middle-sized towns (50-199 000 inhabitants), 37% of whom returned that response; they were followed by residents of rural areas (28.6%) and those residing in small towns (23.2%), with those residing in large towns with a population of over 200 000 occupying the last place (21.8%). A nearly similar picture was rendered in the case of the Roma: the largest awareness of the pejorative sense of the word was found among residents of middle-sized towns (29.3%), followed by rural areas (25.7%), large towns (20.4%) and small towns (20.4%). Finally, far the most aware of the pejorative meaning in the case of the Hungarians were the residents of middle-sized towns (50.9%) and the *least* aware of it were residents of large towns (26.3%); those residing in rural areas scored higher (38.1%) than those residing in small (33.4), middle-sized or large towns.

Surveys carried out in Romania have repeatedly showed that the strongest rejection of the Hungarian minority is found in regions where members of that minority are either historically absent or at present in insignificant numbers<sup>2</sup>. This may well explain why residents of middle-sized towns and rural areas, as most Transylvanian settlements are, tend to view their neighbors belonging to the Hungarian minority with a more benevolent eye and be more aware of the significance of pejorative meanings. The same applies to some extent to the Roma, since a large proportion of that population resides in middle-sized towns and rural areas. But since Romania's Jewish population has been reduced to a meager few thousands<sup>3</sup>, with practically no

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<sup>1</sup> The four types of localities into which the sample was divided were as follows: rural; small town (10-49 000); middle-sized towns (50-199 000); large towns (200 000 inhabitants and over).

<sup>2</sup> As reported by the daily *Evenimentul zilei* on 8 December 1993 in reference to a poll carried out by CURS and by the weekly *Revista 22*, no. 31, 3-9 August 1994 in reference to a survey carried out by IMAS. The latter findings also reported by the daily *Adevărul*, 13 August 1994.

<sup>3</sup> According to the census carried out in March 2002, only 6,057 Jews (0,02% of the total population) were still living in Romania (5 870 had defined themselves as Jews according to nationality and 6 057 according to religion. 951 said Yiddish was their mother tongue. See "Structura etnodemografică a României", <http://recensamant.referinte.transindex.ro/?pg=8>, accessed on April 12, 2012. The results of a census carried out in July 2011 have not been published in full and number of Jews is small enough to have been included under "other minorities" in preliminary reports; see Cristian ANDREI, "Recensământul populației, primele rezultate. Câți români sunt, câți etnici maghiari și cât de mare este minoritatea romă", *Gândul*, 2 February 2012, <http://www.gandul.info/news/recensamantul-populatiei-primele-rezultate>

Jews residing in the countryside and very few in small towns, this explanation can hardly apply in their case.

Is historical memory, then, playing a role? The results of the IMAS survey seem to point in that direction, since when the "historical region" residence is taken into consideration, the largest share of those opinionating that *jidani* is a "very offensive" term is occupied by respondents residents of Moldova (40.0%), where a large proportion of Romania's Jewish population resided before emigrating to Israel and elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. This is not necessarily an indication of philosemitism, however, but simply of a more acute awareness of the pejorative than in the other Romanian regions. For the other two pejorative terms, regional residence confirms in the case of Hungarians that actual regular contact might increase awareness of the "other's" sensitivities. Residents of Transylvania, where the bulk of the Hungarian minority lives, were more aware of the pejorative sense (52.4%) than residents of Moldova, which has a small Hungarian minority (45.2%), and considerably more than residents of either Bucharest (20.9%) Muntenia (20.3%). On the other hand, residents of Muntenia, with very few Hungarian minority members, scored by far higher than all other regions in claims that the term has no pejorative meaning at all (25.3%). But the hypothesis of "the closer acquainted, the more empathic" is not backed by the data on the Romani minority. Unawareness, possibly combined with adversity, is dominating in all three "historical regions", with Moldova scoring lowest at the "absolutely inoffensive" pole (19%, vs. 37.8 for Muntenia, 33.7 for Bucharest and 31.8 for Transylvania) and highest (31%) at the "very offensive" pole (vs. 24% for Transylvania, 21% for Muntenia and 15% for Bucharest).

Education seems to play a somewhat significant, but by no means crucial role, according to the findings of this survey. Differences in the case of Jews for "absolutely inoffensive" are of at most four percentage points between the higher educated (17.2%) and high school and post-high school education (21.2). This factor is more relevant in the case respondents who chose to give the "very offensive" answer: the difference between graduates of high school and post high schools here (31.6%) and the higher educated (23.6%) is of full eight percentage points. These two age groups are thus dominating both ends of the spectrum. Surprisingly to some extent (but not for those familiar with Romanian history), "intellectuals" (defined as holders of university diplomas for this purpose) seem to be less willing to be aware of the pejorative meaning of *jidani* (23.6%) not only than graduates of high schools, but also of gymnasium (10 schooling years) or vocational schools (27.4%) and even of the lower (up to 8 years) educated (24.5%).

Educational differences between those opinionating that *bozgor* had no pejorative meaning whatever where of at most 3.7 percentage points (between graduates of high schools or post-high school education, 17.1% and university degree holders, 13.4%) and 2.8 percentage points (up to eight schooling years). At the other end of the spectrum, these differences were statistically of roughly the same (in)significance: 39% of the

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cati-romani-sunt-cati-etnici-maghiari-si-cat-de-mare-este-minoritatea-roma-9200308, accessed on February 2, 2012.

<sup>1</sup> 410 000 Jews out of nearly 800 000 had survived the Second World War. By 1961 more than half of the survivors had emigrated, Romania's Jewish population at that time being 225 000; in 1968, less than half of the latter figure (about 100 000) were still living in the country. For yearly emigration figures to Israel see Radu IOANID, *The Ransom of the Jews. The Story of the Extraordinary Secret Bargain between Romania and Israel*, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, 2005, pp. 185-186.

high school and post high school educated said the idiom was "very offensive", as did 35.1 percent of those with up to eight years of schooling, 36% percent of gymnasium and vocational schools graduates and (on last place!) intellectuals (34.8%).

Summing up the findings of the IMAS survey relevant for Jews, one gets the following data

**Table 3<sup>1</sup>**

*On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Absolutely inoffensive" and 5 "Very offensive", please tell me how offensive seems to you the term jidan*

n= 1, 9	Absolutely inoffensive %	2 %	3 %	4 %	Very offensive %	DK, NA %
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	22.4	12.3	18.4	17.2	28.2	1.4
Female	17.4	14.1	16.5	21.1	26.8	4.2
<b>Age</b>						
18-29	17.6	17.7	19.5	19.4	23.4	2.5
30-44	15.2	6.9	20.1	23.3	32.1	2.5
45-59	24.0	16.4	12.4	13.6	30.4	3.2
60+	22.3	12.6	17.7	20.1	24.0	3.2
<b>Residence</b>						
Rural	17,4	10.8	19.2	20.6	28.6	3.4
10-49 000	26.8	13.3	14.6	18.9	23.2	3.1
50-199 000	19.5	12.2	14.1	14.1	37.5	2.6
200 000+	19.1	18.3	18.7	20.2	21.8	1.9
<b>Region</b>						
Transylvania	20.2	11.4	19.3	18.1	28.5	2.5
Muntenia	26.2	12.8	16.9	18.2	22.0	3.9
Moldova	11.5	10.9	13.9	21.6	40.0	2.2
Bucharest	13.4	26.5	20.3	21.5	16.8	1.5
<b>Education</b>						
1-8 yrs.	20.8	13.2	15.9	20.5	24.5	5.2
Vocational, gymnasium	18.4	13.1	19.9	18.4	27.4	2.9
High school, post-high. sch.	21.2	12.9	15.6	17.3	31.6	1.3
University	17.2	14.3	20.8	22.6	23.6	1.4

## *Stereotypes*

Stereotyping is common in every nation, indeed there is no group (ethnic or otherwise) and probably no individual that is totally immune to it. Basically, stereotyping is based on self-image, on one hand, and hetero-images on the other, where members of the "in-group" tend to depict themselves in positive terms and

<sup>1</sup> Sondaj Romnibus realizat de IMAS pentru LDK Consultants, p. 27.

produce a somewhat negative and even discriminatory image of "the other"<sup>1</sup>. Based on opinion polls and/or focus groups, several studies were produced in Romania tackling "in the mirror" mutual perceptions of the ethnic majority, on one hand, and different its different ethnic minorities (mainly Hungarians, Roma, Germans and Jews) on the other hand<sup>2</sup>. By and large, these studies confirm the findings mentioned above, namely the general depiction of the Romani minority in negative terms (f. example "dirty," "thieves" and "lazy"), of the Germans in positive terms (such as "civilized", and "diligent"), and of Hungarians in both positive ("diligent", "hospitable") and negative ("vain", "egoist") images<sup>3</sup>. I shall therefore concentrate on the stereotypical depiction of Jews in two surveys conducted in 2001 and 2002, and on an additional poll carried out in 2008. The three surveys are not quite comparable, as the first two were based on three separate subsamples (Romanians, Hungarians and Roma) with an additional sub-subsample for Romanian Transylvanians, whereas the last did not make that distinction. In addition, the latter survey included groups (Arabs, Chinese, Africans, Jehova's Witnesses) not examined in the former two surveys and excluded one group (Germans) scrutinized there.

In all three surveys, respondents were asked to choose up to and at most three opposite characteristics out of 12 pairs<sup>4</sup> of presumably opposing traits for Romanians, Hungarians, Roma, and Jews, which should have rendered a scale of prejudice stereotyping. In the 2001 sample, respondents of Romanian ethnic origin chose "entrepreneurial" (33%) and "religious" (31%) most frequently as characterizing Jews on what the questionnaire designers viewed as the "positive pole" and "egoists" (9%) was the most frequently mentioned characteristic at the "negative pole". Interestingly enough, there was only a difference of frequency, but not of picked stereotypes among the three subsamples at the "positive end": ethnic Hungarians and Roma respondents also chose "entrepreneurial" and "religious" most often. The former group viewed the two traits in nearly equal proportion (30% for entrepreneurship and 29% for religiousness), whereas the Roma chose "religious" (23%) slightly more often than "entrepreneurial" (20%). The three subsamples differed in their choice of negative characteristics, however: the most frequent choice of Romanian ethnics was "egoists" (9%), Hungarian ethnics opted most frequently for "divided" (8%), while Roma respondents picked "hypocrites" more frequently than any other negative trend (9%)<sup>5</sup>.

The 2002 survey mirrored the same image of the Jews, with significantly higher options but many of the same choices. Nearly two in five ethnic Romanians (39.2%), over one half (51.2%) ethnic Hungarians and more than one-third of the Roma respondents to the survey chose "religious" at the positive pole, alongside "intelligent" (31% of

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<sup>1</sup> Aurora LIICEANU, "Alteritate etnică și imaginar colectiv", in Gabriel BĂDESCU, Mircea KIVU, Monica ROBOTIN (eds.), *Barometrul relațiilor etnice 1994-2002...cit.*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Alina MUNGIU-PIPPIDI, *Transilvania subiectivă*, Humanitas, București, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> These examples are taken from a survey conducted in 2001 by Metro Media Transylvania and reported in Mircea KIVU, "Comentarii pe marginea Barometrului Relațiilor Interetnice", in Rudolf POLEDNA, François RUEGG, Călin RUS (eds.), *Interculturalitate. Cercetări și perspective românești*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, pp. 75-84.

<sup>4</sup> The list of pairs used: Nice (*Cumsecade*)/Egoists; Hospitable/Hostile; Intelligent/Stupid; Diligent/Lazy; Entrepreneurial/Neglectful; Trustworthy/Hypocrite; Modest/Conceited; "Honest"/"Thievish"; United/Divided; Religious/Superstitious; Civilized/Uncivilized; Clean/Dirty.

<sup>5</sup> Mircea KIVU, "Comentarii...cit.", p. 79.



the Romanians, 31.4% of the Hungarian and 26.7% of the Roma). The third "positive characteristic" opted for by respondents to this survey was "nice" (*cumsecade*)<sup>1</sup>.

Unlike the 2001 and the 2002 surveys, a poll conducted by Gallup Romania on behalf of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) in July 2008 was based on a mixed sample, i.e. Romanian and members of other ethnicities pulled together<sup>2</sup>. Jews were again mostly depicted as "entrepreneurial" (32%), "religious" (26%) and "intelligent" (23%) on the positive side, and as "egoists" (10%), "proud" (6%) and "superstitious" (5%) on the negative side. The prejudice stereotyping scale also included Romanians, Roma, Hungarians, Arabs, Chinese, Africans and (oddly enough, since they are neither a separate ethnic group nor a separate race), Jehova's Witnesses. Findings, including a positive-negative traits balance, are rendered below:

**Table 4**  
*Which traits do you believe best characterize the.....*  
*(three possible choices)*

<b>Ethnic/religious minority</b>	<b>First three choices</b>	<b>Positive/negative balance</b>
Romanians	Diligent Hospitable Nice	3.8
Roma	Thieves Dirty Lazy	0.3
Hungarians	Diligent Civilized United	2.5
Arabs	Religious United Entrepreneurial	1.5
Chinese	Diligent Entrepreneurial Intelligent	5.7
Africans	Uncivilized Dirty Religious <sup>2</sup>	0.9
Jews <sup>3</sup>	Entrepreneurial Religious Intelligent	3.8
Jehovah's Witnesses	Religious United Superstitious	1.6

<sup>1</sup> Aurora LIICEANU, "Alteritate etnică...cit.", pp. 59-60. No findings for "negative traits" were reported.

<sup>2</sup> The Gallup Organization Romania, *Percepții și atitudini ale populației României față de fenomenul de discriminare. Cercetare realizată la cererea Consiliului Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării*, Gallup International, București, iulie 2008. The survey was based on a probabilistic tri-stadial stratified sample of 1 200 respondents aged 18 and over and had a margin of error of  $\pm 2.8\%$ . The sample was weighted for the variables of geographical region, place of residence, sex, age and ethnicity. It was carried out between 27 June-7 July 2008.

Apart from reconfirming the earlier findings on the Roma, who are clearly at the bottom of the ladder and only slightly above zero, the most surprising finding of Table 4 is that Chinese are depicted by far above any other ethnic group, including Romanians themselves. The finding seems to be way out of the presumptions on which self-and-hetero stereotype images are constructed, as in the case of the Chinese the positive/negative balance is by nearly two percentage points higher than that of Romanians themselves. Yet stereotypes are not necessarily constructed on the base of actual contact. According to the 2002 census, the Chinese minority in Romania is close to insignificant; it numbered no more than 2 243<sup>1</sup>, all of them living in Bucharest<sup>2</sup>. It is obviously a community that does not in any way endanger the ethnic Romanian majority. But neither does the low-scoring (second lowest after the Roma) African community (no numbers available), or, for that matter, the Jews (less than 0.02%), whose number by 2002 was of more than 1000 in only two of the country's "historical regions": Bucharest and Bukovina<sup>3</sup>.

In the 2008 Gallup poll Jews score considerable higher than Hungarians in the positive/negative balance, thus reconfirming the findings of the 2001 poll conducted by Metro Media Transylvania. That survey (the national sample) returned a 1.31 "meridian attitudinal score" for Jews, vs. 0.45 for Hungarians<sup>4</sup>. But is such findings fully depicting reality? As András Kovács has demonstrated for the case of Hungary, a not insignificant part of "the Devil" might hide in the "Don't know, no answer" returns. In other words, the more sensitive respondents perceive the issues at stake, the more often they might seek refuge in non-committance, thus avoiding to return perceived "politically incorrect" answers<sup>5</sup>. This is one of the many strange legacies of the communist system and (this is my own assumption) one likely to be at peak among the oldest age groups. While in the case of Romanians and Roma the "don't know/now answers" were of a neglectful 1%, one in five did so in the case of the Hungarians (19%), but no less than one-third of the sample (33%) avoided replying to the question in the case of the Jews, as well as in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses (34%), the Arabs (35%) and the Chinese (36%). In the case of Africans, over two in five respondents (43%) did so. For now, the Romanian pollster that would follow Kovács's refined tuning in the search for "latent antisemitism" is, alas, not in offing in this or other cases.

One last aspect concerning stereotypes. It is questionable whether the "opposing pairs" are really what they were taken to be by questionnaire designers, who apparently opted for utilizing *bona fide* instruments designed for other social contexts. In Romania's case, "entrepreneurial" might be something else than the opposite of "neglectful"; it simply might be a "politically correct" synonym for "*geșeftar*" (from the *gesheft* in Yiddish), a rather pejorative expression often used in reference to Jews

<sup>1</sup> "Structura etnodemografică...cit."

<sup>2</sup> "Comunități etnice în România", *Wikipedia* (Romanian edition), [http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comunități\\_etnice\\_în\\_România](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comunități_etnice_în_România), accessed on April 12, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> „Comunități etnice în România”, cit.

<sup>4</sup> Mircea KIVU, "Comentarii...cit.", p. 49. The score for other ethnicities in the 2001 survey was as follows: Romanians 2.18; Germans 2.03; Roma *minus* 1.83. The score for "attitudes towards others", which referred to perceptions of ethnicities other than the respondent's own was 1.97.

<sup>5</sup> András KOVÁCS, *The Stranger at Hand. Antisemitic Prejudices in Post-Communist Hungary*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2011, pp. 85-86.

and describing their alleged propensity to engaged in profiteering and other money-making activities. Similarly, "religious" might be a politically correct substitute for "bigoted" and even "intelligent" might not stand in for the opposite of "stupid", but rather as a way of describing cunning.

Using a different 12-pair list suggested by the INSHREW, a poll conducted between 27 December-11 January 2012 by the Bucharest-based TNS CSOP Romania on behalf of the CNCD<sup>1</sup> produced on Jews<sup>2</sup> findings considerably different from earlier polls, as shown by Table 5.

**Table 5**

*I shall now read out a list of good points (calități). Please choose those that you consider the most representative for most Jews.*

*I shall now read out a list of deficiencies (defecte). Please choose those that you consider the most representative for most Jews.*

*n=1,400*

<b>Good points</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Bad points</b>	<b>%</b>
United	18	Disunited	3
Peaceful	17	Aggressive	4
Diligent	16	Lazy	4
Self-confident	13	Lacking self-confidence	6
Serious	13	Unserious	3
Honest	11	Dishonest	7
Polite	9	Impolite	2
Courageous, Daring	9	Cowardly	3
Tolerant (hospitable)	7	Intolerant	11
Law-abiding	6	Law-disrespectful	2
Generous	5	Avaricious	29
Trustworthy	4	Untrustworthy	4
DK, NA	32	DK, NA	49

The findings of this survey evince even more emphatically the points raised in connection with the earlier surveys. First, no less than one-half of the respondents on "bad points" opted out of answering, and one-third of those responding on "good points" did the same. There are strong reasons to suspect that some of these must be "latent antisemites". Second, the choice of pairing is still subject to interpretation. "United" very often expresses prejudice rather than praise, since ethnic majorities tend to attribute that trait to "the other" to explain to themselves both group-failure and particularly give vent to concealed conspiracy-theory frustrations. It is revealing

<sup>1</sup> On a sample of 1 400 persons aged 18 and over, the margin of error being  $\pm 2.6\%$ . Probabilist Stratified sample according to region of development and residence, carried out in 60 rural settlements, 57 towns and the Bucarest Municipality. Face to face interviewing at the respondents' domicile. Weighted according to National Statistic Institute data. Cf. TNS CSOP, CNCD, *Raport de cercetare. Percepții și atitudini privind discriminarea în România*, TNS CSOP, CNCD, București, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Other ethnicities included in the poll were Romanians, Roma, Hungarians and Germans.

in this sense that the respondents to this survey opted for "united" as their most frequent choice to describe the alleged "good points" of the Roma (64%)<sup>1</sup> and of Hungarians (36%)<sup>2</sup>. Just as revealingly, by far the most "bad points" choice for ethnic Romanians was "disunited" (44%)<sup>3</sup>.

### *Social Distance*

In December 1993 IMAS was commissioned by the Cluj (*Kolozsvár, Klausenburg*)-based Korunk Friendship association to carry out an investigation on interethnic relations in Romania. In focus were relations between Romanian, Hungarians, Germans, Jews and Roma, measured, among other instruments, by utilizing a "social distance" scale (Bogardus Scale), where 1 signifies the closest acceptable relationship to a member of a minority (member of the respondent's family) and 7 the least acceptable (should not live in my country at all). The survey established that for Romanian ethnic social distance was growing from Germans (closest) to Hungarians, followed by Jews and Roma. Hungarian respondents returned identical social distances; just as in the Romanian case, social distance was at peak when members of the Roma minority were mentioned. Once again, social distance vis-à-vis Hungarians was narrower in the case of Romanians living in Transylvania and larger in the Romanian national sample<sup>4</sup>.

Subsequent surveys would also include sexual minorities (homosexuals and lesbians), Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims (Islam) believers, Arabs, Chinese, and (in one case<sup>5</sup>) citizens of the Moldovan Republic (Bessarabia), while excluding members of the German minority. In order to make data comparable, the following table sums up results returned by ethnic Romanian respondents for social distance vis-à-vis Hungarians, Jews and Roma. As the wording of the question was not always identical, these results must be taken with a pinch of salt. Thus, respondents to the 2003 Gallup survey were asked: "In the following questions, we intend to see how comfortable you feel when interacting with different categories of people. Which is the closest relationship you would [be ready to] have with someone that is a..."; respondents to the other three surveys were asked: "Which is the closest relationship you would accept to have with people belonging to the following [ethnic] minorities". Answers reproduced in Table 6 indicate acceptance, where the smallest distance is reflected by those ready to have a person of the specified minority as a family member and the largest distance is reflected by respondents (not included in the table) unwilling to have a member of that minority live in or even visit their own country.

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<sup>1</sup> "Courageous/daring" (29%) was on second place and "self-confident" (18%) on third. There is ground to suspect that all three referred to the alleged criminal activities of the Romani minority.

<sup>2</sup> "Diligent" was second most opted for (23%) and "self-confident" third (17%).

<sup>3</sup> "Lacking self-confidence" (24%) and "cowardly" (15%) were on second and third place.

<sup>4</sup> "Români despre maghiari, maghiari despre români", *Revista 22*, no. 31, 3-9 August 1994. The representative sample was based on 1 022 interviews conducted at the respondents residence and had a margin of error of  $\pm 3\%$ .

<sup>5</sup> Institutul pentru Politici Publice, *Intoleranță, discriminare și autoritarism în opinia publică*, Institutul pentru Politici Publice, București, September 2003. Survey carried out by Gallup Romania and based on a representative sample of 1 500 respondents aged 18 and over. Stratified probabilistic three-stadial unweighted sample, margin of error  $\pm 2.7\%$ .

**Table 6**  
*Social Distance 2003-2011-12<sup>1</sup>*

	2003			2007			2010			2011-12		
n=	1,500			1,026			1,400			1,400		
	H %	J %	R %	H %	J %	R %	H %	J %	R %	H %	J %	R %
Family member	15	21	7	12	7	2	27	14	11	25	12	8
Personal friend	17	17	12	11	12	5	18	21	17	21	21	17
Neighbor (live in my town)	13	13	17	7	10	6	10	14	16	12	16	14
Work colleague	10	10	11	6	8	5	16	15	16	17	19	17
Visit (live in) Romania	31	27	31	40	42	48	18	24	25	15	21	28
Should not visit (live in) Romania	8	4	13	9	7	19	4	3	8	4	3	7
DK, NA	6	8	9	15	14	15	7	9	7	6	8	9

Sources: Institutul pentru Politici Publice, *Intoleranță...cit.*; Institutul Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel", *Sondaj de opinie privind Holocaustul din România și percepția relațiilor interetnice*, tncscop, INSHREW, București, 2007); TOTEM, Institutul Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel", *Fenomenul discriminării în România. Sondaj de opinie*, TOTEM, INSHREW, București, 2010; TNS CSOP, CNCDD, *Raport de cercetare...cit.*

The most striking finding is that the results of the 2007 survey are so different from the other three surveys that one is inclined to believe that something must have gone astray with responses to this question. There simply was no event that would explain why Romanian respondents suddenly become so "welcoming" of both Hungarians and Jews (two-in-five respondents or higher) and even to a greater extent of the Roma minority (nearly half of the sample). Returns from other years have between 15% (2011-12) and nearly one-third of the sample (2003) saying they would agree to having Hungarian ethnics visiting Romania or living there. The same applies to Jews, with one respondent in five or somewhat higher returning that response in the other three surveys. Nothing justifies the "deviance". And while acceptance of the Roma to either visit or live in Romania most likely reflects acquiescence to reality, there have been no grounds that would have turned nearly one-half of Romanian respondents that happy about a Romani presence. This is the advantage (or is it a disadvantage?) of

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of longitudinal comparison "live in my town" (asked in the 2003 survey) has been combined with "visit Romania" (not asked in that survey), resulting in a six-point scale instead of the classical seven-point Bogardus scale.

longitudinal surveys. They may serve as warning systems. In what follows, then, we shall not take that survey into consideration.

The remaining three surveys under consideration show that between one in five ethnic Romanians (2003) and one in ten (2010, 2011-12) display minimal social distance (member of one's own family) vis-à-vis Jews and that roughly the inverse proportion in all three cases claim readiness to have a Jew as a personal friend (second best social distance, according to theory). There is a statistically significant drop in those displaying minimal social distance toward Jews from 2003 to 2010 and the trend seems to have continued in the following surveyed year. Those willing to have Jews as neighbors (considered to be third-best indicative of acceptance) are roughly within the margin of error around one-and-a-half Romanians out of ten but show a tendency to raise from survey to survey when it comes to the fourth level of acceptance, namely having a Jew as a work colleague. At the other end, all three polls show under 5% positioning themselves in the largest social distance category. Yet only between one in four and one in five ethnic Romanians are ready to have Jews either living in the country or visiting it. This means that a good part of the three samples might have (once again) been displaying latent antisemitism and (unfortunately) this aspect remained hidden from the eyes of analysts.

### *Antisemitism*

Other surveys lit up that corner slightly more. Thus, a poll commissioned by the governmental Department for Interethnic Relations in October November 2006 and conducted by the "Max Weber" College of Professional Sociology in collaboration the the Center for Research on Interethnic Relations and titled "National Minorities in Romania. Representations, Intolerance, Discrimination" found out that 7.2% of respondents "fully" and 8% "partly" agreed that "All Jews in Romania should move to Israel"<sup>1</sup>. This is significantly higher than the 4% or less who, according to the three surveys discussed in the last section, were ready to state that Jews should not live in Romania or visit it, though lower than those who held the same view of Hungarians (11% in full agreement and 11.9% partly agreeing)<sup>2</sup>.

Even more significant, the poll conducted by the "Max Weber" College repeated several questions first used in a survey conducted some three years earlier by Gallup Romania<sup>3</sup>, thus making possible again a longitudinal comparison that turned out to be of high relevance for latent antisemitic inclinations. Table 7 sums up these findings.

<sup>1</sup> Guvernul României. Departamentul pentru Relații Interetnice. Secretar de Stat, "Material pentru presă. Lansarea studiului de cercetare 'Climat interetnic în România în pargul integrării europene'", București, 4 decembrie 2006, p. 2. The survey was conducted on a representative sample of 1 170 persons aged 18 and more and had a margin of error of  $\pm 2.9\%$ . The probabilistic sample was stratified according to type of residence (rural vs. urban), residence size, residential administrative status, region and proportion of national minorities in local political representation according to the 2002 census.

<sup>2</sup> No findings were reported for the Romani minority, but 6.2% fully and 8.5% partly agreed with the statement that "People of nationalities other than Romanian should leave Romania" and 24.6% (12.3% each) backed the statement that "Romanians should not mix with other nations".

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Institutul pentru Politici Publice, *Intoleranță, discriminare și autoritarism...cit.*

**Table 7***Antisemitic Attitudes 2003, 2006.**To what extent do you agree with the following statements on Jews?*

	2003 n=1,500		2006 n=1,170	
	Agreement %	DK, NA%	Agreement %	DK, NA%
The emigration of Jews should be encouraged	18.0	23.0	19.1	8.5
Jews destabilize societies they live in	11.0	32.0	13.0	14.7
Jews exaggerate the persecutions they were subjected to in order to obtain advantages	27.0	32.0	31.5	17.9
Jewish interests in our country are most often different from other citizen's interests	31.6	35.0	24.0	18.6
Genuine Christians should have nothing to do with Jews	14.4	9.2	12.0	21.0
Jews have too much influence in our country	14.0	35.0	17.0	16.5
International politics and finances are controlled by Jews	23.0	21.4	31.5	43.0
Jews backed the communist takeover	15.0	29.4	20.0	52.0
Jews cannot be forgiven for the sin of Christ's crucifixion	27.0	15.6	29.0	37.0
The suffering of the Jewish people is God's punishment	36.0	35.0	33.5	17.8

Perhaps the most important finding of Table 7 rests in the sharp drop in respondents who in 2006 no longer opt out of replying to the question "To what extent do you agree with the following statements on Jews?". While in 2003 a majority of 53% did so, in 2006 three in five respondents (62%) are ready to express an opinion<sup>1</sup>. Interestingly, religion-based "deicidal justifications"<sup>2</sup> are the only exception to this pattern (37% no answers to the "unforgivable sin"), but this is compensated by the drop in the partly related absence of answers supporting the "God's punishment" version, that (for reasons mentioned below) might be related to the debates on the Holocaust. The same connection might explain the moderate increase (from 27 to 31.5 percent) in the proportion of those backing the statement that "Jews exaggerate the persecutions they were subjected to in order to obtain advantages" and the *significant* drop in those no longer opt out of answering this question.

What I am trying to suggest is that, paradoxically, the publication of the findings of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania in 2005<sup>3</sup> and the setting up of the INSHREW in line with the commission's recommendations triggered reactions of opposite nature than that pursued: contributing to awareness of the role played by Romania in the Holocaust and acceptance of the current generation's responsibility (to distinguish from culpability or guilt) for those events.

Part of the 2003-2006 findings were in fact partly reconfirmed by the INSHREW itself its 2007 survey:

**Table 7a**  
*Antisemitic Attitudes 2007<sup>4</sup>*  
*Now in reference to Jews, to what extent do you agree or disagree*  
*with the following statements?*

n = 1,026	Fully agree %	Partly agree %	Somewhat Disagree %	Fully Disagree %	I cannot appreciate %
It would be better if they went to live in their country	9	12	19	22	37
They pursue only their interests, even if harming others	7	12	19	17	45

<sup>1</sup> Guvernul României. Departamentul pentru Relații Interetnice. Secretar de Stat, "Material pentru presă...cit.", p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> On the Deicide as a form of deflecting the responsibility for the Holocaust on the Jews themselves see Michael SHAFIR, *Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization". Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe*, The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism. ACTA no. 19, Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 38-39.

<sup>3</sup> International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, *Final Report*, eds. Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, Mihai E. Ionescu, Polirom, Iași, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel", *Sondaj de opinie*, cit., p. 24. The poll was carried out by TNS CSOP between 25 April and 3 May 2007 on a sample of 1 026 and had a margin of error of  $\pm 3.06\%$ .



They backed the communist takeover	4	8	13	20	55
They act to destabilize societies they live in	2	7	19	31	41

On those questions belonging to the same "family", Tables 7 and 7a, seem to confirm each other at a distance of one year. The proportion of those who would rather see a Romania cleansed of its Jews reaches by 2007 one in five respondents, but no less significantly, the "opting out" choice is fourfold that of 2006, becoming by far the first choice. More than half of the sample opts out on the "backing the communist takeover" choice and nearly half of the respondents do the same on the other two questions. One is forced to conclude that attitudes toward Jews are still hard to measure.

That this indeed is so is illustrated by Table 7b, showing references to Jews in what questionnaire designers and analysts considered to be positive terms in the same 2007 survey:

**Table 7b<sup>1</sup>**

*Positive Perceptions of Jews, 2007*

*Now in reference to Jews, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

n=1,026	Fully agree %	Partly agree %	Somewhat disagree %	Fully disagree %	I cannot appreciate %
They are a minority maintaining good relations with the rest of the population	18	39	8	4	32
They have many important personalities in different fields	23	33	5	4	35
They have a lot of international influence	27	27	6	5	35
They are an important minority for Romania	12	31	10	13	34

<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23.

They represent a community furthering the country's progress	14	28	11	7	41
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In this case too, large pluralities ranging from one-third to two-fifths of the sample would not pronounce themselves. More importantly perhaps, is having "a lot of international influence" really a "positive" reference? Is it really essentially different from the 2003-2006 surveys' "International politics and finances are controlled by Jews"? The "Max Weber" College survey showed that every third Romanian believes in conspiracy theories – an increase of a significant ten percent from 2003, when "only" 23% inclined to be the partisan of such fallacies. The domination of international finance markets by Jews can be considered to be the modern age's version of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion which, as sociologist Horváth István of the "Max Weber" Institute pointed out, responds to the need of the layman to receive "simple, coherent explanations" rather than "rational, complex and abstract" explanations to a situation where "capitalism's dynamics brings about rapid changes to which people adapt with great difficulty". In such situations, "simplifying the causes" of the change through "the personification of evil by finger-pointing to occult groups with religious or other intent" becomes an attractive option<sup>1</sup>.

Romanian sociologist George Voicu, who authored a tome on "conspirationism" in postcommunist Romania<sup>2</sup> saw a direct linkage between the INSHREW "tongue in cheek" declarations of Romanian officials concerning the Holocaust after being pressed by the West to do so as a condition to accessing NATO<sup>3</sup> and later the European Union, and their conviction that "Jews dominate the world"<sup>4</sup>.

### *Holocaust Awareness*

Optional classes on the Holocaust were introduced in the national high-school *curriculae* as a mandatory subject (2-4 hours) in the larger framework of World War II history (which is being taught in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade) as early as 1998, by former Education Minister Andrei Marga. The first textbooks to include the topic were published in 1999 but many of them included wrong or even biased information, most of the times in a clear attempt to exonerate the Romanian authorities from any responsibility for their wartime wrongdoings. Things, however, seemed to change for the better after the Final Report of the International Commission for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, whose findings became the country's "official position"

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<sup>1</sup> Victor BORZA, "Fiecare al treilea român crede în teoriile conspiraționiste", *Cotidianul*, 5 February 2007.

<sup>2</sup> George VOICU, *Zei cei răi. Cultura conspirației în România postcomunistă*, Polirom, Iași, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> For details see Michael SHAFIR, "Memory, Memorials and Membership: Romanian Utilitarian Antisemitism and Marshal Antonescu", in Henry F. CAREY (ed.), *Romania Since 1989: Politics, Culture and Society*, MD, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2004, pp. 67-96.

<sup>4</sup> Victor BORZA, "Fiecare al treilea român...cit."

on the Romanian chapter of the Holocaust. Thus, with few exceptions, the textbooks published after 2004 are generally more coherent and accurate than before<sup>1</sup>.

Apparently having in mind precisely the purpose of finding out how these developments impacted high-school students that the 2007 survey initiated by the INSHREW stepped out of line, including in its sample people aged 15 and over, rather than the habitual age groups of 18 and over. The experiment has not been repeated since, which makes longitudinal comparison more difficult rather than facilitating it. Four surveys conducted between 2007 and 2011-12 included a question that requested respondents to state whether or not they had heard of the Holocaust. As Table 8 shows awareness seems to have increased in 2010 (but then tended to slide back again) due to the debates launched after the publication of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania report and the setting up of the INSHREW, reaching a peak in 2010.

**Table 8**  
*Have you heard about the Holocaust?*

	2007 n=1,026 %	2009 n=1,201 %	2010 n=1,400 %	2011-12 n=1,400 %
Yes	65	69	72	68
No	27	24	23	29
DK, NA	8	7	5	3

Sources: Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel", *Sondaj de opinie*, cit.; INSOMAR, Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării în România, *Fenomenul discriminării în România. Percepții și atitudini*, CNCD, București, August 2009; TOTEM, Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel", *Fenomenul discriminării în România*, 2010; TNS CSOP, CNCD, *Raport de cercetare*, 2012.

That is also illustrated in the findings of Table 9, where, regardless of the simplicity or complexity of answers or their accuracy, a longitudinal increasing awareness of the phenomenon combines with a decreasing drop in the proportion of no answers. The question was asked of all respondents who said they had heard of the Holocaust.

**Table 9**  
*Please tell me what the term Holocaust means*  
*(multiple choice)*

	2007 %	2009 %	2010 %	2011-12 %
The extermination of Jews by the Germans	54.0	61.2	66.0	76.0
The persecution of European Jews	14.0	18.5	20.0	30.0

<sup>1</sup> See Felicia WALDMAN, Michael SHAFIR, "Jewish Studies in Romania", *Modern Jewish Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, March 2011, p. 80.

Mass crimes/killings/pogroms	8.0	11.0	22.0	30.0
The deportation of Jews	7.0	9.0	21.0	36.0
The punishment of Jews in Nazi concentration camps	5.0	3.0	26.0	31.0
Concentration camps	3.0	2.1	20.0	35.0
The organized persecutions of one nation	3.0	4.0	15.0	18.0
A disaster	3.0	4.9	14.0	25.0
Something bad for mankind	2.0	6.0	12.0	19.0
Mass gasing	2.0	1.1	20.0	30.0
The persecution of Gypsies (Roma)	2.0	0.4	5.0	12.0
The attitude of Germany towards Jews	1.0	1.9	11.0	19.0
Other answers < 1%	5.0	-	-	-
DK, NA	15.0	15.4	6.0	2.0

Two additional findings emerge from this table: first, there is still relatively little awareness among Romanian respondents of the *Porriamos* (the Roma genocide), and this must be read in connection with the large anti-Roma prejudice. Indeed, in 2003, Gallup Romania found out that 25% of the respondents to a survey based on a representative sample of 1 500 persons aged 18 and over believed Romania did not participate in the *Porriamos*, 22% said it participated in it and the majority (53%) simply did not know or did not care to answer the question<sup>1</sup>. Second, there is a strong tendency to blame the Holocaust on the Germans alone.

Indeed, respondents who answered that they had heard about the Holocaust were then requested to state where it had been perpetrated. This question was important in view of numerous attempts to deflect the perpetration of the crimes on Germany alone and particularly in view of what I have termed as "selective negationism", by which is meant the attempt to present one's own country as an exception among Germany's allies in the Second World War<sup>2</sup>. In spite of having passed in 2002 a governmental ordinance forbidding the negation of the Holocaust that (after long procrastination) became law in 2006<sup>3</sup>, Romanian officials and historians have repeatedly claimed that no Holocaust has taken place on Romanian territory and prosecutors often refuse to heed complaints about the law's infringement on grounds that the law does not refer to Romania but to Germany alone.

<sup>1</sup> Institutul pentru Politici Publice, *Intoleranță, discriminare și autoritarism...*cit., p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Michael SHAFIR, *Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization"...*cit., pp. 52-59.

<sup>3</sup> *Monitorul Oficial al României*, no. 377, 3 May 2006.

**Table 10**

*Taking into consideration that the term Holocaust means the systematic state-organized extermination of Jews by Nazi Germany and its allies and collaborators between 1933-1945, do you believe that this happened in... (multiple choice)*

	2007 %	2009 %	2010 %	2011-12 %
Romania	28	32	49	46
Other European countries	39	42	79	56
Germany	66	73	52	75
DK, NA	27	21	10	8

As Table 10 demonstrates, between half and three-quarters of Holocaust-aware respondents still believe Germany alone has been involved in the perpetration of the Holocaust (leaving aside the unfamiliarity with the geography of the Shoah) and only between one-quarter and one-half are conscious of their own country's involvement in the crimes' perpetration. Remarkably, ethnic Hungarian respondents (for obvious reasons) are by far more aware of the fact that the Shoah had been perpetrated in countries other than Germany. More than half of them (52%) said in 2007 the atrocities took place in other European countries as well, significantly higher than the average<sup>1</sup>.

Respondents who in the 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011-12 surveys said a Holocaust had taken place in Romania were further requested to specify what the Shoah in their country had consisted of. In 2007 and 2009 they had the possibility of opting from a handed list, whereas in the latter two surveys they could either approve or reject the mentioned options.

**Table 11**

*What did the Holocaust in Romania consist of? (multiple choice)*

	2007	2009	2010			2011-12		
	%	%	Yes %	No %	DK %	Yes %	No %	DK %
The deportation of Jews to isolated places or other countries	74	77.3	75	9	16	74	11	15
Mass detentions of Jews	67	68.8	71	11	16	67	14	19

<sup>1</sup> Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel", *Sondaj de opinie*, cit., p. 35. No data available for other years.

Expropriation of goods and the forced evacuation of dwellings	62	64.8	67	11	22	68	12	20
Persecutions and limitations of Jewish rights	55	61.2	66	13	21	63	16	21
The systematic extermination of Jews	49	45.1	58	18	23	51	26	23
Mass executions of Jews (pogroms)	26	28.1	57	19	24	47	28	25
DK	4	4.9	-	-	-	-	-	-

Options for the latter two entries seem to indicate that large segments among the respondents have still difficulty in acknowledging that their country has participated in the perpetration of the worst atrocities against its Jewish minority. Except for respondents to the 2010 sample, these segments never become majorities on both counts. However, there is clearly a significant increase in the proportion of those who, due to the International Commission's report, the debates in the media in its wake and the activity of the INSHREW, are now ready to acknowledge the existence of mass executions and of pogroms. Three in four respondents, moreover, mention the deportations (although it remains unclear whether those carried out by German and Hungarian authorities in northern Transylvania or those implemented by the Romanian authorities to Transnistria) and roughly two in three refer to other forms of persecutions. Yet one should never lose sight of the fact that these answers are *not* representative of the population as a whole, but rather of the one-quarter to one-half of those aware of their country's participation in the Holocaust.

Does that mean that these respondents are ready to acknowledge Romania's responsibility for those events? Respondents to the four surveys who acknowledged the fact that a Holocaust had been perpetrated in Romania among other places were asked who, in their opinion, should be held responsible for it. Findings are summarized in Table 12.

**Table 12**

*In your opinion, who was responsible for the outbreak of the Holocaust in Romania?*

	2007	2009	2010					2011-12				
	%	%	%					%				
			V.large extent %	Large extent %	Little extent %	V. little extent %	DK, NA %	V.large extent %	Large extent %	Little extent %	V. little extent %	DK, NA %
Nazi Germany	90	91.7	67	17	2	1	13	69	17	2	1	11

The Antonescu government	47	51.8	16	23	19	14	28	17	26	20	12	25
The USSR	11	9.1	6	12	18	25	39	11	19	17	22	31
The Jews	4	2.1	2	6	12	50	31	3	5	13	49	29
The Romanian people	2	3.9	2	8	16	41	33	3	5	23	41	28
Others	1	0.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DK, NA	8	5.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

While attributing responsibility for the Holocaust in Romania to Nazi Germany is close to unanimous, at most half of the respondents to this question opine that the country's wartime government should also share it. Only one in ten Romanians or less is willing to accept responsibility as a member of the Romanian nation for the country's wartime persecution of its Jewish minority.

There is a strong likelihood of a correlation between the post-communist Antonescu personality cult<sup>1</sup> and the above findings. The impact of that cult has been measured several times before. A poll conducted by IRSOP in April 1995 established that 62% of respondents had "a good opinion" on Antonescu, 24% a "bad opinion", with 14% replying that they did not know. The poll attempted to establish how Romanians were viewing the Second World War and Antonescu was the only leader of the times who scored positively among those mentioned<sup>2</sup>. Asked to pick up the Romanian leader who best served Romania's interests (*a făcut cel mai mare bine*) in the last one hundred years in a survey carried out by CURS in November 1999<sup>3</sup> and by Gallup Romania in October 2007<sup>4</sup>, however, only 4% selected Marshal Antonescu in 1999 and 2% in 2007; conversely, only 2% picked him as the leader who worst served Romania in the last century in 1999 and 3% in 2007. On both instances, communist dictator

<sup>1</sup> See Michael SHAFIR, "Marshal Antonescu's Postcommunist Rehabilitation: *Cui Bono?*", in Randolph L. BRAHAM (ed.), *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews during the Antonescu Era*, The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies Graduate Center/The City University of New York and Social Science Monographs. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York and Boulder, 1997, pp. 349-410 and IDEM, "Memory, Memorials and Membership...cit."

<sup>2</sup> The poll was conducted between 21-30 April 1995 on a representative sample of 1 198 respondent aged 18 and over randomly selected from 78 rural and urban settlements and had a margin of error of  $\pm 2.8\%$ . Results for other Second World War leaders were as follows: Good opinion – Hitler 2%, Mussolini 5%, Stalin 5%, Churchill 26%, Roosevelt 31%. Bad opinion – Hitler 90%, Mussolini 68%, Stalin 87%, Churchill 38%, Roosevelt 31%. See "Ce cred românii despre al Doilea Război Mondial", *Adevărul*, 9 May 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Survey conducted between 14-27 November 1999 on a representative sample of 2 019 persons, with a margin of error of  $\pm 2\%$ . See "Emil Constantinescu – pe un prețios loc doi, după Nicolae Ceaușescu", *Adevărul*, 17 November 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Survey conducted between 10-22 October 2007 on a representative probabilistic sample of 2 000 persons aged 18 and more with stratification according to historical region and size of settlement. Margin of error  $\pm 2.2\%$ . See Gabriel BĂDESCU, Mircea COMȘA, Dumitru SANDU, Manuela STĂNCULESCU, *Barometrul de Opinie Publică Octombrie 2007–BOP 1998-2007*, Fundația Soros România, București, 2007, p. 5.

Nicolae Ceaușescu distantly headed the lists on both accounts<sup>1</sup>. Yet in 2006, when Romanian Television organized a popular show based on models earlier tested in the several European countries as well as Canada and South Africa where people were asked to pick up (phoning in, by SMS or letters) the "ten greatest Romanians", Ion Antonescu was not only among the "finalists" (on second place) but placed sixth in the final round<sup>2</sup>. Such shows, of course, are not scientific polls, and critical voices were quick to point that out, the more so as suspicion lingered of possible manipulation on Ceaușescu, apparently "pushed out" to 11<sup>th</sup> place to avoid having him among finalists<sup>3</sup>. But neither can such instances be dismissed as wholly lacking in relevance. Antonescu's presence among the final contenders, the daily *România liberă* wrote,

"reflects the continuing lag-behind of Romanian political culture and the failure of a large part of the population to assume responsibility for the past. This failure includes the role played by Romania in the Holocaust, although under the pressure of Romania's efforts to access the EU, official efforts to assume responsibility for the past have been noticed in the last years. Under Antonescu's regime massacres and deportations of Jews have been carried out, especially in Romania-occupied Transnistria, and the government legislated antisemitic laws on the model of those in force in Hitler's Germany. The Antonescu cult has been a phenomenon of the 1990s, when post-1989 political leaders exploited Antonescu's resistance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union as part and parcel of the effort to cultivate nationalism in order to deflect attention from the fact that political and economic power had remained unchanged"<sup>4</sup>.

Perhaps just as important is the fact that numerous public opinion polls indicated that in the context of "transition's hardships" combined with deprivation and notorious corruption, segments of the population are prone to incline for a strong leader, indeed even for a dictatorship of one kind or another. As soon after the change of regime as 1991, a public opinion poll carried out by the Bucharest-based Independent Center for Social Studies and Polling (CISSS) led by sociologist Pavel Câmpeanu (better known in the West under the pseudonym Felipe Garcia Casals) found that 10.5% of those questioned would prefer a military government to that in power<sup>5</sup>. Twenty-two percent were of that opinion by 2003, 8% of whom saying that it would be "very good" for Romania to have such a regime and 14% that it would be "good", according to a Gallup Romania poll. The same survey found that 13% believed it would be "very good" for Romania to have a single political party and 20 percent that it would be "good". In other words, by 2003 one in three respondents was disaffected with democracy<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Twenty-two percent in 1999, 23% in 2007 as the country's best leader; twenty-two percent in 1999, 24% in 2007 as its worst leader in the last one hundred years. Gabriel BĂDESCU, Mircea COMȘA, Dumitru SANDU, Manuela STĂNCULESCU, *Barometrul...cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> See "Liderii au avut priză la votanți", *Evenimentul zilei*, 10 July 2006; "Topul 'celor mai mari români' reflectă o societate dezorientată și confuză", *România liberă*, 3 November 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Marius VASILEANU, "Cercul marilor români", *Adevărul*, 11 July 2006.

<sup>4</sup> "Topul 'celor mai mari români'...cit."

<sup>5</sup> Pavel CÂMPEANU, "Politica internă (Opinia publică despre instituții și actori)", *Revista* 22, no. 16, 26 April 1991. No details on sample.

<sup>6</sup> Institutul pentru Politici Publice, *Intoleranță, discriminare și autoritarism...cit.*, p. 30.



A poll conducted by IRSOP in February 1993 found that 27% of the respondents would opt for "strong-fist authoritarian leadership"<sup>1</sup>. There can be little doubt that Ion Antonescu would easily fit into those shoes. According to a Gallup International poll, by end 1994 more than one in four Romanians (28%) believed that the best option for the country was to "have a strong-fist leadership, even if that means limiting democracy", and an even larger segment of one-in-three (32%) was ready to "solve the criminality problem" by "restricting citizens' rights for some time"; ten percent of those questioned in this poll said the situation would improve if Parliament would be done away with and 11% were of the opinion that political parties should be abolished in order for the situation to get better<sup>2</sup>. In 1995 and 1996, in IMAS-conducted surveys, about one-half of ethnic Romanian questioned (52.2% and 49.9%, respectively), "fully agreed" with the statement that "submission to authority is the best thing children can learn". Partial agreement was expressed by 19.6% in 1995 and 32.6 percent in 1996<sup>3</sup>. According to the Gallup Romania poll of 2003, 35% were in full or partial agreement with the statement that "obedience and respect of authority are the best things children should learn" and precisely the same proportion of respondents believed that "Respect for public order is more important than respect of individual rights"<sup>4</sup>. By November 1998, according to a poll conducted by Metro Media Transilvania, no less than three in four Romanians believed that it would be better for the country to have at its head "a single determined person rather than several people with different ideas"<sup>5</sup>. Finally, a Gallup Romania survey conducted in November 2005 found that two in three respondents (66%) would like to see at the helm "a strong leader, who does not waste his time with Parliament and elections"<sup>6</sup>.

Inclinations toward authoritarianism are even more pronounced among Romania's rural population (some 45% of the country's total population). If at national level 66% of Romanians might opt for "a strong leader, who does not waste his time with Parliament and elections", among those who dwell in the countryside three out of four respondents (74%) do so, according to a Eurobarometer-type survey commissioned at the end of 2005 by the Soros Foundation Romania and conducted by Metro Media Transilvania<sup>7</sup>. Other options scoring high among this category are non-party experts (72%), high Church prelates (65%) and military leaders (62%).

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<sup>1</sup> *Libertatea*, 16-17 March 1993. Poll based on face-to-face interviews with a sample of 1 100 aged 18 and over. Margin of error  $\pm$  3%.

<sup>2</sup> "Ultimul sondaj Gallup chestionează cetățenii asupra desființării partidelor", *România liberă*, 5 January 1995. Poll carried out between 7-10 December 1994 on a sample of 1 294 respondents aged 18 and more. Margin of error  $\pm$  3%.

<sup>3</sup> Results by courtesy of IMAS. No details on 1995 sample. The 1996 sample was of 1 582 persons (see Ralu FILIP, „Relațiile româno-maghiare: Românii se simt mai străini în propria lor țară decât maghiarii”, *Curierul național*, 13 April 1996). Nearly one in four ethnic Hungarians "fully agreed" with the statement in 1995, but in 1996 support had almost doubled (46.3%). In partial agreement were in 1995 32.3% of ethnic Hungarians and in 1996 24.8%.

<sup>4</sup> Institutul pentru Politici Publice, *Intoleranță, discriminare și autoritarism...cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Mediafax and Reuters, 26 November 1998, Associated Press, 27 November 2008. The poll was conducted on a sample of 1 253 persons, and had a margin of error of  $\pm$  3%.

<sup>6</sup> Mircea MARIAN, "Farmecul discret al dictaturii", *Adevărul*, 24 November 2005. No details on sample.

<sup>7</sup> The survey was carried out between 22 November-6 December 2005 on a representative sample of 1 516 residents of rural areas and had a margin of error of  $\pm$ . See *Rompres* 27 January 2006.

Bearing in mind these aspects, how is the Marshal viewed by the *minority* of respondents (an aspect that should never be overlooked) aware of Romania's participation in the Holocaust? The four surveys commissioned or carried out by the INSHREW provide a mixed picture. In the first survey, *all* 1 026 respondents were asked to choose from a list ascribing to the Marshal six positive and five negative descriptions.

**Table 13**

*Marshal Antonescu was Romania's leader between 1940-1944. I shall read out a number of statesmanship attributes and ask you to tell me how well they suit this historical figure (2007)*

	Fully suitable %	Suitable to a great extent %	Not too suitable %	Not suitable at all %	I cannot appreciate %
He was a great patriot	20	26	8	5	41
He was a great strategist	19	25	7	4	45
He must be rehabilitated for what he did for Romania	12	21	10	8	49
He was a democratic leader	8	16	18	10	49
He created Greater Romania	7	15	12	15	51
He was a savior of Jews	5	10	14	17	54
He is responsible for crimes against the Roma/ Gypsies	12	21	9	9	49
He was a dictator	8	20	14	10	48
He is responsible for crimes against the Jews	8	17	11	12	52
He led Romania to disaster	6	13	16	16	50
He was a war criminal	6	12	15	17	50

From very large pluralities of between 41 and 49 percent to small majorities ranging from 50 to 54 percent Romanian respondents seem non-committal to the symbolic figure of the Marshal. Whether this is due to choice for keeping away from "delicate" subjects or genuine lack of information there is no way of telling. The roughly half of sample who opts for expressing an opinion seems to be divided, but the wartime leaders' partisans display more certainty. Ion Antonescu as a "great patriot" and a "great strategist" had been the subject of popular movies (for example Sergiu Nicolaescu's *The mirror*, 1993) and alleged historical documentaries such as Felicia Cernăianu's 1996 *Marshal Ion Antonescu's Destiny*<sup>1</sup>. The market has been saturated with books by historians ranging from apologetic to simply hagiographic<sup>2</sup>, some of which would make even Nicolae Ceaușescu blush. And, of course, there has been a pronounced negationist effort, denying involvement in crimes against Jews or attempting to deflect the responsibility for the atrocities on subordinates, on Jewish "provocations" and even transforming the marshal into a savior of Jews<sup>3</sup>. The poll conducted in 2007 seemed to indicate that success in the latter effort was rather limited – not more than 15% of those questioned opted for that description. Notably, however, one-third of the sample backs the attempts to bring about Antonescu's judicial rehabilitation. These attempts started in 1992<sup>4</sup> and were still ongoing at the time the poll was conducted. As for his having been a "democratic leader" or for having "created" Greater Romania (he was still a young, though important member of the General Staff during the First World War at whose end Greater Romania came into being) – these are responses showing that ignorance never dies.

In the remaining three polls, the same question was posed only to those who had replied that Romania had participated in the Holocaust. In other words, the query was addressed to those who were more informed than the rest. Would they have a different image of the Marshal? Findings are summarized in Table 13a, in which the two opposing pairs have been joined into one.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://filmeromanestivechi.myforum.ro/-vp68.html>, accessed on October 10, 2010 and <http://www.trilululu.ro/video-cultura/destinul-maresalului-ion-antonescu-documentar>, accessed on February 2, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these are mentioned in International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, *Final Report*.

<sup>3</sup> For a partial reviewing see Michael SHAFIR, "Romania's Tortuous Road to Facing Collaboration", in Roni STAUBER (ed.), *Collaboration with the Nazis. Public Discourse after the Holocaust*, Routledge and Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism, London, New York, Tel Aviv, 2011, pp. 256-260.

<sup>4</sup> In the last such attempt, Șerban Alexianu, son of Transnistria's governor under Romanian occupation, failed to bring about his father's judicial rehabilitation and implicitly that of Antonescu and the members of his government sentenced to death or prison terms. The High Court of Cassation and Justice on 6 May 2008 annulled a lower court's decision of 5 December 2006 to acquit the marshal, Iron Guard leader Horia Sima and 19 members of the Antonescu cabinet of war crimes. Alexianu Jr. had claimed that the 1946 sentencing of Antonescu, his father Gheorghe Alexianu and others should be annulled because the offences had been triggered by the USSR's annexation of Bessarabia in 1940 and the People's Tribunal who pronounced the sentence in 1946 had not taken into consideration the secret protocols of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. See Mediafax, 6 May 2008; A.G., "Reabilitare respinsă", *Ziua*, and CAB, "Reabilitarea numelui mareșalului Antonescu respinsă de ICCJ", *România liberă*, both of 7 May 2008.

Table 13a

*Marshal Antonescu was Romania's leader between 1940-1944. I shall read out a number of statesmanship attributes and ask you to tell me how well they suit this historical figure (2009-2011-12)*

	2009			2010			2011-12		
	Suitable %	Unsuitable %	Cannot appreciate %	Suitable %	Unsuitable %	Cannot appreciate %	Suitable %	Unsuitable %	Cannot appreciate %
Great patriot	43	19	38	44	18	37	46	18	36
Great strategist	41	19	41	43	16	41	39	21	40
Must be rehabilitated	32	30	38	25	25	50	26	25	49
Democratic leader	18	37	45	8	36	56	13	36	51
Created Greater Romania	20	34	46	11	37	52	16	35	49
Savior of Jews	13	34	53	3	42	55	10	41	49
Responsible crimes ag. Roma	39	17	44	30	25	45	34	23	43
Dictator	29	29	42	23	33	44	28	30	42
Responsible crimes ag. Jews	28	22	50	25	29	46	26	31	43
Led Romania to disaster	22	38	50	12	39	49	17	37	46
War criminal	22	29	42	17	34	49	20	34	46

In view of the fact these answers were provided by the *informed* segment of respondents, there is little ground for comfort. To put it otherwise: out of the roughly half of the total sample who in 2010 and 2011-12 acknowledged the Holocaust had been perpetrated in their country, between 36 and 56 percent (over one in three to one-half of respondents) chose not to pronounce themselves on Antonescu's good or bad attributes as a statesman.

Compared to 2007, when all respondents answered this question, and the remaining three surveys where only those informed were faced with it, one notes some surge in the awareness of the Holocaust having affected the Roma population, yet at most two out of five respondents fit into this category. There is also a slight surge in the awareness of Antonescu's crimes against Jews, but this raise is even

smaller, affecting at most one in four respondents. On Antonescu's having been a dictator there is practically stagnation, accompanied by a significant decline in those who view him as having led Romania to disaster. One also notes fluctuations in those opting for seeing the former *Conducător* (*Führer*) as a war criminal, yet the proportion of those who do so is never higher than one in five respondents.

Antonescu as a "great patriot" or a "great strategist" are also stagnant over time, but these are clearly the most favored choices, opted for by some two in five respondents or even higher. The drive for his rehabilitation loses ground from one in three to one in four respondents, and there are significant drops at in the "ignorant" answers (democratic leader and forger of Greater Romania). Notably, the Marshal's apologists do less well in his depiction as an alleged savior of Jews; the choice here declines to as little as 3% in 2010, though some ground is regained in 2011-12 (10%).

Altogether and despite some progress in the post-2005 years, the Holocaust remains a subject that interests only superficially (if at all) the Romanians. Out of the 1 026 respondents to the 2007 survey, only 1% said they were "very much interested in the problem of the Holocaust" and an additional 5% claimed they were "interested much". Twenty-three were "neither much, nor little interested" and 15% acknowledged their interest was "little". Two respondents in five (39%) admitted their interest in the problem was "very little". Twenty-two percent of the respondents to the same survey were aware that Romania has a national Holocaust Commemoration Day, but 71% were unaware of it and 7% could not answer the question. Even among those aware of the day's existence, only 10 respondents were able to mention correctly the date (9 October, when the first deportations of Jews started in Bukovina in 1941)<sup>1</sup>. Only a minority among Romanians are aware of the Holocaust's having been perpetrated in Romania and the Marshal Antonescu is predominantly viewed as a positive figure of the country's history or at least as one in whose political record the "good side" overshadows the "bad side".

### *Political Antisemitism*

As András Kovács has pointed out, "while anti-Jewish prejudice is an important factor to be considered in any society, it is more likely to be a prerequisite and indicator of the dynamic of antisemitism rather than its cause". To become politically consequential, the process entails "the combined effects of several internal and external factors, only one of which is anti-Jewish prejudice". The transformation of overt of covert "societal moods" into politically relevant actors

"gathers momentum if, in societies where anti-Jewish prejudices have been present more or less continuously, a 'culture' and a language arises that makes use of opinions, myths, and phantasmagorias 'about Jews' to interpret situations that are unrelated to Jews or the role of Jews in society"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Institutul Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel", *Sondaj de opinie*, cit., p. 39. The questions were not included in subsequent surveys, which makes longitudinal comparison impossible.

<sup>2</sup> András KOVÁCS, *The Stranger at Hand...cit.*, p. x.

The surveys hitherto presented leave little doubt that such elements are indeed present in Romanian political culture. To what extent might they at one point lead to the politicization of antisemitism in postcommunist Romania as was the case of the emergence of Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary) as a xenophobic antisemitic and anti-Roma force in Hungary (16.67% in the 2010 elections, thus becoming the third largest force in the legislature<sup>1</sup>) is more than a pertinent question.

Available data on Romania is, alas, too scarce to match the Hungarian sociologist's impressive performance, as indeed are the skills of this article's author. In what follows, analysis is mainly qualitative, though whenever possible is supported by quantitative support.

Back in 2008, I wrote<sup>2</sup> that if antisemitism in postcommunist East Central Europe may be said to be a *dependent variable* (i.e. what needs to be explained), an examination of the reasons for its relatively successful post-communist dissemination is bound to reveal a variety of *independent variables* (what explains a phenomenon) in the postures of the different movements, associations and political parties displaying major or less obvious anti-Semitic nuances. These might be driven by different, indeed sometimes contradictory attitudes towards the past (the legacy of the interwar radical right), present (the legacy of communism) and future (orientations towards the "well ordered" society). They may be political and/or cultural foes, and the fact that they find themselves in the same boat, disturbing as it might be for the local remnants of the Jewish communities, should not make one jump to the conclusion that the rationality of this state of affairs is to be sought in the simplistic blind, ancestral hatred of what Alain Finkielkraut and later Andrei Oișteanu in Romania called the "imaginary Jew"<sup>3</sup>. That article distinguished between the following taxonomic categories of "producers" of antisemitism: a) "Self-exculpatory nostalgic antisemitism" or what I have called in the past parties and movements of a "radical return" to models of inter-war radical right; b) "Self-propelling antisemitism", or what I have called in the past parties and movements of a "radical continuity" based on models provided by exacerbated national communism<sup>4</sup>; c) "Neo-populist mercantile antisemitism", in which antisemitism is utilized or shed away as a function of perceptions of what "sells" and what not at both national and international level; d) "Utilitarian anti-Semitism", which shares some characteristics with the former category but is nonetheless distinguished from it by the fact that it is employed by parties, movements and personalities who are on record for being "anti-antisemitic"; e) "Reactive antisemitism", basically explained in terms of the "competitive martirology" between the Holocaust and the Gulag; f) "Vengeance antisemitism" represented by that category driven by the simple hatred of Jews for whatever they do or refrain from doing. Of these, categories a) to e) are

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<sup>1</sup> At the 2009 elections for the European Parliament, Jobbik managed to elect three deputies out of the 22 allotted to Hungary.

<sup>2</sup> Michael SHAFIR, "Rotten Apples, Bitter Pears: An Updated Motivational Typology of Romania's Radical Right Anti-Semitic Postures in Post-Communism", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 21, no. 7, Winter 2008, pp. 149-187, <http://jsri.ro/ojs/index.php/jsri/article/view/381>. In what follows I make extensive use of that article.

<sup>3</sup> Alain FINKIELKRAUT, *Le Juif imaginaire*, Seuil, Paris, 1980; Andrei OIȘTEANU, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română. Studii despre imagologie în context Est-Central European*, Humanitas, București, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Michael SHAFIR, "Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues. Radical Politics in Post-Communist East Central Europe", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. I, no. 2, 2001, pp. 397-446.

particularly relevant for scrutinizing political antisemitism. Category f) is less relevant, since it appears that everywhere in East Central Europe (and perhaps not only) there would be a number of individuals who simply and incurably hate Jews.

The "nostalgic" attribute is warranted by the fact that the category looks upon the interwar authoritarian past as a model for solving the transitional problems of the present and constructing the country's future. "Nostalgia" should therefore not be comprehended as mere contemplation, I was then emphasizing. It involves activism, at both grassroots and at central political level. The members of the category are by and large either very old or very young, with the middle-age bracket being thinly represented, though not wholly absent. Exiled personalities linked with the wartime regimes, many of whom established abroad associations, as well as people freed from communist prisons after long years of detention, are thus bridging a gap of generations with young would-be political leaders whose education under communism carefully avoided to address their own nation participation in, and responsibility for, the atrocities committed against Jews in that period. This is what Shari J. Cohen called "state-organized forgetting"<sup>1</sup>.

These political (and "cultural"! ) formations would be the Romanian penchant of Jobbik. But none of them ever made it to Parliament or was even close to making it. Among them one can mention the (now deceased) Movement for Romania led by Marian Munteanu, which was set up in 1992, Radu Sorescu's Party of National Right, set up in 1993, and the neo-Iron Guardist Everything for the Fatherland Party (*Totul pentru Patrie*), set up in 1993 and which in 2011 decided to take off its mask and restore the formation's interwar name, Everything for the Country (*Totul pentru țară*). Coriolan Baciuc leads the latter party, but its first leader was Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu, an Iron Guardist who was a member of the armed anti-communist resistance in the mountains and who died in. As Romanian legislation prohibits the existence of fascist parties, following the name change the Prosecutor General's Office has launched action for its outlawing<sup>2</sup>. More recently (1 March 2012), a new formation calling itself and having among its members the foremost Holocaust negationist Ion Coja, announced its drive to be registered as a political party, the National List (for which it needs the endorsement of 25 000 supporters residing in at least 18 out of the country's 41 counties).

These movements – and a plethora of associations established either in connection with them or independently, such as the Manu Foundation – have all had their successors, the most recent of which is an organization calling itself the New Right (Noua Dreaptă) Group, led by the young Tudor Ionescu and whose leadership is entirely made up by people in their twenties. Also in this category belongs the Iron Guard splinter movement led by Șerban Suru. Publications such as *Permanențe*, *Obiectiv legionar*, *Puncte cardinale*, *Noua dreaptă*, and others display an unconcealed identification with exculpatory nostalgic antisemitism, while other publications, such as *Rost* or *Jurnalul literar* barely display the fig of distancing themselves from what is taken to be the "non-emblematic" excesses of some political and cultural figures of the past. In most cases, however, an apologist explanation accompanies the distance

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<sup>1</sup> Shari J. COHEN, *Politics without a Past. The Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1999, pp. 85-118.

<sup>2</sup> Cristi CIUPERCĂ, "Parchetul cere dizolvarea partidului legionarilor", *România liberă*, 22 July 2012.

taking. Enough, nevertheless, to provide justification for meritorious intellectuals of center-right political persuasion to lend their prestige by regularly contributing to such publications and thereby legitimize antisemitism and extremism. Even if yet "in the bud", one is reminded of Kovács's explicit warning that:

"If, in addition to the antisemites, other people who feel no personal antipathy toward Jews are inclined to use the vocabulary of this language for debating changes, conflicts, decisions, and existential issues, and if antisemitic arguments become, for such people, a considerable, though not necessarily acceptable, explanation of different events, then the various forms of anti-Jewish hostility can indeed constitute an explosive mix"<sup>1</sup>.

According to the daily *Curentul* of 6 February 2007, some 28 radical-right organizations were active in Romania under one guise or another, as well as 12 foundations and associations set up by supporters of the Iron Guard. The daily cited information reportedly included in the Romanian Intelligence Service's report for June 1998-June 1999. Several major themes dominate the political discourse of this category. First among them is Holocaust denial, followed by related conspiracy-theories in which Jews play either the single or the main part (in conjunction with other ethnic minorities) and the (also related) theme of the Jewish guilt for having created, nurtured and imposed communism on the world in general and on one's own country in particular.

There is very little hard data regarding attitudes vis-à-vis the renaissance of the Iron Guard. In a survey conducted by IRSOP between 7-14 December 1994, only 5% of respondents said they considered the "renewed appearance of the Legionary Movement" to be "a good thing", 75% replied that it was "a bad thing" and 20% said it "has no importance"<sup>2</sup> (the Legionary Movement was the original name of the organization at its set up in 1927). In the 2003 poll conducted by Gallup Romania the 30% of the sample's total (456 out of 1 500) who replied that political and other extremist organizations exist in Romania (20% said "no" and 50% that they did not know or did not answer), only 3% percent mentioned among them the Legionary Movement<sup>3</sup>. Finally, in the 2006 Romanian TV show on the "greatest Romanians", Legionary Movement founder Corneliu Zelea Codreanu placed twenty-second, far higher than such interwar democratic leaders such as Iuliu Maniu (32<sup>nd</sup>)<sup>4</sup>.

As for self-propelling antisemitism, parties that make up this category are the parties of "radical continuity"<sup>5</sup>. There are either personal or ideological links (or both) between these parties and the communist past. These formations exacerbate the implicit antisemitism inherited from the former regime and transform it into an explicit one. The transformation is not accidental but intentional. Antisemitism, for the members of this category, is instrumental, serving mobilization purposes. The purpose no longer is (as in the case of the nostalgics) to merely cleanse the past, but to prepare the future.

<sup>1</sup> András KOVÁCS, *The Stranger at Hand...cit.*, p. x.

<sup>2</sup> *Libertatea*, 23 December 1994. Poll based on a sample of 1 305 persons aged 18 and over randomly selected from 83 rural and urban settlements and weighted in line with National Statistics Institute data. Margin of error  $\pm 2.8\%$ .

<sup>3</sup> Institutul pentru Politici Publice, *Intoleranță, discriminare și autoritarism...cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> "Topul 'celor mai mari români'...cit."

<sup>5</sup> Michael SHAFIR, "Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues...cit."



The authoritarian legacy comes to play here an important role. The instrumentality of antisemitism consequently consists in providing potential electorates with "models" that rule out their political adversaries' alternative democratic constructs.

Like the nostalgic anti-Semites, self-propelling anti-Semites indulge in the "Judaization" of political adversaries, but unlike them the exercise is aimed at the effective rather than at the affective aspect of politics. The past is important for the self-propelling anti-Semites, but its importance derives from its instrumentality. In other words, self-propelling antisemitism needs the "generic Jew" and, unlike self-exculpatory antisemitism, cares in fact little about the "really existing" Jew. For self-propelling anti-Semites the "genetic Jew" must become a "generic Jew", for in a situation where the physical Jewish presence is extremely reduced, the mobilization force of antisemitism would otherwise suffer. It is in this sense that Zygmunt Bauman observes that in post-communist Poland the term "Jew" has started being applied to anything disagreeable and has lost its real-reference to the Jews as a separate ethno-religious group<sup>1</sup>. Yet it must be added that the generic sense has not, however, eliminated the genetic one, which continues to be instrumentalized regardless of its numerical and above all sociological insignificance

Self-propelling antisemites "propose" alternative models to democracy, though they are usually careful to do so implicitly rather than explicitly. With democracy being viewed as a foreign implant aimed at establishing world Jewish power, "patriotic" figures of the recent past are resurrected and their rehabilitation is pursued with tenacity. Marshal Ion Antonescu serves this purpose in Romania. The post-communist political party that best fits this category is the Greater Romania Party (PRM). That the generic Jew is instrumental for no other purpose than power-seeking was demonstrated in the PRM's case by the ease with which antisemitism was briefly abandoned shortly before the 2004 elections, when party chairman Corneliu Vadim Tudor's electoral campaign was managed by an Israeli spin doctor, and by its re-emergence as a central feature of party mass-appeal once that EU-eying recipe proved inefficient at the polls. I ought to add that this does not make Tudor and his party mere electoral anti-Semites. The party leader's hate of Jews can be documented well back into the communist era<sup>2</sup>.

Both nostalgic and self-propelling anti-Semites engage in self-victimization and in the externalization of guilt. They both seek to present either their own group or the Romanian nation as a whole as being the victim, rather than the perpetrator and to attribute whatever black spots may have existed to other internal and/or external forces. They share with nostalgic anti-Semites the generic Jew in the role of the internal enemy, sometime along other national minorities such as the Hungarians, just as they share with them Russia and revisionist Horthyate Hungary as one of the outlets for the externalization of guilt. Yet while some self-propelling nationalists such as Tudor occasionally distance themselves from the Iron Guard (though freely print its propaganda in the publications they disseminate, the daily *Tricolorul* and the weekly *România mare*), other self-propelling nationalists, such as historian Gheorghe

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Ilya PRIZEL, "Jedwabne: Will the Right Questions Be Asked?", *East European Politics and Societies*, no. 1, 2002, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> See Michael SHAFIR, "The Men of the Archangel Revisited: Anti-Semitic Formations among Communist Romania's Intellectuals", *Studies in Comparative Communism*, no. 3, 1983, pp. 223-243; IDEM, "From Eminescu to Goga via Corneliu Vadim Tudor: A New Round of Antisemitism in Romanian Cultural Life", *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, no. 3, 1984, pp. 3-14.

Buzatu, collaborate with the nostalgics in the Iron Guard cleansing operation. Where Buzatu would, however, stop, is at the point repeatedly emphasized by the nostalgics that they were victims of both Marshal Antonescu and the communist regime.

There is an important difference between nostalgic and self-propelling anti-Semites insofar as memory is concerned. The former are still engaged in a battle for their past's rehabilitation. Therefore they tend to restrict the debate, or at least to focus it, on the role played by their predecessors in Romanian history, rarely venturing to more general venues. Self-propelling anti-Semites, on the other hand, extend the battle to national dimensions. Whereas both categories engage in Holocaust denial, the latter tend to be paradoxically more emphatic than the former, as they perceive participation in the Holocaust as a national affront. While both categories claim that Romanian participation in the Holocaust is an invention of the "occult," self-propelling anti-Semites bring in the dimension of the present more often than nostalgic anti-Semites do. For them, accusations concerning Romania's participation in the genocide against the Jews are primarily aimed at enslaving Romanians through the cultivation of unwarranted guilt feelings and taking over local assets by way of no less unjustified compensation demands. Unlike nostalgic antisemites, who would often question the Holocaust in totality, self-propelling antisemites are "selective" Holocaust deniers (see *supra*). Former PRM vice-chairman Buzatu, who is also a former vice-chair of the Romanian Senate, is the most prominent representative of this trend.

The PRM was set up as a political party in May 1991 and first participated in elections in late September 1992, managing to garner a modest 3.89% (16 seats) in the vote cast for the Chamber of Deputies and 3.85 percent (six seats) of those for the upper house (the Senate). In 1996 its performance was not much better: 4.45% (19 seats) in the lower house and 4.54 percent (eight seats) in the upper chamber. Running as a presidential candidate the same year, Tudor scored an unimpressive 4.72%. The PRM's fortunes seemed to have taken off four years later. Not only did Tudor make it to a runoff with Ion Iliescu (which, however, he lost 33.17 vs. 66.83 percent), but his formation became the second largest force in the legislature, with 84 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 37 senators. About one in five Romanians (19.48% of the vote for the Chamber of Deputies, 21.01% of senatorial votes) had cast their ballot for the PRM. The scrutiny was above all an expression of the disaffection with the performance of the center-right (CDR) of Romania, which had won the 1996 elections. Tudor did his best to cast himself in the role of the "righteous" (*justițiar*) champion of the struggle against corruption, the PRM leader was able to capture for himself and his party that segment of the "fluctuating electorate" that had neither forgotten nor forgiven the social democrats for their own pre-1996 spoilage of the country's assets. He was also advantaged of the fact that the extreme nationalist Romanian Transylvanian no longer had an alternative after the disintegration (for all practical purposes) of the Party of Romanian National Unity<sup>1</sup>. In 2004 the party had lost considerably in support, garnering 13.63% of the vote for the Senate and 12.93% of that for the lower house; in the presidential elections that year Tudor no longer made it to the runoff, coming in third with support from only 12.57% of the voters. These represented the PRM's hard core of former regime *securitate* who (unlike many of their

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<sup>1</sup> Michael SHAFIR, "The Greater Romania Party and the 2000 Elections in Romania: How Obvious Is the Obvious?", *The Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2001, pp. 91-126.

peers) had not managed to join the ranks of the new managerial class, transition losers and poorly educated former officials who had owed their advantageous privileges to ideological criteria. The year 2004 might have marked the PRM's swan song as well. The party no longer made it to Parliament in 2008, while in the presidential elections of 2009 Tudor came in a poor fourth, being supported by just 5.56% of voters<sup>1</sup>. This was to a larger extent the result of a change in the electoral system that did away with proportional representation. Running jointly with "mercantile antisemite" George (Gigi) Becali in the 2009 elections for the European Parliament when a proportional system was again used, Tudor's list secured three seats on that body<sup>2</sup>.

This is somewhat ironical, since one of the reasons for the decline of popularity of the PRM is to be found precisely in its being (rightly) depicted by political adversaries as anti-European, extremist and xenophobic at a time when all polls were indicating strong support for joining the EU. Shortly after its set up, in a poll conducted by Câmpeanu's CISSS in 1995, Tudor was easily identified as an "extremist" leader by no less than 30% of the respondents, which was higher than even those identifying the PRM as "extremist". On second place, however, was the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), which again is ironical, as Tudor repeatedly (and wrongly) strived to depict this ethnic formation<sup>3</sup>. Another survey carried out by Metro Media Transilvania in 1998 found that the PRM (and the center-right Democratic Convention of Romania) were considered to be the most "patriotic", but at the same time Tudor's formation and the UDMR were viewed as being the most "extremist"<sup>4</sup>. The 2003 Gallup Romania poll mentioned above reconfirmed the PRM's perception as "extremist", with almost half (49%) of the 456 respondents who said in Romania there existed extremist party identifying the PRM as such; but again, the UDMR placed second (20 percent). Finally, respondents to the 2007 survey supervised by the INSHREW were asked whether in their opinion Romania had political "parties or formations that have an antisemitic message". Expectedly, more than half of the sample (56%) said they did not know. Only 16% gave an affirmative answer and 28% replied in the negative. The 167 respondents (out of 1026) who said such parties existed were then asked to identify them. Eighty-four percent named the PRM, six percent the UDMR, four percent the New Generation Party (PNG), six percent named other formations and 12 percent did not respond<sup>5</sup>. It might be then concluded that the extremist, xenophobic and antisemitic identity of the PRM was not an unknown factor, but neither was it an element that bothered the public at large. The decline of

<sup>1</sup> Results of 1992-2004 elections in Stan STOICA, *Dicționarul partidelor politice din România 1989-2004*, Editura Meronia, București, 2004, pp. 150-171. For the presidential elections of 2009 cf. Rezultate oficiale finale BEC: Alegeri prezidențiale 2009-Turul I, <http://www.tashy.ro/rezultate-oficiale-finale-bec-alegeri-prezidentiale-2009---turul-i/>, accessed on November 25, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> "Rezultate oficiale euroalegeri 2009: PSD+PC - 11 mandate, PD-L-10, PNL-5, UDMR-3, PRM-3, EBA-1", *EurActiv.ro*, [http://www.euractiv.ro/uniunea-europeana/articles|displayArticle|articleID\\_17441/Rezultate-oficiale-euroalegeri-2009-PSD+PC-11-mandate-PD-L-10-PNL-5-UDMR-3-PRM-3-EBA-1.html](http://www.euractiv.ro/uniunea-europeana/articles|displayArticle|articleID_17441/Rezultate-oficiale-euroalegeri-2009-PSD+PC-11-mandate-PD-L-10-PNL-5-UDMR-3-PRM-3-EBA-1.html), accessed on June 10, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Pavel CÂMPEANU, "Extremismul în trei viziuni", *Revista 22*, no. 45, 8-14 November 1995. The poll was based on a sample of 1 134 respondents aged 18 and above from 64 rural and urban localities and the Bucharest Municipality. No margin of error specified.

<sup>4</sup> Mediafax, 26 November 1998. No details available on the poll's structure.

<sup>5</sup> Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel", *Sondaj de opinie*, cit., p. 17.

the party is not to be attributed to these factors, but rather to the anxiety that Romania might end isolated in Europe.

But what is the PNG? The leader of the PNG, Becali, is a good example of what might be called an "instinctive" neo-populist politician seeking to gain power from below by whatever possible means. His model appears to be former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Like Berlusconi, he is a highly successful businessman and Romania's second-richest man, with an estimated fortune of \$2.8–3.0 billion, according to the Bucharest daily *Ziua* of 27 November 2007. Like the Italian, he owns the country's most popular soccer team – in Becali's case, Steaua Bucharest. Unlike Berlusconi, however, Becali lacks any formal education, and, again, unlike him, he is on record occasionally uttering anti-Semitic statements.

Born in June 1958, Becali decided to enter politics in 2003. He did so by becoming president of a phantom party, established in January 2000 by former Bucharest Mayor Viorel Lis, who had resigned from the PNG after failing to gain representation on the Bucharest Municipal City Council. Becali simply bought the party from Lis, thereby sparing himself the trouble of registering a new political formation. Hence his barely concealed conviction that whatever he lacks in education or political experience can be bought for cash. And he may be right. Becali displays in his frequent television appearances a primitive vocabulary, all too often full of invectives directed at his critics, which would normally turn him into what the Germans call "*salonunfähig*". But Romania is no Germany. Considered by many TV moderators to be an audience-attracting clown, Becali in early 2007 was for some time one of the most interviewed political personalities, which undoubtedly contributed to his seemingly unstoppable climb in opinion polls.

Professing to be a devout Christian, Becali engages in incontestable charities, claiming he has been picked by God to become rich in order to help the poor and save Romania from its current travails. In 2005, for example, he financed the construction of homes for those affected by floods and promptly showed up in a Bucharest slum in 2006 paying the electricity bill of residents who were threatening to turn the town into rubble after their supply had been cut off. Becali seemed to pick up the vote of the disoriented and the disillusioned, whose numbers run into hundreds of thousands. While in the 2004 elections he barely received 1.77% of the vote and the PNG received 2.36%, failing to gain parliamentary representation<sup>1</sup>, by 2007 polls showed him to be the country's second most popular politician and his party third in party preferences. This turnaround occurred against the background of the mutual annihilation of Romania's parliamentary parties and the deadlock in the confrontation between them and President Traian Băsescu. Yet the PNG did not make it to Parliament in the elections of 2008, and running for president in 2009 Becali scored a poor 1.85%<sup>2</sup>.

Alongside the Army, the Romanian Orthodox Church has been consistently shown in public opinion polls to be the country's most popular institution. Back in

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<sup>1</sup> Mediafax, 1 December 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Cristian PĂTRĂȘCONIU, "Ce mai poate impune 'dictatorul' Băsescu?", *Cotidianul*, 2 April 2007, [http://www.cotidianul.ro/editorial\\_ce\\_mai\\_poate\\_impune\\_dictatorul\\_basescu-24211.htm](http://www.cotidianul.ro/editorial_ce_mai_poate_impune_dictatorul_basescu-24211.htm), accessed April 2, 2007; Răzvan Mihai VINTILESCU, "Cucul Tăriceanu", *Cotidianul*, 2 April 2007, [http://www.cotidianul.ro/cucul\\_tariceanu-24207.html](http://www.cotidianul.ro/cucul_tariceanu-24207.html), accessed on April 2, 2007; "Rezultate alegeri: Băsescu și Geoană merg în turul doi", *Ziare.com*, <http://www.ziare.com/basescu/stiri-traian-basescu/rezultate-alegeri-basescu-si-geoana-merg-in-turul-doi-scorul-este-foarte-strans-video-955752>, accessed on November 23, 2009.

2004, Becali, who is also the most generous magnate financing the construction of Romanian Orthodox churches, said he was ready to help any religious organization except the Jews; the latter allegedly had successfully infiltrated Romanian politics and did not need his help<sup>1</sup>. On several occasions, Becali has awarded prizes to high-school pupils in contests for reciting prayers. By 2007, ahead of a cancelled visit to Israel, he was denying any discrimination, claiming he was ready to engage in charity for Jews in Romania and Israel as well. Like many other of his country's politicians, he had become convinced in the meantime that Jews could do and undo everything anywhere – including the Romanian presidential elections. He also denied on that occasion any trace of antisemitism, claiming that it would run against his devout Christian beliefs to hate Jews<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, apparently aiming at gaining some votes from Jews of Romanian origin in Israel ahead of the November 2007 elections for the European Parliament, PNG Secretary General Cătălin Dâncu, made a great effort in an interview with a Romanian-language Israeli daily to deny any links between Becali and Iron-Guard sympathizers<sup>3</sup>.

Yet back in 2004, Becali had called on the OTV private television for the canonization of Iron Guard "Captain" Codreanu<sup>4</sup> and on 28 August 2004 he said on television that "the Legionary Movement has been the most beautiful movement in this country [incorporating] the country's entire elite, [such as] priests, university professors and students"<sup>5</sup>. On 25 May 2008, in an interview with the German daily *Der Tagesspiegel*, the PNG leader acknowledged that his father had been an Iron Guardist, and he would "always be my model". I would "never deny my origins", he emphasized. Still, "the Legionnaires were no extremist, but a religious movement", he said. When journalist Keno Verseck reminded him of the Iron Guardist anti-Jewish pogroms, Becali countered:

"Where did you fish that story? The Romanians are not a people who commit crimes. Do you know why? Look around, in neighboring countries, in the whole Eastern world. Romania is the bravest and the quietest of them all. There is no crime and no mafia here. We are not a people of criminals. When I watch those movies with the Jews, I cannot believe that Romanians, my people, did such things. Never! The Romanians are simply not capable of that. This is why I do not believe that a Holocaust has ever taken place in Romania"<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Michael SHAFIR, "Profile: Gigi Becali", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 13 December 2004, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1056373.html>, accessed on December 13, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Al. NICHITA, „Ziua premiată la Tel Aviv”, *Ziua*, 2 May 2007, <http://www.ziua.net/display.php?data=2007-05-02&id=219913>, accessed on May 2, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> "La ora actuală nu există în partidul lui George Becali nici un fel de persoană care să poată să mai reprezinte un pericol pentru relația cu Israelul și cu israelieni de origine română. Prima parte a interviului cu av. Cătălin Dâncu, secretar general al formațiunii politice românești Partidul Noua Generație-Creștin Democrat și candidat pentru postul de deputat europarlamentar". Interviu realizat de Nando Mario Varga, *Viața noastră* (Tel Aviv), 16 November 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Michael SHAFIR, "Profile: Gigi Becali", cit.

<sup>5</sup> Radu Călin CRISTEA, "Trei personaje în căutarea altei povești", *Ziua*, 12 November 2004, <http://www.ziua.net/display.php?data=2004-11-12&id=162281&keyword=Becali>, accessed on November 12, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Keno VERSECK, "Gigi Becali: Die Scafe haben mich stark gemacht", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 25 May 2008, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/zeitung/Sonntag;art2566,2536698>, accessed on May 25 2008.

Having hired political scientist Dan Pavel as a consultant in March 2003, Becali began employing the political discourse of the interwar fascist Iron Guard. Pavel, who used to be a specialist in, and a prominent opponent to, Iron Guard renaissance, never addressed this issue. He simply confessed that as Becali's consultant he would make more money than he would have made in 10 years as a university professor. Becali first came out with the slogan "Everything for the Country" (as mentioned above, at one point this was the Iron Guards' name of their political party), then he promised to "make Romania into a country like the holy sun in the sky". The words were taken almost literally from a famous Iron Guardist song and were based on a letter addressed by "martyr" Ion Moța to fascist leader Codreanu shortly before Moța died fighting on Franco's side in Spain in 1937. After the 2004 elections, Pavel cut his ties with Becali, claiming the PNG was becoming a "fascist party", having co-opted several members of the New Right Group, apparently at the suggestion of Ion Coja. Coja is a leading figure in both Holocaust denial and attempts to rehabilitate the Iron Guard. In my earlier work, I depicted him as the emblematic figure of "vengeance antisemitism".

When the list of PNG candidates for the 2007 European Parliament elections was released, it included "historian" Alex Mihai Stoenescu and former PRM parliamentary deputy Vlad Hogeia. Both are notorious anti-Semites and Holocaust deniers and/or trivializers with Hogeia being also on record for racist positions targeting the Roma. In a collection of articles published in 2001, he was praising an infamous Nazi ideologist, exclaiming:

"[The] time has come for the nations to liberate themselves from the chains of Jewish slavery, lest it be too late! How right was Julius Streicher (tortured and killed by the Occult for his courage): 'He who fights against the Jews, fights against the devil!'"

Incitement on deicidal grounds was not missing from the volume either:

"Many ask themselves why the heads of the Judaic Occult are so revengeful and so acquisitive. The key of the problem is likely to be found in the killing of the Redeemer by the Jews. Unable to liberate themselves from the sin lying heavy on their shoulders for 2000 years, *the Jewish-Khazar anti-Christ*s have been trying to break their spiritual inferiority complex by fully animalizing their affective experiences"<sup>1</sup>.

Finally, Hogeia cited approvingly crowds shouting anti-Roma slogans at soccer games and calling for wartime dictator Ion Antonescu to take care of "a million crows" in his old proven way<sup>2</sup>.

In a multi-volume book entitled *Istoria loviturilor de stat în România*, Stoenescu tells his readers that at its starting days, the Legionary Movement was by no means antisemitic. "Captain" Corneliu Zelea Codreanu "was not born as an anti-Semite, but as an anti-communist leader". It became so, however, when it realized that the many Jews who at that time attended Romanian universities were leftists and thus carriers of

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<sup>1</sup> Vlad HOGEIA, *Naționalistul*, Editura Crater, Iași, 2002, p. 44. Author's emphasis.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

the Bolshevik threat<sup>1</sup>. Even so, Stoenescu claims, it is wrong to describe the Movement as Right wing just because of its antisemitism, and it is particularly wrong for Jews to do that, because "once you explain the position of the Legionary Movement as Right wing, by implication you find yourself in the position of having stated that the Jews were Left wing, thus provoking a Right-wing antisemitic reaction"<sup>2</sup>. For Stoenescu, whatever Jews do is unavoidably wrong. Those who worked in the media are "the first who should be held responsible for the instauration of hatred between Romanians and Jews". They had for years claimed they were fighting for political, rather than racial rights, but when their political adversaries, dressed up in Iron Guard uniforms and carrying pistols, set up to hunt them, they started shouting that they were Jews and the reason for their persecution was antisemitism, not anti-communism, he writes. Whereas in the past they had distanced themselves from their rabbis, they became Jews again overnight. Many of them later took refuge in the Soviet Union, "only to return riding its tanks as victors"<sup>3</sup>.

In any case, there had been no reason for them to seek refuge. The Legionary "Death Squads", according to Stoenescu, "were not set up as groups of assassins, organized to eliminate political adversaries". Only communist propaganda portrayed them so. They had been set up "on the principle of self-sacrifice, being formed by legionnaires willing to risk their life; hence their uninspired name". These were people ready to die, "not to bring death on others. This is a fundamental distinction". The Legion, Stoenescu tells his readers, has been persecuted by all regimes and its image distorted by all alike. That persecution "continues even today, in 2002"<sup>4</sup>.

In December 2012, Becali ran in the parliamentary elections as a candidate of the PNL, a formation allied for that scrutiny with the Socialist Party. He won a seat in Bucharest by a huge majority. Becali thus managed to turn that center-left alliance into one that can be now viewed as belonging to the "utilitarian antisemitic" category. "Utilitarian antisemitism" refers to the occasional exploitation of antisemitic prejudice for the needs of the hour by politicians who, by and large, are probably not antisemitic. Utilitarian antisemitism is by no means a distinguishing feature of the post-communist world. It is no less spread in Western countries. It is not as much what utilitarian antisemites say that counts, as is what they *refrain* from saying. In other words, the political discourse of utilitarian antisemites is implicit rather than explicit. It is also quite often a coded discourse, never going all the way of the self-exculpatory nostalgics or the self-propelling antisemites, but "signaling" to those able to encode the discourse its unmistakable intention. Failure to distance oneself from antisemitic views in the hope of enlisting the support of those who are obviously prejudiced, or even forging political alliances with them, can be just as telling as is embracing their view openly. That such political alliances are shortsighted and, more often than not, turn against the utilitarian antisemites themselves, is altogether another matter. But it is one that brings to fore the singularly present orientation of utilitarian antisemites, who seem to believe that what counts is only what serves the need of the hour, and that the future can always be dealt with starting from scratch.

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<sup>1</sup> Alex Mihai STOENESCU, *Istoria loviturilor de stat din România*, vol. 2, RAO International Publishing Company, București, 2002, pp. 415-416.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 422.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 423-424.

<sup>4</sup> IDEM, *Istoria loviturilor de stat din România*, vol. 3, RAO International Publishing Company, București, 2002, p. 142.

It is therefore not surprising to find the political discourse of utilitarian antisemites to be self-contradictory in a longer time perspective.

Utilitarian antisemitism is to be found at both the Left and the Right ends of the "mainstream" post-communist political spectrum. This is not a surprise either, since neither the Left nor the Right ends of that spectrum are oblivious to the dangers of being painted by more extremist political adversaries as lacking roots in the country's past or culture. Utilitarian memory fine-tunes itself to that of the exculpatory nostalgics and particularly to that of the self-propelling antisemites for being potential political allies. Former Romania President Ion Iliescu is such a utilitarian politician. During his 1992-1996 mandate, Iliescu was ready to forge an informal, and later even a formal coalition with the radical continuity formations of the PRM, PUNR, and Socialist Labor Party, all of which displayed antisemitism, though the PUNR combined that feature with a pronounced anti-Hungarianism and the PSM added to both a more open endorsement of Leftist postures. That coalition was not void of tension, Iliescu being among other things reproached with having allegedly acquiesced in Romania's "culpabilization" for the Holocaust when he visited the Choral Temple in Bucharest in 1993, and (later) on the occasion of a visit paid at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington. Running again for the office, which he temporarily lost to President Emil Constantinescu in 1996, on 12 October 2000, in an interview with the daily *Adevărul*, Iliescu was keen to point to the electorate that he had valiantly defended Romania's historical record. His detractors, he said, had blown out of any proportion the fact that he had covered his head in a gesture of politeness towards his hosts, but no one had remarked the difference between himself and Polish President Lech Walesa. Unlike Walesa, when visiting the Israeli Knesset he had refrained from apologizing for his countrymen's participation in the Holocaust, the former and future president was keen to stress. The issue, he said, was one that still required elucidation by historians. Unlike Iliescu, during his term of office Constantinescu had acknowledged Romanian responsibility for the "genocide" perpetrated against Jews, even if at the same time insisting on his country's refusal to deliver its Jews to Hitler<sup>1</sup>.

In a speech at the Choral Temple in Bucharest marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Iron Guard pogrom in Bucharest on 21 January 2001, Iliescu, now re-elected president, said the Iron Guardist "aberration" had been a "delirium of intolerance and antisemitism". Yet, he added, except for that brief "delirium", there had been no Romanian contribution to "the long European history" of persecution of the Jews, and it was "significant" that there was "no Romanian word for pogrom". Furthermore, he hastened to add, it was "unjustified to attribute to Romania an artificially inflated number of Jewish victims for the sake of media impact". Romania's distorted image, according to Iliescu, was likely to be corrected when "Romanian [read rather than Jewish] historians will tackle the subject"<sup>2</sup>.

The setting-up of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania has its own peculiar saga. It followed an Iliescu blunder in an interview with a journalist from the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* published on 25 July 2003. Engaging in Holocaust trivialization, the former president told the interviewer that "[T]he Holocaust was not unique to the Jewish population in Europe. Many others, including Poles, died in the same way". But only Jews and Roma, the interviewer observed in reaction, had been

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<sup>1</sup> *Realitatea evreiască*, 16 April-15 May 1997.

<sup>2</sup> *RFE/RL Newslines*, 22 January 2001.



"targeted for genocide" at that time. To which Iliescu responded: "I know. But there were others, who were labeled communists, and they were similarly victimized. My father was a communist activist and he was sent to a camp. He died at the age of 44, less than a year after he returned". Although Iliescu admitted that massacres of Jews had been perpetrated on Romania's territory proper, and observed that "the leaders of that time are responsible for those event", he insisted that

"[i]t is impossible to accuse the Romanian people and the Romanian society of this. When Germany declared [sic!] the Final Solution – a decision that was obeyed by other countries, including Hungary, Antonescu no longer supported that policy. On the contrary, he took steps to protect the Jews. That, too, is historical truth".

He also went on to observe:

"Antonescu also had his positive side. In 1944, when Hungary under Horthy was implementing the Final Solution and transported its Jews, including residents of northern Transylvania, which was then under Hungarian rule, to death camps, Antonescu was no longer doing that".

In an attempt to hush the international scandal created by the interview, the president proposed the setting up of what became known as the Elie Wiesel commission, after the name of its chairman.

He was not the last social democrat to have to swallow his words on the Holocaust. On 30 March 2012, young PSD Senator Dan Şova, appearing on the private TV Money Channel, said no Jew has suffered "on Romania's territory" and this was Antonescu's merit. As source, he quoted a book by Jewish journalist Teşu Solomovici, who likes to pose as historian. He was sanctioned by the new leader of his party, Victor Ponta, who suspended him from the position of SPD spokesperson and sent him off to Washington D.C., to document himself at the United States Holocaust Museum. But sanctions stopped there and upon return Şova retook his previous function, after having expressed regrets for his earlier pronouncements. Meanwhile, two NGOs, the Center for Monitoring and Combatting Antisemitism and the Roma association Romani Criss launched an official penal complaint against Şova. Like most such complaints, the Romanian justice system shelved it<sup>1</sup>.

At this point it is necessary to emphasize that such perceptions of Antonescu's role are not widespread in Romania, indeed they cross party lines. At the initiative of historian and National Salvation Front (FSN) – the predecessor of the PSD – parliamentary deputy Petre Ţurlea in 1991, on the eve of the 45th anniversary marking Antonescu's June 1946 execution, Parliament raised in a minute of silence tribute to his memory<sup>2</sup>. The Front was the first name of what today is known as the Social Democratic Party (PSD). Screen director Sergiu Nicolaescu, who directed the movie

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbmakPZ-Xeo>, accessed on March 8, 2012; "Plângere penală împotriva lui Dan Şova privind afirmațiile despre Holocaustă", *HotNews.ro*, <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-11689683-plangere-penala-impotriva-lui-dan-sova-privind-afirmatiile-despre-holocaust.htm>, accessed on March 7, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> *Monitorul Oficial al României*, 31 May 1991.

on Antonescu mentioned above, belonged to the same political camp. But things were not much different at the other side of Romania's post-communist political spectrum. If in 1991 it was the then-ruling FSN that initiated the tribute paid by Parliament to Antonescu's memory, eight years later, under the ruling of a coalition formed by the CDR it was the turn of National Peasant Party Christian Democratic (PNȚCD) Senator Ion Moisin to (unsuccessfully) propose that the upper house approve a resolution describing Antonescu as "a great Romanian patriot, who fought for his country till his death". Presenting the resolution (also backed by Nicolaescu in a rare display of consensual political non-partisanship in the Romanian legislature), Moisin denied Antonescu bore any responsibility for the Holocaust, claiming that "on the contrary, he saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews, refusing to carry out Adolf Hitler's order to send them to Germany [sic!]"<sup>1</sup>. As early as 1990, Moisin's fellow PNȚCD senator, Valentin Gabrielescu told Romanian-born German journalist William Totok that the marshal had been one of Romania's "great statesmen". Under Antonescu, he said, Romanian Jews had suffered "considerably less than in Hungary or Poland" and historic accounts claiming otherwise were nothing but "fairy tales". In fact, Jews had been privileged when compared to the Romanian majority, for while "Romanian soldiers were fighting on the Volga, the Jews stayed home and were only obliged to clean the capital's streets of snow"<sup>2</sup>.

The National Liberal Party (PNL), which alongside the PNȚCD initially belonged to the CDR, has a particularly long post-1989 record in support of Antonescu's rehabilitation drive. One of the most emphatic spokesmen for this cause among parliamentarians representing the party, was Dan Amedeo Lăzărescu, who also claimed to be a historian. In 2001, shortly before his death, Lăzărescu was revealed to have been a *securitate* informant, most likely recruited while in prison. In the first (1990-1992) legislature he spoke in Parliament several times in praise of Antonescu and seemed to have never changed his mind. By 1997, in an article published in *România liberă's* weekly supplement *Aldine*, Lăzărescu was writing that the Romanian people

"cannot comprehend the absurd pretensions of some [Jewish or Jewish-supporting] circles over the ocean to except [Antonescu and his cabinet ministers] from the noble principle of rehabilitation and restitution of property confiscated by a regime eager to liquidate by all means Romania's political, military, and social elites".

*Aldine* and the would-be "democratic" and pro-Western daily *România liberă* would often carry such views. The first chairman of the PNL, Radu Câmpeanu, became one of the first supporters of depicting the Holocaust in "deflective" terms. In 1991 he told Totok that Romania cannot be accused of having participated in the Holocaust, as during the war the country had been for all practical purposes under German occupation. Antonescu himself, according to the then PNL leader, had been "a great Romanian" and among Germany's allies Romania had produced the smallest number of victims – some 60 000 "at most". It was only to Hungary-occupied northern Transylvania that one can apply the term "Holocaust", Câmpeanu claimed.

<sup>1</sup> Mediafax, 14 June 1999.

<sup>2</sup> William TOTOK, "Rumänien wird zur Hochburg der Antisemiten", *Die Tageszeitung*, 27 October 1998.

Antonescu had tried to defend Romania's Jews and was "as successful as possible under the prevailing circumstances", he said<sup>1</sup>.

There are many aspects to "reactive antisemitism," but the most recent ones refer to what has been called "the competition of the victims" or "competitive martyrology" between the Holocaust and the Gulag<sup>2</sup>. To avoid any misunderstanding, let me clearly state that "reactive antisemites" would be surprised to observe that anyone can consider them as having an anti-Jewish prejudice. Addressing the issue of competitive martyrology in a more general analytical framework, Dan Stone rightly titles it a "memory war"<sup>3</sup>. Rather than dealing with history, one deals in this case with what Pierre Nora in 1989 termed as a dispute among "counter memories"<sup>4</sup>. While not necessarily explicit antisemitic, partisans of this *symmetric* or *double genocide* approach often imply that Jews indulge in "monopolizing sufferance", mostly in order to conceal their participation in and responsibility for their country's sufferance under communist rule. Romania is by no means a singular case in this category, but as Tables 7 and 7a show, the impact of such contentions cannot be overlooked either.

One of the unplanned and unforeseen effects of the demise of communism, Stone remarks, has been (in both East and West) the disappearance of the imposed or assumed consensus that the extreme right had been a political plague. With the publication in France of the *Black Book of Communism* and its explicit claim that the communist regime made more victims than Nazism or fascism ever did, revisionist historians like Ernst Nolte seemed to be vindicated that the European "civil war" had been one of defense.

This breaking down of the postwar consensus can also be seen at work in the rhetoric of the "double genocide" that informs a wave of new museums in post-communist Eastern Europe. In Budapest's Terror House<sup>5</sup>, in Tallinn and Riga's Occupation Museums, and in Vilnius's Museum of the Victims of Genocide, the memories of Nazism and communism are placed in competition with each other, and anti-fascism is only employed insofar as it does not impinge on the anti-communist narrative... Indeed, [historian István] Rév goes as far as to argue that the Terror House, with its overwhelming focus on the communist period, is not meant as a space of memory at all, but is "a total propaganda space, where death and victims are used as rhetorical devices"<sup>6</sup>.

There has been an obvious attempt in Romania from the part of the remnants of the Iron Guard and their young followers to monopolize anti-communist resistance.

<sup>1</sup> Interview registered on 2 November 1990. Fragments were broadcast on RIAS-Berlin on 5 February 1991. I am grateful to Totok for this information.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Michel CHAUMONT, *La Concurrence des victimes: génocide, identité, reconnaissance*, Éditions la Découverte, Paris, 1997; Alan S. ROSENBAUM, "Introduction to First Edition," in IDEM, *Is the Holocaust Unique?: Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, second edition, Westview, Boulder, CO, 2001, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Dan STONE, "Memory Wars in the 'New Europe'", in IDEM (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, pp. 714-731.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre NORA, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations*, no. 26, Spring 1989, pp. 13-25.

<sup>5</sup> For my own views on the Terror House see Michael SHAFIR, "The Politics of Public Space and the Legacy of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Hungary", *Zeitgeschichte-online*, June 2004, [http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/Portals/\\_Rainbow/documents/pdf/asm\\_oeu/shafir\\_asm.pdf](http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/Portals/_Rainbow/documents/pdf/asm_oeu/shafir_asm.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Dan STONE, "Memory Wars...cit.", p. 723.

When the Sighet Memorial Museum for the Victims of Communism and of Resistance was opened in 1993, veterans of the Guard attempted to take over the event, triggering the public protest of prominent anti-communist dissident Doina Cornea<sup>1</sup>. The memorial itself helped them, for it made no distinction between the democratic leaders imprisoned at Sighet (a prison for political prisoners that functioned between May 1950 and June 1955 as an extermination center for the country's political, religious, economic and administrative elites, being then transformed into a common prison<sup>2</sup>) and Iron Guardists jailed there. In the last years, that drive has intensified within the process of the condemnation of communism. There have been demands for the canonization of the "prison's saints", many of whom were members or sympathizers of the legion<sup>3</sup>. In one such instance, they posted on the Internet the celebration of Father Iustin Pârveu's 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday, where nuns sang the Iron Guard's anthem, "Holy Legionary Youth" and other Iron Guard songs<sup>4</sup>. That anthem is often intoned at ceremonies organized by the supporters of the Guard at different commemorations<sup>5</sup> and Pârveu attended some of them personally in the past. And so did prominent negationist Coja<sup>6</sup> or Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's grandson, Florea Nicador Codreanu. At one of these ceremonies, Florea Nicador Codreanu said the "Captain's" assassination at the order of King Carol II had taken place "at the orders of international Jewry" and that Romania was facing a new invasion by the same Jewry, with 600 000 Jews having allegedly taken up Romanian citizenship<sup>7</sup>. According to Coja, a secret plan approved by the Romanian government has as target granting citizenship to one million Jews<sup>8</sup>. Although these gatherings are obviously an infringement on Law prohibiting the display of fascist symbols, the Prosecutor General's Office has never heeded complaints.

More significant (that is to say with larger impact) is the fact that the struggle against communism takes primacy over the alleged "detail" that some of its champions were notorious Iron Guardists, who, like Antonescu and for much of the same reason, are transformed into national heroes. Not long after the death of Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu (to whose funerals former Premier and PNL leader Călin Popescu Tăriceanu sent a

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<sup>1</sup> Michael SHAFIR, "O tragicomedie în desfășurare?", in *Radio-grafii și alte fobii*, Institutul European, Iași, 2010, p. 132, reproducing the article under the same title first published in *Sfera politicii*, no. 61, July-August 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Gabriela CRISTEA, Simina RADU-BUCURENCI, "Raising the Cross: Exorcising Romania's Communist Past in Museums, Memorials and Monuments", in Oksana SARKISOVA, Péter APOR (eds.), *Past for the Eyes. East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989*, Central European University Press, Budapest and New York, 2008, p. 298.

<sup>3</sup> For the communist and post-communist careers of such figures, among whom were Patriarch Teoctist, Metropolitan Bishop Valeriu Anania and others see Lavinia STAN, Lucian TURCESCU, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, pp. 71-73, 204-205 and *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPjkEtCzp-Y>, accessed on February 20, 2011

<sup>5</sup> For instance, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0mErVyn5qw&feature=related>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbHXGBeNj6Q&feature=related>, accessed on September 15, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJAq2WBqq5Q&feature=related>, accessed on December 8, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyHAX16094E&NR=1>, accessed on November 29, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ioncoja.ro/la-zi/nu-nici-vorba/>, accessed on April 21, 2011.

wreath<sup>1</sup>), young screen director Constantin Popescu produced the feature film *Portrait of the fighter as a young man*. Based on Ogoranu's life story, the film (which won a distinction at a Berlin festival) never mentioned his affiliation to the Iron Guard, to whom he had remained faithful to his last breath. Indeed, Ogoranu's coffin was draped in the Guard's standard at his funerals and he was given the last salute with a raised hand-fascist style. None of these "details" found their way in Popescu's heroic depiction<sup>2</sup>. Nor was that the first such instance. A highly popular series repeatedly shown on national and private TV channels titled *Memorial to Suffering* produced by Lucia Hossu-Longin and later released on the market on video and book format<sup>3</sup> never mentioned the past of the frequently-depicted Iron Guardists, but as French political scientist Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine shows, time and again insisted on the "genocidal" aspects of communist rule<sup>4</sup>. The report issued by the presidential commission headed by American political scientist Vladimir Tismăneanu (one that claimed to be the penchant to that issued by the Elie Wiesel commission) did precisely the same, making no distinction whatever among extreme-right "victims" imprisoned or liquidated under communist rule and the other victims, and ignoring Ogoranu's legionary past<sup>5</sup>. In a chapter produced by the Association of Former Political Prisoners in Romania, the commission improperly used the concept of "genocide" in reference to the crimes against humanity of the former regime, precisely in order to place communist rule on the same foot<sup>6</sup> with the Holocaust, and inflated the number of victims (estimated at two million), which triggered the overt distance taking by two of its members (Andrei Pippidi and Dorin Dobrinu)<sup>7</sup>. In brief, the "symmetric" approach loomed large in the report, even if it was never used in the document.

By far the most influential figure among these "reactive antisemites" was commission member Monica Lovinescu, though by then she was too ill to actively

<sup>1</sup> "Lacrimi la căpătâiul liderului partizanilor din Munții Făgăraș. Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu s-a frânt, dar nu s-a îndoit", *România liberă*, 5 May 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. <http://www.iedb.net/movie/portrait-of-the-fighter-as-a-young-man>, accessed on November 29, 2011; Roxana LUPU „Povestea cutremurătoare a luptătorului Ogoranu”, *Adevărul*, 28 November 2010; Mihai FULGER, "Bienala românilor", *Observator cultural*, 15 February 2010, [http://www.observatorcultural.ro/FILM.-Berlinala-romanilor\\*articleID\\_23256-articles\\_details.html](http://www.observatorcultural.ro/FILM.-Berlinala-romanilor*articleID_23256-articles_details.html), accessed on February 15, 2010 and "Tablou de grup cu partinici și partizani", *Observator cultural*, no.552, 26 November 2010, [http://www.observatorcultural.ro/FILM.-Tablou-de-grup-cu-partinici-si-partizani\\*articleID\\_24617-articles\\_details.html](http://www.observatorcultural.ro/FILM.-Tablou-de-grup-cu-partinici-si-partizani*articleID_24617-articles_details.html), accessed on November 26, 2010; Liviu ORNEA, "La început de an: tristeți, dezamăgiri, decepții", *Observator cultural*, no. 559, 21 January 2001, [http://www.observatorcultural.ro/BIFURCATII.-La-inceput-de-an-tristetii-dezamagiri-deceptii\\*articleID\\_24811-articles\\_details.html](http://www.observatorcultural.ro/BIFURCATII.-La-inceput-de-an-tristetii-dezamagiri-deceptii*articleID_24811-articles_details.html), accessed on January 21, 2001; William TOTOK, "Istorie unilaterală?", Radio France Internationale (in Romanian), <http://mobil.rfi.ro/articol/stiri/cultura/istorie-unilaterală>, accessed on March 10, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Lucia HOSSU-LONGIN, *Memorialul durerii. O istorie care nu se învață la școală*, Humanitas, București, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Alexandra LAIGNEL-LAVASTINE, "Fascism and Communism in Romania", in Henry ROUSSO (ed.), *Stalinism and Nazism. History and Memory Compared*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 2004, p. 343.

<sup>5</sup> Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, *Raport final*, eds. Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrinu, Cristian Vasile, Humanitas, București, 2007, pp. 676-677.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 461-462

<sup>7</sup> See note 4, p. 463.

participate in the report's making. In March 1992, Lovinescu was raising objections to the publication by exiled Romania Jewish writer Norman Manea in *The New Republic* of a tract on the fascist past of the internationally famed historian of religion Mircea Eliade, a personal friend<sup>1</sup>. After the fall of communism, Eliade had been turned in Romania into practically an intellectual national idol. Enjoying tremendous prestige and influence in Romania, Lovinescu – daughter of Romania's most influential liberal-minded and Western-oriented literary critic Eugen Lovinescu – had been encouraging intellectual resistance to the communist regime from the microphone of Radio Free Europe between 1964 and 1992, when the then Munich-based station liquidated its Paris bureau. When the regime was indulging into its aberrant promotion of "National Communism", Monica Lovinescu had been its most eloquent opponent in the West. She often denounced the echoes of Legionary ideology in the regime's propaganda, indeed came out in defense of Manea himself. But once the specter that had united all opponents of the Ceaușescu regime had vanished, Lovinescu (whose mother had perished in communist prisons), was at the head of those moved by the drive to have communist perpetrators subjected to a Nürnberg-like "Trial of Communism". Reading Manea, she said, "one wonders if one is not the victim of a hallucination". Was the Iron Guard at the helm for just a few months, or vice versa? Was it communist supporters who were imprisoned by Antonescu and left prison only in 1964, or were these Legionnaires? Was one dreaming in 1989 that Europe had rid itself of "communist terror" while in fact it had just emerged from a "fascist terror?"<sup>2</sup>. In the preface to a book amassing her articles published in the Writers' Union weekly *România literară* between February 1996 and November 2001, Lovinescu went one step further, depicting a conspiracy aimed at deflecting attention from the communist criminal past:

"Is it still necessary to ask myself whether the resurgence of the anti-fascist obsession is not aimed at camouflaging the real crimes of communism and hiding its perpetrators? A rhetorical question, whose answer is inevitably assertive. Right-wing negationism is succeeded by left-wing negationism, and the latter is ampler than the former"<sup>3</sup>.

That torch was passed on after her death in 2008 to philosopher and essayist Gabriel Liiceanu, the unofficial leader of the intellectually influential Group for Social Dialogue and the no less influential director of the Humanitas publishing house. I have elsewhere dealt with Liiceanu's attempt of 1997 to place the equality symbol between the Holocaust and the Gulag and suggest that Jews made themselves collectively guilty of Romania's communization<sup>4</sup>. That was by no means a one-time incident and despite criticism, the philosopher never gave up on it. On the contrary, it became a sort of obsession with him. In an apparent attempt to justify the 1997 incident, he was noting in a sort of diary published five years later:

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<sup>1</sup> Norman MANEA, "Felix Culpa", *The New Republic*, 5 August 1991. For further details see my "The Man They Love to Hate: Norman Manea's 'Snail House' Between Holocaust and Gulag", *East European Jewish Affairs*, no. 1, 2000, pp. 60-81.

<sup>2</sup> Monica LOVINESCU, "Câteva confuzii", *Revista 22*, no.10, 13-19 March 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Monica LOVINESCU, *Diagonale*, Humanitas, București, 2002, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> "The Man They Love to Hate...cit.", pp. 74-75. See also Alexandra LAIGNEL-LAVASTINE, "Fascism and Communism...cit.", pp. 178-179.

"Is it so difficult to grasp that one must first settle accounts *with the evil one has encountered*, that turmoil one's life, deflected one's history and from whose consequences one cannot escape even one decade after it had left the stage? And that only by analogy one is then able to comprehend *all* forms of evil and to open up to a different sufferance, that otherwise would have been more difficult to grasp? My path to the Shoah crosses the trauma of communism and this is precisely why I am capable to see a brother in every Jew – with his anxieties, his hates and his memories of his kindred sufferance. Is it too much to demand a symmetric treatment? Is it unjustified that I be granted the right to my own anxieties, hates and memory for the sufferance of my own kindred, as well as to the compassion that should properly accompany them by those who did not experience them? Do not 45 years of *systematically* mutilated lives entitle us to any tear?

Whence the risk that that a sufferance loose its aura of sufferance because another exists? Whence the conceited refusal of cohabitation in sufferance? Whence this claim admitting no contradiction to *unique victimhood*?<sup>1</sup>.

"The Jews did not forget those who killed their children, brothers and parents in Nazi concentration camps", Liiceanu told an interviewer in 1993.

"Who can force us to forget our dead, those jailed and tortured, our grey lives, our broken destinies, the unending abasements, the lies in which we were forced to live and that governed our lives minute by minute? Are there two measures and two different memories for the same deeds?"<sup>2</sup>

Liiceanu's views are shared by many of his peers. This is precisely (as he openly admits<sup>3</sup>) these intellectuals became President Bănescu's unconditional defenders after (for opportunistic reasons) Bănescu – a former communist – pronounced in Parliament in December 2006 his official condemnation of the former regime based on the presidential commission's report. However, not all these intellectuals would settle down for "symmetry". When former President Constantinescu in 1997 Romanian responsibility (not to be understood as culpability) for the Holocaust<sup>4</sup>, which he reiterated during a visit paid at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum one year later, Floricel Marinescu, a historian with connections to the previous regime, in March 1998 published a furious article in the *România liberă* weekly supplement *Aldine* in which not a single cliché employed in the "double genocide" argument was

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel LIICEANU, *Ușa interzisă*, Humanitas, București, 2002, pp. 256-257.

<sup>2</sup> IDEM, "Există două măsuri și două memorii pentru aceleași fapte?", *Revista 22*, no. 4, 28 January-3 February 1993, reproduced in IDEM, *Estul naivităților noastre. 27 de interviuri 1990-2011*, Humanitas, București, 2012, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> IDEM, "M-am gândit să nu păstrez cuvintele doar pentru mine", interview on Brașov TV station MixTV, 19 November 2010, reproduced in IDEM, *Estul naivităților noastre...cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> This important statement (though very cautiously formulated) is usually overlooked, the merit for assuming responsibility being attributed to President Ion Iliescu and his acceptance of the "Wiesel Commission" findings. Constantinescu said during a visit paid at the Bucharest Choral Temple: "The death of innocents can be neither forgiven, nor undone, nor forgotten... As president of all Romanians, it is my duty to be the guarantor of that memory, no matter how painful that is; it is my duty to safeguard the memory of Jews who fell victim to the genocide" (*Realitatea evreiască*, no. 49-50, 16 April-15 May 1997).

missing. With the difference that he left no doubt as to "who did more wrong onto whom". As Marinescu put it,

"from the strict quantitative perspective, the number of crimes perpetrated in the name of communist ideology is much larger than that of those perpetrated in the name of Nazi or similar ideologically minded regimes".

Yet

"no prominent Jewish personality [from Romania] has 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, whose oncoming the Jews had made an important contribution to, than the Jews themselves had suffered from the Romanian state during the Antonescu regime.... The Red Holocaust was incomparably more grave than Nazism"<sup>1</sup>.

In his seminal *Rethinking the Holocaust*, Yehuda Bauer stresses the role of "Lumpenintellectuals" in the emergence of Nazi ideology. These intellectuals, he writes, were people who were

"largely unemployed, exceedingly bitter regarding the bourgeois society that rejected them for a variety of reasons, searching for explanations for their disappointment in a society that appeared to be disintegrating".

It would be these people who would form the future "Nazi elite". The danger of drawing parallels in different historical contexts notwithstanding, such "transition losers" are not absent in Romania (or elsewhere in the region), where they form the backbone of PRM supporters. However, it is only

"[w]hen an intellectual or pseudo-intellectual elite with a genocidal program, whether explicit or implicit, achieves power in a crisis-ridden society for economic, social, and political reasons that have nothing to do with the genocidal program, then, if that elite can draw the intellectual strata to its side, genocide will become possible. By intellectual strata I mean what John Weiss describes as elites: upper-class social groups, army officers, church leaders, bureaucrats, doctors and lawyers, industrial and commercial elites, and especially the university professors who provide all the rest with the necessary ideological tools. A social consensus will be created with the help of these elites: the consensus will provide justification for ordinary folks to participate in the genocidal program"<sup>2</sup>.

Political antisemitism is not *born* at that point. By then it might be too late to do anything about it.

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<sup>1</sup> *România liberă* supplement *Aldine*, 7 March 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Yehuda BAUER, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2002, pp. 104-105.