

**Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization": Holocaust
Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe**

Michael Shafir

Motto:

They used to pour millet on
graves or poppy seeds
To feed the dead who would
come disguised as birds.
I put this book here for you, who
once lived
So that you should visit us no
more

Czeslaw Milosz

Introduction*

Holocaust denial in post-Communist East Central Europe is a fact. And, like most facts, its shades are many. Sometimes, denial comes in explicit forms – visible and universally-aggressive. At other times, however, it is implicit rather than explicit, particularistic rather than universal, defensive rather than aggressive. And between these two poles, the spectrum is large enough to allow for a large variety of forms, some of which may escape the eye of all but the most versatile connoisseurs of country-specific history, culture, or immediate political environment. In other words, Holocaust denial in the region ranges from sheer emulation of negationism elsewhere in the world to regional-specific forms of collective defense of national "historic memory" and to merely banal, indeed sometime cynical, attempts at the utilitarian exploitation of an immediate political context.¹

The paradox of Holocaust negation in East Central Europe is that, alas, this is neither "good" nor "bad" for the Jews.² But it is an important part of the

* I would like to acknowledge the support of the J. and O. Winter Fund of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York for research conducted in connection with this project. I am indebted to friends and colleagues who read manuscripts of earlier versions and provided comments and corrections. While responsibility for the contents of this article remains mine, I would like to acknowledge the help of Leon Volovici and Michael Finkenthal (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Randolph L. Braham (Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, City University of New York), András Kovács (Central European University, Budapest), Radu Ioanid (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), Norman Manea (Bard College), Lya Benjamin (Center for the Study of the History of Romanian Jewry, Bucharest) and George Voicu (University of Bucharest). The article is dedicated to the memory of my daughter, Tamar, who knew what sufferance was all about.

¹ In the following I am employing the concept of "Holocaust denial" to include all shades of explicit and implicit references to the Holocaust that question either its very existence or its significance as an unprecedented atrocity in mankind's history. Except for indicating its improper usage by having it in quotation marks, I am *not* using the concept of "revisionism," for reasons largely exhausted in arguments presented by Deborah Lipstadt (1994), and by Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman (2000). On the uniqueness of the Holocaust see Bauer 2001, 39–67.

² Estimates of Holocaust decimation vary, the more so as borders radically shifted between the two world wars, during the war, and in its aftermath. According to Ivan T. Berend (1993, 130), some 4 million East Central European Jews perished during the Holocaust, but it is unclear whether this number includes Jews in the former Soviet Union. Raul Hilberg, one of the foremost authorities on the Holocaust, provides country-by-country estimations based on the 1937 borders (Hilberg 1994, 3:1300). For another country-by-country estimate, see Gutman and Rozett 1990, 1799–1802. With the exception of Hungary, where a community of more than 100,000 mostly assimilated Jews still survives, there are no Jewish communities to speak of in the region nowadays. In Bulgaria, estimates of the number of Jews currently living in the country range between 5,000 and 8,000; in the Czech Republic between 3,500 and 6,000; in Poland

quo vadis transitional equation. If under the Communist regime "antisemitism without Jews" (Lendvai 1971) was part and parcel of the of the non-optional pseudo-offer of monopolistic regimes, post-Communist East Central Europe remains "without Jews" but is no longer "without offer." Ideologies and politicians compete in a relatively free political market; there is no longer *one* history but *several*, and here, too, the offer is competitive. Last but not least, literati are also relatively free to "offer" their vision of past, present, and future. Attitudes towards the Holocaust will not directly determine the region's outlook. But they may do so indirectly, insofar as facing collective responsibility is part of any "democratic game."

Criminal responsibility, however, can never be collective. Though looming large in post-Communist East Central Europe, suspicions of an intended "collective incrimination" speak more of personal options than they speak of collective apprehensions. In a free society, choice is personal, but its outcome is collective. It is in this sense – and this sense alone – that Holocaust negation in the region is value-ridden. And those who "produce values," and offer them on the newly-established competitive market are politicians and intellectuals, sometimes working in tandem, at other times at odds.

The argument can be made that there is nothing specifically "East-Central European" about that. Indeed, that argument *should* be made. However, what is specific about the region is its former Communist legacy. And this collective legacy partly facilitates, partly explains, and to a certain extent even exonerates Holocaust denial and its "comparative trivialization."

In what follows, I shall, first, examine the Communist legacy of "organized forgetting" and its impact on post-Communist attitudes of denying the Holocaust; second, I shall separately scrutinize three Holocaust-denying postures ("outright," "deflective," and "selective"), before proceeding, in the last section of the study, to examine the specific East Central European aspects of "Holocaust comparative trivialization." These distinctions should be viewed as being above all generic, rather than being mutually exclusive. Each of these (largely heuristic) categories belongs to the larger "family" of Holocaust denying, but they are different in terms of intensity, scope, or basic motivation. Mobility from one category to the other (or back) is by no means impossible. In fact, it is rather common. As Pierre Vidal-Naquet put it when he stood up against the so-called Holocaust "revisionists": "there is more than one room in the revisionist house" (Vidal-Naquet 1992, 18). And people *do* move from room to room, one should add.

between 10,000 and 15,000; in Romania between 12,000 and 14,000; and fewer than 4,000 Jews live in Slovakia; there are about 2,000 Jews in Croatia; between 2,000 and 3,000 in "post-Yugoslav" Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); some 120 in Slovenia; between 100 and 150 in Macedonia; and an even smaller group in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Gruber 1999). Latvia has a community of 12,800 Jews but, with the exception of Russia (325,000 at the beginning of 1998), Ukraine (155,000) and Belarus (23,000), no community in the former Soviet Union is larger than 11,000 (Gitelman 1999, 395–96).

1. The Legacy of "Organized Forgetting"

In a book on post-Communist Slovakia, Shari J. Cohen forged the concept of "state-organized forgetting of history" to describe the former regime's Orwellian manipulation of the historical record to serve its political purposes (Cohen 1999, 85–118). For reasons that need not preoccupy us in this context, I disagree with Cohen's generalization, among other reasons because "forgetting" history implies obliteration rather than manipulation (Shafir 2002). I believe Nancy Whittier Heer's 1971 study on Communist history-manipulation remains to this day as relevant as it was three decades ago, when its focus-object (the Soviet Union) was still with us (Whittier Heer 1971). But "state-organized forgetting" is fully applicable when it comes to the East Central European Communist regimes' "de-Judiazation" of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis and/or their local emulators or official allies, as amply demonstrated by contributors to a volume edited by Randolph L. Braham after the demise of those regimes (Braham 1994a). This makes the task of Holocaust negationists easier, and the receptivity to "Holocaust trivialization" arguments higher than it would otherwise be in the Western parts of the continent.

Except for the very first postwar years, Soviet historiography and its imposed model strove to both "nationalize" and to "internationalize" the Holocaust. "Nationalization" amounted to transforming Jewish victims into local victims, while "internationalization" derived from those regime's ideologically-determined "definition" of "Fascism." In an essay written in 1985, French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet noted that the *History of the Great Patriotic War* by Boris Tepulchowski, while mentioning the gas chambers at Auschwitz, Maidanek, and Treblinka, never indicated that these had been put in place mainly to serve the purpose of the Jews' physical elimination; instead, Tepulchowski wrote that six million "Polish citizens" had been murdered by the Nazis. As for the extermination of Jews on Soviet territory proper, it was covered in just two lines (Vidal-Naquet 1992, 94). Thanks to the poet, Evgenii Yevtushenko, the case of Babi Yar, where Soviet authorities constantly sought to blur the record of the victims' Jewish identity,³ acquired world notoriety. When

³ This statement may, however, be somewhat exaggerated, since at different times and in different political circumstances, Soviet historiography did not always, and/or entirely ignore the Jewish aspect of the Holocaust. Zvi Gitelman (1997, 14) observes that "While most Soviet writers either ignored the Holocaust or submerged it in more general accounts of the period, none denied it, and some did treat it not simply as German atrocities but as a uniquely Jewish fate. A survey of Soviet writings reveals that they vary significantly in the prominence and interpretations they give to the Holocaust. Western assertions to the contrary, there was no consistent Soviet 'party line' on the Holocaust. Some works do acknowledge and describe the Holocaust, while others discuss only some aspects of it. We can only speculate regarding Soviet motivations, but we can point

in 1961, Yevtushenko bewailed the fact that "no monument stands over Babi Yar," little did he know that "no monument" was better than "any monument." The one finally erected in 1976 on the site of the massacre specified that between 1941 and 1943, the Germans had executed there "over 100,000 citizens of Kiev and prisoners of war." No trace of specific Jewish suffering (Korey 1994, 210–12).

Similarly, the 1947 Polish parliament's decision to set up a memorial at Auschwitz described the site as one where "Poles and citizens of other nationalities fought and died a martyr's death." Twenty years later, a monument was erected at the site, carrying inscriptions in nineteen languages, including Yiddish, telling visitors that "Four million people suffered and died here at the hands of the Nazi murderers between 1940 and 1945." Jews were thus included among the list of "other nationalities" that had "suffered" at the hands of the German perpetrators, and, as Michael C. Steinlauf ironically observes, that list was "alphabetically and therefore democratically" ordered, with *ydzi* coming last. The four million figure was inflated on purpose to allow for a larger presence among the victims of Poles, Russian prisoners of war, and other non-Jews murdered at that extermination camp (Steinlauf 1996, 117–18).⁴ It was only after the fall of Communism that the inscription would be changed, to read "Let this place remain for eternity as a cry of despair and a warning to humanity. About one and a half million men, women, children and infants, mainly Jews from different countries of Europe, were murdered here. The world was silent" (Steinlauf 1996, 145). Much of the same applies to Sobibor, where the tablet mentioning 250,000 murdered "Soviet prisoners of war, Jews, Poles, and Gypsies" was replaced by one speaking of "over 250,000 Jews and about 1,000 Poles" who lost their lives there (Steinlauf 1996, 144).

Communist-ruled Czechoslovakia provides its own exemplification of largely the same pattern. As Cohen points out, even before the 1948 takeover, "the Communist Party was ambivalent about singling out Jews as victims of fascism" and those "books and memoirs that were published during this period were removed from library shelves and bookstores after 1948 or 1949" (Cohen 1999: 93). Although school textbooks underwent fluctuations in references to the Holocaust, its de-Judaization remained a rather constant trait. For example, a school textbook of the 1950s told students that the camps at Auschwitz and Theresienstadt were not large enough to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of "democrats" from all over the continent (Cohen 1999, 221 n. 67). A document published by the Charter '77 group of dissident intellectuals in 1989

with greater certainty to some consequences, intended and unintended, of the *general Soviet tendency to ignore or downplay the Holocaust!* (emphasis added).

⁴ *Legitimate* "revisionism" brought the figures of those exterminated at Auschwitz-Birkenau down from the immediate postwar estimates of 4 million to 960,000 Jews, 73,000 Poles, 21,000 Roma, 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war, and 10,000 to 15,000 citizens of other nationalities. See Steinlauf 1996, 117. This hardly changes the estimates of overall Jewish victims of the Holocaust, which range between 4,578,800 to 6,269,097 (see Table 2 in Shermer and Grobman 2000, 177).

stated that although the fate of Czechoslovakia's 360,000 murdered citizens was often mentioned in official speeches or textbooks "Only rarely...and practically never when the relevant text is aimed at wider audiences, do we encounter information that 240,000 to 255,000 of the total number of victims were persons of Jewish origin" (cited in Hahn 1994, 61). The ethnic identity of the famous drawings of Theresienstadt children was passed over in silence for many years (Hahn 1994, 61–62). In Slovakia proper, "the word *Holocaust* did not enter [public] debate...until 1989" (Cohen 1999, 10; author's emphasis). The avoidance of specifically treating the role of Slovak "clerical fascism" in the extermination of Jews was possibly also a reflection of the sensitive relations between Czechs and Slovaks.

Hungary was no different. Under Stalinism, "the Holocaust was virtually sunk into the Orwellian black hole of history" (Braham 2001). As István Deák puts it, "World War II was officially remembered as the era when 'communists and other progressive elements' had struggled against, or became the victims of, 'Hitlerite and Horthyite fascism.' Somehow, there seemed to have been no Jews among these heroes and victims; instead, all were 'anti-fascist Hungarians'" (Deák 1994a, 111).

Failure to deal with the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust can also be traced to the general failure of Communist regimes to provide a viable definition of "Fascism" – a term under which all the radical Right European regimes in the interwar period were (sometimes unwarrantedly) grouped together. Up to the late 1960s and early 1970s, the universally-accepted and universally-imposed definition of Fascism was that provided by Georgi Dimitroff in his 1935 Comintern report, which had Fascist regimes being little else than "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital" (Dimitroff 1974, 7). That was "explaining Fascism away," by carefully avoiding revelation of the overarching support that Italian Fascism, Nazism, and other radical authoritarian forms of government had enjoyed among all social classes (Gregor 1997, 128–78). But its advantage, from the Marxist perspective, rested in enabling the ruling parties to present themselves as having been the "vanguard" of popular democratic attitudes in a population allegedly largely opposed to those regimes. The revolutionary character of generic Fascism could thus be fully buried in ideological jargon, for after Lenin the "revolution" was no less monopolized than was the actual Communist hold on power. Fascism could not be anything else than "counter-revolutionary."

Deák's remarks (1994a, 118) on the Hungarian postwar situation could, in fact, apply across the board in East-Central Europe:

Keen to show the uniqueness of communists as anti-fascist fighters and simultaneously to present class-struggle as the main if not the only factor determining historical progress, orthodox Stalinist communists acted as if the Holocaust had never happened. Clearly, an ideology that regards ethnic and religious problems as mere-cover-ups for class conflict cannot deal

adequately with a historical process that had as its goal the extermination of all members of a particular group, whether progressive or reactionary, whether exploiters or part of the exploited. Hence also the 1953 official Hungarian history textbook for high school students, which did not contain the word "Jew" in its section on World War II. Hence also the general Stalinist practice to treat such Jewish victims of the Holocaust who happened to be communists or social democrats as "martyrs of the international working class movement" while relegating all other Jewish dead to the general category of "victims of fascism."

Hence also, one may add, the fact that, according to a Czechoslovak history textbook of the 1960s, the perpetrators at the camps had been "particularly cruel to communists, whom they set up as their key enemies," although it is acknowledged that "they also treated Jews very brutally" (Cohen 1999, 105). For Romanian communist historiography under Ceaușescu, even "pogroms," like the one perpetrated in Iași in late June 1941, had been organized "against anti-fascist forces" (Eskenasy 1994, 184). A rather interesting ("amusing" would be out of place) compromise was produced by Romanian historian (of Jewish origin!) Nicolae Minei, according to whom 12 million people had been interned by the Nazis in the "specially-constructed camps," of which "half had been Jewish" (Minei 1978, 7).

That this official definition of Fascism and its derivatives started to somewhat shift in the 1960s and the 1970s need not, I believe, be granted the exaggerated attention paid to it by A. James Gregor in an otherwise highly illuminating volume published in 2000 (pp. 107–27). First, because the changing definitions (one should rather speak of *approaches*) were never *officially* embraced in binding Communist documents⁵; and, second, because they were rather transparently – indeed, ridiculously so – aimed at allowing each side in the Sino-Soviet conflict to condemn the other as being Fascist. Official documents could mutually indict the adversary as being Fascist, but no Communist Party congress and even less, any international Communist gathering I am aware of, ever replaced the Dimitroff definition.

And that definition left its mark not only on Communist historians. Milan S. ěurica, a Slovak scholar teaching history at a theological faculty, for example, in 1992 defended the record of the Nazi-allied Jozef Tiso regime, emphasizing that

⁵ Besides, A. James Gregor is persuaded that such alternative approaches necessarily met with Communist Party approval and seems to be persuaded that those who provided them were always acting in the party's service. At least in one case, that of dissident Hungarian historian and philosopher Mihály Vajda (see Gregor 2000, 50–52) this is obviously not the case. That this does not reflect the actual situation is also demonstrated by the case of Zhelju Zhelev, a dissident under Communism and Bulgaria's post-Communist president; his 1981 book *Fashizmut sreshtu Fashizmut*, posing as a study of interwar Germany, Italy, and Spain, but in actual fact drawing rather obvious parallels with the Communist regimes, created an uproar upon publication (see Bell 1997, 358, 395 n. 15).

labeling it Fascist would be wrong. There never was sufficient autochthonous Slovak capital in the "Parish Republic," it being largely concentrated in Hungarian-Jewish-German hands, he wrote; and Fascism, according to ěurica is "the reign of terror by financial capital, the most reactionary imperialistic movement of chauvinist high bourgeoisie allied with nationalism" (cited in Me%oĒan 2000, 93–94).

To the extent that perceptions of what "Fascism" was all about nonetheless underwent a change in the area, this was due to mutations in civil society. The same applies to changes registered in perceptions of the Holocaust and its Jewish character. Sometimes, as during the Czechoslovak "Prague Spring," these perceptions were crushed by Soviet tanks and the ensuing "normalization," only to re-emerge on the eve of regime change, as witnessed by the above-cited Charter '77 statement.⁶ When force against civil society proved insufficient, the impact of the shift in perceptions was wider, and would eventually be reflected in the respective polity's enlarged readiness to face the burden of its own past.⁷ Finally, the shift was occasionally a "fallout" of what can be labeled as "the transition to Transition."⁸ But without diminishing their importance, these shifts in perception remained confined to a small, mainly intellectual elitist group, and their impact on society at large was marginal at best.

But Gregor (2000, 42, 128–65) is definitely right when arguing that a "perfectly plausible case can be made that Stalinism was the ideology of a

⁶ For example, the 1965 movie, *The Shop on Main Street*, was banned after 1968 (Cohen 1999, 106). A book on the fate of Slovak Jewry by Ivan Kamenec, although finished in 1971, was published only in 1989. The book did, however, circulate in *samizdat* (Cohen 1999, 65, 109).

⁷ This is obviously the Polish case and reflects the impact of the Komitet Obrony Robotników (KOR) and later of SolidarnoÅç on Polish-Jewish relations. For a detailed discussion, see Steinlauf 1996, 126–45. Nowhere else in the area after 1989 was there such readiness by scholars and intellectuals to face delicate issues linked to the Holocaust higher than in Poland. Which does not imply, of course, that national oversensitivities have been fully overcome, as will be shown below.

⁸ According to Deák, "in Hungary, much earlier than in any other Communist country, efforts were made to face up to the dilemma of anti-Semitism and Hungarian participation in the Final Solution." But Hungary, I wish to add, also pioneered economic and political reform, which explains at least in part why during this period of "transition to the Transition," the "Hungarian textbooks, although full of omissions, went into great details on Europe's collective guilt about the Holocaust" (Deák 1994a, 118). Still, popular awareness of the Holocaust remained low, the appearance of a relatively large number of documentary and historical publications on it notwithstanding (Braham 2001). It is, however, not irrelevant that the Communist Party extended even during this period its protection to the nationalist-inclined members of the Hungarian intelligentsia (the so-called "populists"), rather than to the "urbanists," most of whom continued to publish their works in *samizdat* and most of whom happened also to be Jewish. This would eventually have a significant impact on post-Communist perceptions of Hungarian-Jewish divisions and attitudes towards the Holocaust.

developmental *national socialism*—the 'socialism' of an economically backward nation. As such, it shared more than superficial similarities with the Fascism of Mussolini.⁹ As I pointed out elsewhere (Shafir 2001b, 400–401, and 2002), Stalin's "socialism in one country" was the first ideologically-formulated justification of what would eventually become known as "National Communism." This, in fact, is also the core argument of a book published by Mikhail Agursky, a Soviet-time dissident who emigrated to Israel in the 1970s (Agursky 1987). It is in this spirit that Vera Tolz (1997, 179) concludes that in Russia "Nationalism took the form of National Bolshevism..., the most extreme manifestation of which was Iosif Stalin's highly anti-Semitic campaign against cosmopolitanism in the late 1940s and early 1950s."

Nor was "National Communism" confined to the former Soviet Union's borders. "Objectively speaking" (as Stalin would have put it), it became the dominant doctrine adopted *against* Soviet domination. Tito's "heresy," as we know from Zbigniew Brzezinski (1960), had "National Communism" at its core, as did the Hungarian revolution of 1956 (at least in its early stages), and the Polish return to power in that same year of Władysław Gomułka. Eventually, that latter event would beget the phenomenon of General Mieczysław Moczar's "Endo-Communism," combining "the assimilation of ideas with direct linkage to the prewar Endecja" with "proletarian rhetoric" and thus producing a "peculiar marriage of authoritarian Communism and chauvinist nationalist tendencies," among which antisemitism figured prominently (Steinlauf 1996, 115).

But Steinlauf is somewhat mistaken – the marriage was hardly "peculiar." Under Nicolae Ceaușescu, Romania would not only undergo a similar process, but would by far overtake Poland, with the world outlook of the interwar Fascist Iron Guard encoded in all but official acknowledgment in party documents, and reflected in party-supervised historiography. With the exception of Czechoslovakia (or rather its Czech part), no country in East Central Europe remained unaffected by "the plague," with Enver Hoxha's Albania and Ceaușescu's Romania (joined in the 1970s by Bulgaria's Todor Zhivkov in what I termed "xenophobic communism"; see Shafir 1989) reaching paroxysm in their attempts to substitute nationalist for ideological legitimacy (Tismaneanu 1984 and 1989; Fischer 1989). As one scholar put it, "national communism, though it may seem to be a political oxymoron, became increasingly the norm by the 1970s and certainly by the 1980s as the Marxist-Leninist regimes sought to hold on to power in face of collapsing political legitimacy" (Braun 1997, 141).

A large part of the post-Communist East Central European political spectrum is occupied by parties of "radical continuity" and – to a lesser, but not inconsiderable – extent by parties of "radical return." The former are the offspring of National Communism liberated from its earlier Communist ideological straightjacket, while the latter advocate a return to the values embraced by the interwar radical Right (see Shafir 2001b). All radical continuity

⁹ Emphasis author's.

formations are "successor parties" of the former Communist rulers, which does not necessarily imply that *all* successor parties are radical continuity formations. However, what *all* successor parties share is access to what Michael Waller (1995, 481–82) calls "organizational continuity," including, above all, access to material resources. Neither radical return formations nor the conservative or neo-conservative formations which identify themselves with historically-reborn mainstream parties, benefit from such access. Rejecting, as they do, continuity with Communism, they must replace it with other resources, among which "historic continuity" figures more prominently than it does in the case of the successor parties. At first sight, this has little to do with Holocaust denial and with its comparative trivialization. On closer scrutiny, however, both radical return and conservative formations, or intellectuals identifying with them, are often found to be part of the Holocaust-denying landscape.

In an article analyzing what is termed as the "assault on historical memory" in post-Communist Hungary, Randolph L. Braham, the world's most important historian of the Holocaust in that country, describes the spectrum of Holocaust denial as following:

While the number of populist champions of anti-Semitism, like that of the Hungarian neo-Nazis actually denying the Holocaust, is relatively small, the camp of those distorting and denigrating the catastrophe of the Jews is fairly large and, judging by recent developments, growing. Wielding political power and influence, members of this camp represent a potentially greater danger not only to the integrity of the historical record of the Holocaust, but also, and above all, to the newly established democratic system. For unlike the Holocaust deniers – the fringe group of "historical charlatans" – ...the history cleansers who denigrate and distort the Holocaust are often "respectable" public figures – intellectuals, members of parliament, influential governmental and party figures, and high-ranking army officers (Braham 2001).

Mutatis mutandis this applies to all countries in the region. And one of the main reasons for the widespread presence of the "respectable public figures" indulging in casting doubt on the Holocaust rests precisely in the absence of "organizational continuity" and the resulting over-pronounced necessity of compensating that absence with appeals to the legitimizing "historic continuity."

In other words, the legacy of state-organized forgetting and National Communism extends far beyond those who under the former regime identified with its values and continue to do so in the post-Communist setting. The partisans of radical return (from among whom most outright negationists stem) are perhaps the most fierce in opposing the legacy of Communism. However, the former regime has made their discourse more persuasive than might otherwise have been the case by having failed to address the issue of the Holocaust, or (as will be seen) by deflecting the blame for its perpetration onto either the Germans or onto a combination between them and the traditional

"historic enemy." This, for example, was the case of Romania, where, under Ceaușescu, references to Jewish extermination were singularly confined to Hungarian-occupied northern Transylvania, with no mention whatever being made of the extermination of Jews in Transnistria under Marshal Ion Antonescu's regime and/or solely attributed there to the Germans (Eskenasy 1994, 191, 196; Ioanid 1994, 164). Why then, should Iron Guard leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Antonescu, Admiral Miklós Horthy and Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi,¹⁰ President Tiso or Croat *Ustasha* leader Ante Pavelić not reemerge as model figures of national heroes, whose only fault rests in their having (nilly rather than willy) supported or allied themselves with those who were fighting Communism and/or the traditional enemy of their nation?

What is more, with Antonescu, Szálasi, and Tiso having been executed as war criminals, or Codreanu having been assassinated at the orders of King Carol II in 1938, they may fit very well into the natural post-Communist search for replacing manipulated state-organized martyrdom on the altar of proletarian internationalism with martyrdom on the altar of national, anti-Communist values. Āudovit Pavlo, chairman of the Slovak League of America and a partisan of Tiso's rehabilitation, was most genuine in giving vent to this quest for martyr-hero models. In 1996, in an article included in a volume of collected papers published in Bratislava, Pavlo wrote quite bluntly: "I was pleased that Tiso died a martyr's death because we gained a saint and a hero.... I was afraid [after the war] that Tiso would be sentenced to life imprisonment because, with the passage of time, he would probably had fallen into oblivion." Tiso-defender Gabriel Hoffmann, in a book he edited together with his brother Karel in 1994, concluded, "after the study of hundreds of documents," that all accusations leveled at Tiso were lies and that he was "not a criminal, but a saint." The Vatican, Hoffmann wrote, will one day still canonize Tiso (cited in Me%Èan 2000, 159, 164).¹¹

Tiso, who was a Catholic priest, finds himself in the company of laymen Codreanu and Antonescu. In 1993, when an Iron Guard "inheritor party" calling itself New Christian Romania was set up in Bucharest, participants in its founding congress demanded that Codreanu be canonized (see *România mare*, 29 January 1993); the same demand was made in 1998 by a Cluj-based foundation of radical return leanings. In 2001, a participant in a symposium marking the tenth anniversary of the setting up of Romania's most conclusive exemplification of a radical continuity party – the Greater Romania Party (PRM) – proposed that Antonescu be canonized by the Romanian Orthodox Church (Totok 2001).

¹⁰ This does not imply that Horthy and Szálasi, or their responsibility for Hungary's participation in the Holocaust are identical. See the discussion below.

¹¹ Hoffmann happens to be a converted Jew. Me%Èan (2000, 153) is of the opinion that both he and his brother could "hardly better exemplify the zeal of the convert." This may be true, but is hardly a sufficient explanation, if one takes into consideration cases such as that of Hungarian Holocaust negationist Albert Szabó (see below).

"Mainstream" – allegedly democratic – party leaders in search for alternatives to organizational resources face a double dilemma when coming to forge what Hungarian sociologist András Kovács properly termed in Hungary's case "creating an identity on a symbolic level." I believe Kovács's insights can be generalized beyond Hungarian borders. These parties can either opt for placing themselves somewhere around the Western political spectrum or to "express a relationship with certain emblematic periods, events or individuals in the country's own history."¹² Formations whose option is mainly introvert, fight among themselves the battle "for the appropriation of history" in which they attempt to "demonstrate historical tradition and continuity" (Kovács 2002). But a second dilemma emerges once the introvert option has been made, namely whether to distance themselves or not from the less seemly aspects of remote or immediate history – and to what extent do so. Opting for distancing themselves from figures such as those mentioned above is in many cases tantamount to renouncing historic legitimacy as well. For what historic legitimacy can one claim if, as a Slovak or a Croat politician, one casts aside any continuity with the only time when an independent Slovak or Croat state has existed? And while claiming "anti-Communist historic legitimacy" *is* possible in the case of Hungary's or Romania's historic parties or neo-conservative formations, it is not easy to do so when Antonescu and Horthy are largely perceived as *the* embodiment of anti-Communist postures.

Finally, even in the case of Poland or the Czech Republic (which, unlike the Hitler allies were themselves victims of aggression and decimation), the Holocaust poses the problem of "competitive martyrdom" – that of one's own nation vs. that of the Jews. In the Polish case, moreover, politicians, intellectuals, and indeed, the Catholic Church, must cope with a legacy of non-institutionalized, large-scale popular antisemitism, as well as with that of the partly-institutionalized antisemitism of formations such as the Endecja. Under these circumstances, it is quite tempting to engage into one shade or another of comparative trivialization.

2. Outright Holocaust Negation

Outright negation of the Holocaust is rare, but not insignificant. To a large extent, it is part and parcel of what Kovács calls "imported or re-imported antisemitism" (2002). In general, it is supported and inspired by the aged, extreme nationalist exiled community, many members of which are linked with exile associations. These people have access to Western negationist literature and some go as far as to participate themselves in the negationist drive. The Western inspiration is, however, not always acknowledged. Viewed from this perspective, one could possibly speak of "honest" and "dishonest" negationists.

¹² In actual fact (one must correct Kovács), one option does not necessarily rule out the other. A political formation may rally itself to, say, the European conservative stream of the "People's Party" and still proceed to identity-forging on mainly autochthonous values.

Politicians usually belong to the latter category. A case in point is Stanislav Pánis, the former leader of the Slovak National Unity Party and later a deputy representing the Slovak National Party in the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly (Hahn 1994, 71; Cohen 1999, 158; Meenan 2000, 73). In an interview with Norwegian television in 1992, Pánis said it would have been "technically impossible" for the Nazis to exterminate six million Jews in camps – a clear echo of negationist Robert Faurisson's contentions. Pánis also claimed that Auschwitz was nothing but an "invention" of the Jews to make possible the flow of compensation to Israel. His political career did not suffer as a result of these statements,¹³ and in the late 1990s, he even served as a Deputy Culture Minister (see *RFE/RL Newslines*, 20 June 1997).

In Romania, PRM leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor in March 1994 professed to have "learned that English and American scientists [*sic!*] are contesting the Holocaust itself, providing documentation and logical arguments proving that the Germans could not gas six million Jews, this being technically and physically an impossibility." The Holocaust, he added, was nothing but "a Zionist scheme aimed at squeezing out from Germany about 100 billion Deutschmarks and to terrorize for more than 40 years all those who do not acquiesce to the Jewish yoke" (*România mare*, 4 March 1994). In November 2000 Tudor's party became the second-strongest formation in the Romanian parliament and the PRM leader made it to a runoff with Ion Iliescu for the position of head of state.

Not all Holocaust negationist politicians in East Central Europe, however, went unpunished. In general, the less significant politically their formation, the greater the chance that they would eventually face some sort of judicial accounting. The most famous case in point is perhaps that of Poland's Bolesław Tejkowski, leader of the radical return neo-Fascist Polish National Commonwealth-Polish National Party. In 1995, he was given a two-year suspended sentence for insulting "the Polish authorities, the Jewish people, the Pope and the Episcopate." In Tejkowski's eyes not only Poland's entire post-Communist leadership was made up of Jews and "closet-Jews," but the Pope himself was Jewish. The Holocaust, he claimed, was a Jewish conspiracy that had made it possible for the Jews to hide their offspring in monasteries during World War II, in order for them to be baptized and take over the Church from within. This, he said, was how Karol Wojtyła became a Catholic priest (Prazmowska 1995, 209–10; Szayna 1997, 121; Ost 1999, 96). Outlandish as this may sound, it was nonetheless not singular. In Hungary, two radical return publications, *Hunnia Füzetek* and *Szent Korona*, "unmasked" Cardinal Páskai

¹³ Pánis, who in 1991 headed a group of skinheads who threw eggs at President Václav Havel in Bratislava, was sued by Federal Assembly Deputy Ján Mlynárik for having propagated "Fascism." At a rally on March 14, 1991 marking the fifty-second anniversary of Slovak independence, he declared that the 1939 setting up of Tiso-ruled independent Slovakia had been "one of the greatest and the most glorious events in the history of the Slovak nation." The case was dismissed, no evidence being found by the Prosecutor General's Office of "propagation of Fascism" (Cohen 1999, 158, 240 n. 6).

as being allegedly Jewish (Berend 1993, 131); and precisely the same argument was produced in Romania by Radu Theodoru, who "revealed" that Wojtyła's name was in fact "Katz" (Voicu 2000b, 82, 157). In other words, the Jews are the authors of the Holocaust – an "argument" by no means limited to the outright negationists, as we shall yet observe.

For obvious reasons, Poland is the least prone to outright negationism, Tejkowski's case notwithstanding. Too many of the extermination camps had been on Polish soil and negation would be to question the largely consensual *Polish* martyrdom itself. And yet negationist articles began appearing in 1994 and 1995 in *Szczerbiec* (The Sword), the publication of the extreme Right formation that calls itself National Revival of Poland (NOP). That radical return party is led by Adam Gmurczyk and claims to be the reincarnation of the prewar violently antisemitic youth organization, National-Radical Camp, that was outlawed in 1934. The NOP is a member of the neo-Nazi International Third Position and *Szczerbiec* lists such notorious Holocaust deniers as Derek Holland and Roberto Fiore on its editorial board. It printed several "classics" among outright deniers in the West (Pankowski 2000, 79–80). The NOP, following the so-called Western "revisionist" tactics, also established a National-Radical Institute, which in 1997 published a volume under the title *The Myth of the Holocaust*, consisting of translations from the most infamous Western Holocaust deniers. One of the regular contributors to *Szczerbiec*, Maciej Przebindowski, in 1997 went so far as to emulate his Western inspirers by claiming that "a group of researchers from the National-Radical Institute" had conducted field work at Auschwitz-Birkenau, concluding that the extermination in gas chambers was an impossibility (Pankowski 2000, 76).

Politicians, however, are not alone in indulging in outright Holocaust negation. The phenomenon is spread far more in publications that may or may not have a direct party affiliation, and in journals or weeklies translating, adopting, and embracing the argument of Western negationists. In 1999, a Polish historian, Dariusz Ratajczak, who worked as a researcher at the recently-founded University of Opole, was put on trial for having published a book that espoused the "Auschwitz lie" theory. *Dangerous Topics*, embracing the so-called Fred Leuchter Report, claimed, among other things, that Zyklon-B gas had been used in the camps solely for "disinfecting" purposes. Other arguments of the improperly-called "revisionists" were also reproduced in the volume. In his defense, Ratajczak claimed that he did not necessarily agree with the arguments of the revisionists, but considered it necessary to make known all points of view on the Holocaust. "My only objective," he said, "was to present a phenomenon called 'Holocaust Revisionism,' without an author's commentary." The court found the claim unconvincing, as it transpired from Ratajczak's own comments in the volume, but nonetheless dismissed the case. The small number of copies (230) produced in the book's first print run, it said, was too "insignificant" to cause any "serious degree of social harm," and between the first and the second, larger print, Ratajczak had publicly distanced himself from the revisionists (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 17 November 1999; PAP, 7 December

1999). Yet just days after the verdict was pronounced, Ratajczak was the guest star at a political meeting organized by the extreme Right National Party, whose active member he was. Furthermore, his views were embraced and defended by such figures in the "respectable academic world" as Professor Ryszard Bender, who teaches history at the Catholic University of Lublin. Though he had represented the Communist Party in the parliament in the 1980, Bender later switched allegiance to the Right and was for some time a Senator and the chairman of the State Council on Radio and Television (Pankowski 2000, 78–79). Bender accused the "Jewish lobby" of persecuting Ratajczak and went so far as to deny Auschwitz has been an extermination camp. He was eventually disciplined by his university and Ratajczak himself was fired from the University of Opole. Almost instantly, he was offered a job at the Higher School of Journalism in Warsaw (Pankowski 2000, 79–80).

In the Czech Republic, proceedings were launched by police in 2000 against Vladimír Skoupý, leader of the radical Right National Alliance, a majority of whose members are skinheads. At a meeting in October 1999, Skoupý had denied the existence of the Holocaust. As everywhere else in East Central Europe, in the Czech Republic there is no specific (Fabius-Gayssot type) legislation prohibiting Holocaust denial. But again, as everywhere else in the area, there are articles in the Penal Code that can be used for the purpose of prosecution, provided the authorities are willing to do so (which is not always the case), and provided the courts are willing to interpret those legal provisions as applying to Holocaust denial (which is even more rare).¹⁴ Offenders can be prosecuted on grounds of "incitement to hatred against a community," "defamation of a people or a race," or "propagating a movement aimed at suppressing the rights and freedoms of other citizens." In the Czech Republic, both advocacy of Fascism and Communism are grounds for indictment. A Prague district prosecutor ruled against Skoupý's prosecution (âTK, 2 November 1999, 5 January 2000; *RFE/RL Newslines*, 6 January 2000). Skoupý was, however, arrested in February 2001, after ignoring the prohibition of a demonstration held in Prague, at which his supporters carried Nazi symbols, and soon thereafter the Interior Ministry rejected the application of the National Alliance to be registered as a political party under the name National Socialist Alliance (âTK, 26 February, 19 April 2001). In June, Skoupý, who was kept in detention for several months, was indicted for incitement to racial hatred, propagation of a movement aimed at suppressing citizens' rights and the defamation of a people. Among the prosecution's evidence figured an article he had authored in the skinhead weekly *Vlajka* (The Flag) under the title "Such a

¹⁴ In Slovakia in late 2001, in a "first" for East Central Europe, an amendment was passed to the Penal Code that specifically makes Holocaust denial explicitly punishable (see *RFE/RL Newslines*, 9 November 2001). In Poland, the law that established the Institute of National Remembrance in 1997, includes a provision against those who deny "crimes against humanity" committed by the Nazis and the Communists on Polish territory (Pankowski 2000, 78).

Happy Journey," where he offered the Jews free transportation to extermination camps in livestock wagons lined with straw. The court convicted him on 7 June to one year in prison and a four-year probation sentence, but he was released on 22 June, his earlier detention being counted as part of his sentence. Skoupč made it clear that he did not intend to refrain from participating in demonstrations, though he would not speak there (ãTK, 8, 21 and 22 June 2001).

Criminal proceedings were also initiated in Hungary against negationists Albert Szabó and István Györkös. Szabó claims that the Holocaust is a hoax and that Europe's Jews have all emigrated to America. In turn, Györkös has had contacts with U.S. Nazi and Austrian neo-Nazi leaders and, in his publications denied the Holocaust had ever been perpetrated (Kovács 2002). Both are leaders of the radical return Hungarianist Movement, an organization claiming descent from Szálasi's Hungarian National Socialist Party-Hungarianist Movement, as had been the official name of the Arrow Cross (Gruber 1995, 20). Szabó, leader of the radical return Hungarian People's Welfare Alliance (MNSZ), has a great number of relatives in Israel, whom he visited several times – as fellow radical Right competitor István Csurka disclosed (Karsai 1999, 145). A search for explanation is well beyond the instruments of the political scientist, though some politologists did indulge into psychiatric theorizing. Together with Györkös, in March 1996, a tribunal acquitted Szabó of violating a law banning incitement to racial hatred and the use of prohibited Nazi symbols, on grounds of constitutional provisions protecting freedom of speech (*OMRI Daily Digest*, 5 and 11 March 1996).¹⁵

In Hungary, negationist articles were quite frequently printed in the weekly *Szent Korona* and in the monthly *Hunnia Füzetek*. The former ceased publication in 1992, and its editor-in-chief, László Romhányi, was convicted in 1993 for various crimes, as were several members of the weekly's staff. In 1991 *Hunnia Füzetek* carried an article by Australian-exiled Arrow Cross sympathizer Viktor Padányi, written in the best "scientific" tradition of Holocaust denial. The article – including the main theses of a book Padányi had published in Australia – stated that out of the one-and-a-half million Jews acknowledged to have lost

¹⁵ But following a speech delivered at an October 1996 rally in which he called for the removal of Jews to Israel, in February 1998 he was given a one-year suspended sentence, with three years probation. According to reports in the Hungarian media, this is what determined Szabó to move again abroad in November 1999. But his deputy, Csaba Kunstar, denied the reports, telling a Hungarian state radio interviewer that Szabó had just temporarily moved abroad for several months in order to enlist financial support for the party and establish closer links with like-minded Western formations, such as the U.S. New Order. The intention, according to Kunstar, is quite the opposite from renouncing political activity in Hungary: taking advantage of the country's lenient legislation, Szabó is to work for transforming Budapest into an international center of radical right activism (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 5 February 1998; MTI, *Népszabadság* and Hungarian Radio, 24 November 1999 in *BBC World Summary of Broadcasts—Eastern Europe*).

their lives in World War II, 1.2 million had been killed by the Soviets and "just" 300,000 by the Nazis. The latter had anyhow acted only in self-defense, because the Jews had "been working" for the "enemy" both inside Germany and outside its borders (cited in Kovács 2002). The monthly's editor-in-chief, Ferenc Kunszabó and one of its regular contributors, János Fodor, were charged in 1993 with "incitement against a community," but the court ruled that to convict them would be tantamount to restraining the freedom of the press (Kovács 2002).

In Slovakia, outright negationist articles were occasionally printed, purporting to unmask the *Hoax of the Century* (the title of Arthur Butz's infamous 1976 volume). For example, the weekly *Zmena* in 1992 carried a series of articles by one Patrick Mehrentürk, who frequently invoked in support of his argument the "authority" of Robert Faurisson and other negationists. The gas chambers had never existed, according to Mehrentürk, and, as *Zmena* put it (allegedly relying on "KGB sources"), the number of Jews who perished at Auschwitz was not higher than 74,000. The extermination camps, according to the *Zmena* series, were nothing but "well-maintained gardens with barracks" and the inmates "people employed in useful work" (cited in Mešan 2000, 117–18). All that needed to be added was *Arbeit macht frei*. Similar "arguments," but focusing on own-country alone, are being made as part and parcel of the comparative trivialization effort (see below).

For quite some time, Slovakia also used to be the provider of negationist literature to the Czech Republic, the AGRES publishing house being the printer of the leading Czech antisemitic and negationist weekly *Tědeník politika*. In December 1992, criminal charges were filed against the weekly's editor-in-chief, Josef Tomáš, for having printed a list of 168 prominent Jewish intellectuals labeled "Slavs from the Jordan River." After nearly a decade, the case is still pending before the courts, but the weekly has since suspended publication (Hahn 1994, 71–73; Vago 1994, 190–91).

In Romania, translations of negationist articles were printed in both radical continuity and radical return publications; what is more astonishing, intellectual figures generally perceived to identify with democratic, pro-Western postures uniquely came out in defense of negationist literature dissemination.¹⁶ For example, the PRM weekly *Politica* serialized translations by Leonard Gavrilu from the French periodical *Annales d'histoire révisionniste* in eight consecutive issues between February and March 1995. The radical return publication of the now defunct Movement for Romania, *Miocarea*, in November 1994 published an article by Silviu Rareș reviewing such "milestones of Holocaust contestation" as the works of David Irving, Maurice Bardèche, Paul Rassinier, Pierre Guillaume, Richard Harwood, Udo Walendy, and Ernst Zundel,

¹⁶ For the author's own polemics with these intellectuals, see Shafir (1998) and the ensuing exchange of replies with Professor Nicolae Manolescu, Mr. Dorin Tudoran, and Dr. Ileana Vrancea in the weekly *România literară*. See also Shafir 2000–2001 and 2001a.

as well as of Faurisson and Butz. Roger Garaudy's *The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*, with its well-known negationist tunes, was welcomed not only by the radical return monthly, *Puncte cardinale*, but also by Professor Nicolae Manolescu, at that time a leading National Liberal Party (PNL) figure, as well as by "mainstream" journalist Cristian Tudor Popescu, editor-in-chief of Romania's largest circulation daily, *Adevărul*. For Popescu, criticism of Garaudy's works abroad amounted to nothing less than questioning "freedom of thought" and the condemnation of *The Founding Myths* was on par with passing sentence on Descartes (Popescu 1996, 1998).¹⁷

On its outer cover, the Romanian version of Garaudy's book carried the author's reactions to the protests with which the volume was met: "It is not my fault if those who accuse me have set up a world-business specializing in selling their grandparents' bones." The book had landed its author before a court of justice in France – he was sentenced to a 120,000 Francs fine – and its Swiss distributor came before a similar court in Switzerland (Shafir 2000). If the book's Romanian defenders could argue, as Manolescu (1998) did, that Garaudy did not entirely negate the Holocaust in *The Founding Myths*, having only objected to "some exaggerations," the claim could no longer be made for a 1999 translation of his volume – *The Trial of Israeli Zionism: Unmasking the International Zionist Conspiracy*, in which the negationist argument is embraced full-scale (see Voicu 2000a, 137).

Yet no one among Romanian authors embraced more eagerly and more fully the negationist argument than Radu Theodoru.¹⁸ A former air force officer, founding member of the PRM, and for some time one of Tudor's deputies, Theodoru was expelled from the PRM after he quarreled with Tudor.¹⁹ For a brief period in 1993, he became chairman of the extraparliamentary Party of Social Democratic Unity (Shafir 1993) but eventually dedicated himself fully to repeated negationist productions, occasionally combining those with attacks on the country's Hungarian minority – of course depicted as being "in league" with the Jews (see Theodoru 1996, 1999).

Theodoru is an "honest negationist." "I am the partisan of the revisionist school headed by the French scientist [*sic!*] Robert Faurisson," he wrote in 1995 in the radical continuity weekly *Europa*.²⁰ He added that Faurisson "is the victim of disgusting moral and physical pressures, only for having questioned the existence of the gas chambers." Theodoru then proceeded to produce the list of

¹⁷ See also Totok 2000: 109 n. 44 for a full listing of other pertinent pro-Garaudy postures by allegedly "mainstream" intellectual figures.

¹⁸ On Theodoru as a negationist see also Constantinescu 1998, 126–33.

¹⁹ George Voicu, Romania's foremost specialist in post-Communist antisemitism, nonetheless believes that Theodoru has resumed collaboration with the PRM and that he publishes in the party's weeklies under the pseudonym "Traian Romanescu" (Voicu 2000a, 166 n. 123). Theodoru is also a prolific fiction writer, but the themes of his novels are not much different from his non-fiction output.

²⁰ That weekly ceased publication, its editor-in-chief, Ilie Neacœu, joining the PRM and representing it in the parliament since 1996.

Western negationists and their main "demonstrations," starting with the "Leuchter Report," and then going back to Léon Degrelle, the leader of the Belgian Rexist Fascist movement and his 1979 "open letter" to Pope John Paul II. In that letter, Degrelle – who served as a volunteer in the *Walonia Waffen SS* unit on the Eastern front – claimed that as an eyewitness he can testify that there had been neither gas chambers nor any mass annihilation of Jews in Hitler's Third Reich and in the territories occupied by Germany – Jews rather, having been killed by American and British bombings (Lipstadt 1994, 11). Degrelle, Theodoru added, produced two "comparative columns" which demonstrate that the "real genocide was that committed by the British-American bombings, by the two American A-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, by the mass assassinations in Hamburg and Dresden" and not at Auschwitz, which is used by "Zionist propaganda to squeeze out of defeated Germany fabulous amounts of money." It was "Zionist propaganda" that had "imposed on [international] public opinion the fabulous number of six million assassinated Jews." According to Theodoru, the "revisionist school," however, "demonstrates" that the number of victims packed into a gas chamber could not have fit physically to reach the number of gassed victims attributed to the Nazis. As is well known, this is one of Faurisson's main claims.²¹ The "revisionist school" he wrote, is nothing short of "an A-bomb thrown by conscientious historians on the propagandistic construct put in place by the craftsmen of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*" for, "having demonstrated that at Auschwitz and the other camps no genocide by gassing had occurred, [they implicitly] pose the problem of revising the Nuremberg trials." In turn, that revision calls for "revising the trial of Third Reich Germany" as a whole and hence questions "'the tribute' paid by postwar Germany to Israel and world Jewish organizations – from pensions to all sorts of subventions" (Theodoru 1995).

The article in *Europa* was said to be the first in a serialized new book by Theodoru, whose title was announced as *Romania, the World and the Jews*. The book itself was published in 1997, but under the title *Romania as Booty*, and it apparently sold well enough for a second, enlarged version, to be brought out by a different publisher in 2000, with the article in *Europa* serving as the volume's introduction (Theodoru 1997, 9; 2000a, 6).

But *Romania as Booty* by no means exhausted Theodoru's outright negationist emulation. In a volume published in 2000, whose title was obviously of Garaudian inspiration, he expanded on the argument. In *Zionist Nazism*, Theodoru told his readers the Holocaust has been turned into "the most profitable Jewish business" that ever existed, a business that has "enriched the

²¹ As it has been observed "Faurisson was basing his estimates on the number of people who would fit comfortably into a subway car." Besides, the negationist "anti-gas" argument never takes into consideration that millions of Jewish Holocaust victims did not perish in gas chambers, but rather "from a variety of other causes, including the *Einsatzgruppen* shootings, as well as beatings, overwork, starvation, disease, and the general unsanitary conditions at the camps" (Shermer and Grobman 2000, 60, 131).

so-called witnesses, who fabricated a series of aberrant exaggerations and pathological descriptions of life in Nazi camps." The managers of that "business" had "introduced the Holocaust in school curricula, Ph.D.s are being written on the subject, writers engaged in fiction on the topic make a nice profit from it," and "so-called documentary movies such as [Claude Lanzmann's] *Shoah* – in fact nothing but subtle or gross mystifications" are constantly produced, alongside the holding of "so-called scientific conferences" and articles in the mass media. The combination managed to "set in place a complex system of misinformation, of brain-washing, of psychological pressure" and "succeeded in imposing forgery as an emotional reality." The reaction of "human dignity" to this state of affairs, Theodoru went on to write, "is called *Historical Revisionism*" and its courageous partisans had been turned into "the target of Nazi Zionism, who employ against revisionist historians physical terror, media lynching, judicial terror, assassination attempts, social isolation, economic strikes." The revisionist output "analyses the whole Nuremberg trial, proving that it has been a trial of the revenge of the victors over the vanquished. I myself characterize it as the trial of German Nazism by Zionist Nazism. To be more precise, the trial staged by Judaic Nazism against Aryan Nazism. Nothing but a scuffle among racists" (Theodoru 2000b, 23–24; author's emphasis).

Summarizing the gist of the so-called "revisionist" argument, Theodoru concludes:

No document on the Holocaust can be found. No order signed by Hitler, Himmler or other German leaders. The much-heralded *Final Solution* had two versions: that preceding the war against the USSR and consisting on the deportation of Jews to Madagascar; and that following the war's outbreak, consisting in their deportation to the Far East [*sic!*]. The gas chambers were delousing and disinfecting chambers, and the much-heralded Zyklon B was a pesticide, as demonstrated by American engineer Leuchter²² in the two analytical reports he produced after visiting all camps in Germany, Austria and Poland. The crematoria burned the corpses of those who died of typhus (Theodoru 2000b, 25–26; author's emphasis).

Theodoru ended this section in *Zionist Nazism* by welcoming the publication in Romanian translation of *The Founding Myths*, authored by the "excellent philosopher, sociologist and politologist Roger Garaudy," and expressing the hope that this was just the beginning. Other important "revisionist" authors, such

²² In fact, Leuchter was no engineer and he had practiced the trade without a license. Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, along with a group of Holocaust survivors from the United States, brought an action against Leuchter, and as a result of the trial he was forced to sign a consent decree barring him from using the title "engineer" (Shermer and Grobman 2000, 130).

as Irving, Butz, Faurisson, Jürgen Graf, Carl O. Nordling, and Carlo Mattogno²³ await their turn, he wrote (Theodoru 2000b, 27–28).

3. Deflective Negationism

While outright negationism is not often encountered and, generally-speaking, remains on the fringe, "deflective negationism" is far more diffuse. Whereas outright negationism rejects the very existence of the Holocaust, its deflective alternative does not; or, to some extent it does, but more perversely so. At this point, the reader must be reminded that none of the categories employed in this study is exclusive of the other. One should not be surprised that outright negationists may also indulge in deflective negationism. After all, Holocaust denial is also a matter of means, and different means may be called for in different situations. Rather than negating the Holocaust, deflective negation transfers the guilt for the perpetration of crimes to members of other nations, or it minimizes own-nation participation in their perpetration to insignificant "aberrations." It is thus particularistic rather than universal, as well as self-defensive.

Deflective negationism is a specific form of the more general syndrome of "externalization of guilt" – a phenomenon with deep social and psychological roots, which crosses national boundaries. In most cases, externalization of guilt is focused on the historic national enemies, be they internal (national minorities perceived as threatening) or external. Antisemitism, as I showed back in 1991 when discussing the specific Romanian case, has always been particularly prone to the whims of guilt-externalization (Shafir 1991, 29). But Romania is by no means singular. Writing on the Russian extreme Right, Walter Laqueur observes that it shares the "unshakable belief that all of Russia's misfortunes can be blamed on foreigners. Whatever goes wrong has nothing to do with anything that ethnic Russians have done or have not done. Without the machinations of foreigners, Russia would be great, prosperous, and powerful" (Laqueur 1997, 194).²⁴ However, in the particular case of Holocaust interpretations, explanations, and historiographical output in East Central Europe, one would have expected externalization of guilt to be either very

²³ Mattogno's *Myth of the Jews' Extermination* was in fact serialized in *Miocarea* in 1994–1995.

²⁴ Lest it be misunderstood, it should be added that externalization of guilt is by no means limited to radical Right formations. It affects all shades of the political spectrum, and not only of that spectrum. In fact, when I tell my wife that I burned the sofa with a cigarette because *she* did not bring me an ashtray, I am engaging in *personal* externalization of guilt. *Collective* externalization of guilt is just as self-defensive. If it is more difficult to overcome, this is due to the absence of *collective psychiatrists*. Or perhaps because those who may have been able to act in their stead—writers, historians, journalists—are themselves only rarely immune to the collective illness.

marginal, or wholly absent. As this section will show, this is far from accurate. It is in vain that one would search here for "logical" explanations. For, as Vidal-Naquet (1992, 73) observed, "When logic has no other end than self-defense, it goes mad."

It is possible to distinguish between several sub-categories of deflective negation, according to its target. Monopolizing perpetration on the Germans is the easiest and perhaps most natural form of deflective negationism. Second comes the deflection of guilt onto allegedly insignificant aberrations encountered in one's own nation. Last but by no means least, guilt for the Holocaust is also deflected on the Jews themselves. All three sub-categories involve, at the same time, a conscious or unconscious amount of "Holocaust minimization" (Braham 2001), as indeed the comparative trivialization of the *Shoah* also involves.

3a) Deflecting Guilt onto the Nazis

That the Holocaust would not have taken place without the Nazis and without their invasion of East Central Europe is a truism in no need of demonstration.²⁵ Yet responsibility cannot rest on Nazi shoulders alone. The Holocaust was also made possible by crimes initiated and committed at the order of Nazi-allied authorities; by those initiated and perpetrated by local fascists; or by collaboration, indeed, the effective participation in their perpetration by individuals from among the populations conquered by the Reich. Deflecting the entire guilt for the crimes on the Nazis is thus an explicit or implicit refusal of *Vergagenheitsbewältigung* [coming to terms with the past].

The Polish story is perhaps the most dramatic, for the Poles face a situation of having been victims and, to use Raul Hilberg's terminology, "bystanders" at one and the same time (Hilberg 1992). The former dimension is deeply imbedded in collective memory; the latter is often subject to deflection. As Steinlauf (1996, 125) aptly formulated it, the Communist-induced legacy of ignoring the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust has meant that its meaning "had become Polish victimization *by* the Holocaust" (author's emphasis). In addition, victimization in the "imagined" Polish community (its Andersonian sense; see Anderson 1991) is perhaps more pronounced than elsewhere, undoubtedly reflecting objective historical facts.²⁶ When literature professor Jan B[ł]ofski in 1987 first called on his countrymen to "stop being defensive, pleading innocence" about the Holocaust and "accept our responsibility," his call, as expected, met with harsh reactions. For it was not easy to demolish the myth that had transformed the genuine sixteenth- and seventeenth-century

²⁵ Had the Nazis invaded "just" Western Europe, a *genocide* might still have taken place, but it would not have been a *Shoah* (see the discussion in Bauer 2001, 47–50).

²⁶ If Poles view themselves as the "Christ of nations" (Tismaneanu 1999, 84), this reflects four partitions of the country's territory by its neighbors (1772, 1793, 1795, and 1939, see Kolankiewicz and Lewis 1988).

Polish tolerance of the Jews into one claiming that "that tradition continued uninterrupted over the centuries" (Brumberg 1994, 144). "We welcomed Jews to our home, but made them live in the basement," B[ł]ofski wrote, adding (in an obvious reference to the Emancipation) that "When they sought to enter the drawing room, we promised we would let them in on the condition that they would stop being Jews, or 'become civilized,' as the expression went in nineteenth century Poland, but certainly not only in Poland." However, "When some Jews expressed willingness to follow this advice, we started talking about a Jewish invasion." Then came the Holocaust, when "we lost our home and the occupiers began killing Jews on its premises. How many of us decided that this was none of our business? There were also those (I leave criminals out of account) who secretly were glad that Hitler solved the Jewish 'problem' for us." Does this, B[ł]ofski asked, amount to "complicity in genocide?" The definitive answer, he believed, was negative. "Why talk about genocide, then? About complicity? My answer is this: taking part and complicity are not the same thing. One may be associated in guilt without actually taking part in the crime." The Holocaust in Poland, according to B[ł]ofski, would have been "made more difficult" on its perpetrators, were it not for the "indifference and moral paralysis [of] the society that witnessed it" (B[ł]ofski 1988, 352–54).

B[ł]ofski's article was a landmark in the evolution of both Polish-Jewish relations and Polish attitudes toward the Holocaust. To review that evolution is beyond the focus of this study. But as Polish historian Dariusz Stola noted, by the 1990s, the debate in Poland on the Holocaust had increasingly turned into "Polish-Polish debates, contrary to the previous decades, when they had been mostly Polish-Jewish controversies." Many Poles are nowadays ready to face the seemingly irreconcilable equation that "a victim can sometimes be a victimizer" and that "Nazi intentions towards the Poles were inhuman, but different from the plan of the 'Final Solution' of the Jewish question" (Stola 2002).

Many – but by no means all, it should be added. Deflective negationism is still a tempting option.²⁷ Nothing illustrated this better than the reactions to the publication (in 2000 in Poland, in 2001 in the West) of Jan T. Gross's account of the July 1941 massacre of Jedwabne's 1,600-strong Jewish community by their Polish neighbors (Gross 2001). The massacre had been subjected to confinement in the Communist "black hole of history." Indeed, Gross's book does not reveal facts that were unknown in the first decade of Poland's Communist rule – it only provides additional information on them. Neither does the book in any way generalize Jedwabne into an accusation of overall Polish complicity in the Nazi crimes, though Jedwabne was actually not a singular case. Four days earlier, close to 1,000 Jews were killed by their neighbors in the nearby town of Radzi[ł]ów. Some of the Jedwabne massacre perpetrators had, in fact, been put on trial and convicted in 1949 and in 1953, with one death

²⁷ By *all*, of course, I mean all opinion-makers, politicians and, in the specific Polish case, the Catholic Church, whose role is highly important in the ongoing debates.

sentence pronounced but never carried out (Brumberg 2001; Fox 2001). The monument put on site by the Communists in the 1960s acknowledged the Jewish identity of the victims, but claimed that "Gestapo and Hitlerite gendarmes burned alive 1,600 people" (Fox 2001, 90). A similar inscription was put in place in Radzi[[ów, whose Jewish victims were said to have perished "at the hand of the Fascists" (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 22 March 2001). Nothing could be further from the truth. Most of Jedwabne's victims were forced into a barn that was set on fire by their Polish neighbors. The Germans were certainly present in the vicinity, but ironically, the German military post not far from Jedwabne was the safest place for the Jews to seek refuge in, some owing their lives – for the time being at least – to that military post (Gross 2001, 74–80; Fox 2001, 81–82). There were, according to Gross, less than a dozen German soldiers in Jedwabne when the atrocity was committed, and they did no more than take photographs of it. According to the account of a Jewish eyewitness, the same had happened in Radzi[[ów, where the arrival of German soldiers saved the lives of 18 Jews (Gross 2001, 68–69). A few other Jews were saved in both places by local Poles who hid them from the wrath of their neighbors.

Yet despite the evidence provided by Gross and reported on by the democratic media, some prominent Polish historians entrenched themselves into deflectionist negationist ditches. This was mostly done through postures of "quasi-negationism," defined by Stola as "a most detailed critique of sources, to conclude that nothing can be said precisely and unquestionably about an event" (Stola 2002). While acknowledging that he can no longer deny that Poles have participated in the mass murder of Jews, prominent historian Tomasz Szarota questioned Gross' certainty that *only* Poles had perpetrated the massacre. He claimed that 200 German troops had come to the town on the same day (which Gross conclusively proves in the book to be untrue), and that, even if Germans had not participated in the slaughter, they might well have inspired it. Gross does not deny that this may have been the case, but shows how eager the Jedwabne Poles had been to carry the massacre out; before the slaughter perpetrated at the instigation of the Jedwabne mayor, the Germans had asked the local Poles to leave alive some Jewish craftsmen, but the reply was that the Gentiles can do any job without the Jews. Szarota also wondered "how 1,500 [*sic!*] healthy, able-bodied people could be led to their death by fewer than a hundred criminals armed only with clubs, without attempting to defend themselves or even to flee" (Szarota interview with Jacek  akowski, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18–19 November 2000, in *Thou Shalt Not Kill: Poles on Jedwabne*, 73). Abraham Brumberg, who cites him (2001, 9), remarks that "Thus are axes, knives and iron bars transformed into 'mere sticks,' and a crowd of 1,600 tormented, beaten, blood-covered men, women and children, hardly able to stand, become exemplars of good health. That is, as the standard image has it, cowards."²⁸ But the insistence of Szarota and other Polish intellectuals on the

²⁸ This writer finds it hardly comprehensible that Professor Istv an De ak, in his review of Gross's book, renders credibility to such statements, when he writes: "The Poles had no

role the Germans allegedly played in the Jedwabne massacre led to an investigation by the National Remembrance Institute (IPN), a body in charge of investigating crimes committed by the Nazi and communist regimes in Poland. The fact that German ammunition was found near the massacre site had given some credence to Szarota's version, but the IPN commission concluded in December 2001 that part of the ammunition dated back to World War I and the rest were bullets produced after 1942, one year later than the Jedwabne events. "We have not found any evidence that would indicate that there were other uniformed German formations [in Jedwabne] apart from eight gendarmes, which was known earlier," IPN Chairman Leon Kieres announced at the end of the investigation (see *RFE/RL Newslines*, 20 December 2001).

The Jedwabne memorial was replaced in 2001 with another marker, in a ceremony boycotted (for reasons yet to be discussed) not only by the town's population – with the exception of its mayor – but also by the Catholic Church. The ceremony was attended by President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who apologized for the crime "as a citizen, and as president of the Republic of Poland." But the new memorial still eschews identifying the perpetrators. It is erected "In memory of the Jews of Jedwabne and surrounding areas, men, women, and children, fellow-dwellers of this land, murdered and burned alive at this site on 10 July 1941" (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 10 July 2001). On the eve of the ceremony, a Western agency reported that a sign on the door of a Jedwabne grocery store read: "We do not apologize. It was the Germans who murdered Jews in Jedwabne. Let the slanderers apologize to the Polish nation." It was signed by an unknown "Committee for the Defense of the Good name of Poland" (AP, 10 July 2001).

Lithuania has also had its deflective memorial negationism. In the post-Communist period, Jewish activists from Vilnius erected a monument in the memory of victims slaughtered at Ponary (Paneria). The intended inscription –

firearms. When some Polish writers raised this question, Jan Gross answered bitterly, arguing that the Jewish heads of families had to look after their wives and children. Yet is it not precisely in defense of their families that people tend to risk their lives? It is well known that, in extremis, some Polish Jews dared to confront heavily armed SS soldiers; one can ask why the town's Jewish blacksmiths, for instance did not grab iron bars to fend off the attackers. They may have been hopelessly outnumbered, but the fact that they did not fight may also suggest that there were more than a handful of Germans present at that time" (Deák 2001, 55). Professor Deák is certainly not unaware that armed Jewish resistance and confrontation of the Nazis took place only *after* the Jews learned of the fate awaiting them. Should the Jedwabne Jewish community, in June 1941, have been conscious of what began to be put in place in 1942? Perhaps Yehuda Bauer's summing up of Jewish armed resistance puts it most succinctly: "it took place wherever there was the slightest chance that it could, which did not happen too often." But it also took place after the Jews realized that the Nazis "rarely offered anything but another form of death" (Bauer 2001, 166). For it to take place, moreover, it needed support from the environment (Bauer 2001, 138). But in Jedwabne's case the "environment" were precisely the perpetrating "neighbors."

in Lithuanian, Russian, and Hebrew – spoke of 70,000 Jewish victims murdered and incinerated "by the Nazis and their local assistants." The authorities, however, deleted from the inscription any reference to the "locals" and eventually removed the Lithuanian and Russian-language inscriptions altogether, "evidently out of concern that the non-Jewish young generation would discover what their elders had done" (Levin 2000).

Deflective negationism is also prompted by the pursuit of immediate or short-term popularity by politicians. That they may oscillate, even contradict themselves in their own pronouncements on the Holocaust is therefore no surprise. Each pronouncement is aimed at serving the immediate needs of the hour. Former Polish President Lech Wałęsa, for example, in an apparent spontaneous addition to his prepared speech, when addressing the Israeli Knesset in 1991 added "Please forgive us," triggering the applause of the Israeli parliamentary deputies, but also the wrath of many of his countrymen. In 1995, when Poland observed the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Wałęsa knew better. Presiding over ceremonies in Kraków's Jagiellonian University on the morning of January 26, and in the afternoon over a gathering of Nobel Peace Prize laureates, Wałęsa made no specific reference to Jews or the Holocaust. The inscription at Auschwitz had, in the meantime, changed – but not so the mentality of an electorate brought up in the belief that the Holocaust was, above all, one of the Polish nation. Indeed, a public opinion poll released in that year showed that 47 percent of Wałęsa's countrymen believed that Auschwitz was, above all, the place of Polish martyrdom and only 8 percent were of the opinion that most of the victims there had been Jews.²⁹ It was only in late afternoon, when ceremonies took place at Auschwitz itself, and after protracted negotiations with the present world Jewish leaders, that Wałęsa amended a prepared speech, adding "especially the Jewish nation" after the originally-prepared deploring of the "suffering of many nations" (Steinlauf 1997, 131–32, 139, 141).

Prominent Polish intellectual Adam Michnik was right in defending Wałęsa against charges of antisemitism directed at him after the 1995 Auschwitz ceremonies (interview in *Le Monde*, 10 February 1995). It was not antisemitism that drove Wałęsa on the occasion, just as this had not been the motivation for his having condoned the "Judaization" of his presidential rivals, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Alexander Kwaśniewski in 1990 and 1996, respectively – all while wondering why some people wished to hide their ethnic origin and describing himself as "happy to be a genuine Pole." Rather, Wałęsa

²⁹ As Dariusz Stola (2002), notes, the controversy in Poland triggered by Wałęsa's speeches contributed to a significant, if not radical, change; only one month later, the share of those who saw Auschwitz as being primarily a place of Jewish martyrdom increased from 8 to 18 percent, and that of those considering the place one of primarily Polish martyrdom declined from 47 to 32 percent. This is just one among many illustrations of the important role critical intellectuals can play in remolding perceptions, including those of the Holocaust.

was driven by what I have described as "utilitarian antisemitism" (Shafir 2001b, 419–20), which, to a large extent may call for making use of deflective negationism as well.

Another example in point is provided by current conservative Hungarian Premier, Viktor Orbán, and by his entourage. Orbán is in fact emulating the policies of his predecessor, József Antall, who was of the opinion that if Holocaust issues in post-Communist Hungary must be addressed at all, they should concentrate on Hungarian rescuers of Jews rather than on the Jewish suffering and decimation (Karsai 1999, 139). Antall, of course, had a personal stake at it: he was the son of a "Righteous Among Nations" (Deák 1994a, 119), and precisely because of that, he could *not* be suspected of antisemitism. But first on his political mind was "creating an identity on a symbolic level" (see above). He was undoubtedly aware that the electorate to which he could appeal was generally inclined to idealize Hungary's pre-Communist past and (for reasons yet to be discussed) tended to regard Jews as perpetrators of Hungary's own martyrdom at the hand of Communists, rather than victims of Hungarian antisemitism and of collaboration with the Nazis. Ministers of his cabinet attended the 1993 ceremony of reinterment of Horthy's remains and Antall himself later visited the grave. Before doing so, the premier referred to Horthy as having been a "Hungarian patriot" who "should be placed in the community of the nation and the awareness of the people" (cited in Braham 1993, 140).

Not that Horthy should be placed in the same "league" as Antonescu, Tiso, or Pavelić. Yet no less than 550,000 Jews were exterminated in "Greater Hungary," most of whom perished before the Germans deposed Horthy in October 1944 (Braham 1994b). The harsh anti-Jewish legislation enacted under his rule, the loss of life of between 40,000 and 45,000 so-called "labor servicemen," the murder of "alien" Jews deported to Kamenets-Podolski in 1941, and the massacres in and around Újvidék in 1942 cannot be laid at the door of the Germans (Braham 2001). Even if the extermination of the bulk of Hungarian Jewry had long been delayed, and even if Horthy had personally played a role in that delay and in briefly halting deportations to Auschwitz in July 1944 (Deák 1994a; 1994b), when it occurred – mostly after the German occupation of the country in March 1944 – it did so with astonishing efficiency involving the large-scale collaboration of the Hungarian authorities, particularly the gendarmerie (Braham 2001). At least nominally, Horthy was still head of state ("Regent") throughout a good part of that period. Not that Antall (himself a historian) or his successor were unaware of these facts. But the two were not only *responding* to the electorate's ignorance or prejudice on the Holocaust in pursuit of political popularity. They were – to cite Kovács again – actively engaging in "creating an identity on a symbolic level."

In 1998, after a visit to the Hungarian pavilion in the Auschwitz exhibit, Orbán, decided to reconstruct the pavilion which had been built by the Communist regime, finding it both inappropriate and neglected. The plans, submitted by a commission headed by István Ihász, a museologist with well-

known nationalist credentials, were little else than "a pro-Horthy apologia designed to sanitize the Nazi era in general and the Hungarian involvement in the Final Solution in particular." The commission envisaged to portray a "virtual symbiosis of Hungarian-Jewish life since the emancipation of Jews in 1867, downplaying the many anti-Jewish manifestations as mere aberrations in the otherwise chivalrous history of Hungary. While focusing attention on the positive aspects of Jewish life in the country, emphasizing the flourishing of the Jewish community between 1867 and 1944, the rescue activities of those identified as Righteous, and Horthy's saving of the Jews of Budapest," the same plans "blamed almost exclusively the Germans for the destruction of the Jews" (Braham 2001). The exhibition was canceled after protests from the country's Federation of Jewish Communities. Reacting to the decision, a spokesman of the federation said the country's Jewish communities did not wish to see the project halted, but "to see it is done right" (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 9 and 10 September 1999).

A plaque commemorating Horthy's notorious gendarmes (who impressed even the SS advisers by the enthusiasm they displayed in the ghettoisation and concentration of Hungarian Jews before deportation, and who also participated occasionally in the extermination) was unveiled in 1999 at Budapest's War History Museum in the presence of the minor coalition Smallholders' Party member, Zsolt Lányi, chairman of the parliament's Defense Committee, triggering strong protests from the Jewish community (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 29 October 1999; Braham 2001).

And it was a high official of the same coalition, Orbán's advisor Mária Schmidt, who shortly thereafter again triggered the community's protests, after stating in a Le Pen-like manner that the Holocaust had been but a "marginal issue" of the history of World War II. Yet Orbán issued a statement largely exonerating Schmidt and expressing his "full confidence" in her (*Magyar Hírlap* and Hungarian Radio, in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts-Eastern Europe, 16 November 1999; *RFE/RL Newslines*, 16 November 1999). Schmidt had some sort of "vested interest" when she made the statement. She had been a leading member of the commission that attempted to "cleanse" out of the Auschwitz exhibit the Horthy atrocities against the Hungarian Jews (Braham 2001).

Deflective negationism is also manifest in Hungary (but not only there) under the form of transforming the Nazi-allied country into a victim of the Germans, or, as Braham (2001) put it, "turning Germany's last ally into its last victim." All these manifestations, to return to Kovács's analytical perspective, emerged from the option of Antall's Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) to display historic continuity – an option later embraced by Orbán's Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) as well. The political discourse of the two formations is by necessity "externalizing guilt" and deflective. It is the unjust 1920 Trianon Treaty that forced Hungary into an alliance with Germany and brought to power the extreme Right Arrow Cross, it is claimed. As Kovács summarizes the discourse's main perspectives:

The antisemitic laws of the thirties are the consequences of this alliance; they are concessions made to the Germans in order to prevent a more brutal persecution of the Jews; they were also a means of silencing the Hungarian extreme right-wing. It is thanks to these laws that the largest community in the German sphere of interest could survive in Hungary until the German invasion of the country in March 1944. In this respect, another important factor was the resistance of the Horthy government, which opposed demands for the deportation of the Jews until the German invasion. The responsibility for the Holocaust is borne solely by the German occupiers and the collaborators of the Arrow Cross, who formed only a minority and were the radical opponents of the conservative government (Kovács 2002).

It is true that Antall and Orbán's motivations may have been somewhat different, if only because the two premiers obviously belong to different generations. The most important members of Orbán's cabinet were born between 1960 and 1965. Educated in the spirit of "organized forgetfulness," the younger conservatives may simply be less sensitive to antisemitic demagoguery than the Antall generation and therefore less aware of the need to distance itself from extremists of the István Csurka type.³⁰ Antall and his generation had opted for identifying themselves with Horthy-era Hungary despite awareness of the provocative sensitivity of their option. Orbán's generation is far less sensitive to the implications of its "historical referential" option. Neither the conservative, nor the neo-conservative generation were driven by antisemitic motivation, but at the end of the day both engaged in deflectionist negationism.

Deflectionist negationism is also embraced in Hungary by the radical return Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP), which has, for all practical purposes, become an ally of FIDESZ after the 1998 parliamentary elections. Like the conservatives, MIÉP leader Csurka acknowledges and deplors the Holocaust (Kovács 2002), but even more than them, denies any Hungarian responsibility for it, branding anyone who does so a "traitor" whose only aim is to tarnish the reputation of the Hungarian people and break its self-respect (Karsai 1999, 139). Kovács rightly insists that there is a difference between the conservative and the neo-conservative tone in perceptions of, and attitudes toward, the Holocaust on one hand, and the tone and perceptions of MIÉP supporters on the other hand. Unlike the negationists, conservatives neither display an "overt antisemitism," nor do they deny the Holocaust. While Csurka displays a "concealed, coded" antisemitism and his remarks on the Holocaust are frequently aimed at brandishing the alleged "Jewish revenge" on an "innocent" Hungary, the conservative discourse of the József Antall and Viktor Orbán governments is not antisemitic "in terms of intentions," it "honestly" condemns the persecution of Jews and it considers the Holocaust to have been "a tragic event in Hungarian history." However, since it strives to "demonstrate the

³⁰ I am grateful to András Kovács for drawing my attention to this aspect.

historical continuity of anti-Communist conservatism" perceived to have preserved "the most important characteristic of the Hungarian political system prior to the German occupation," (Kovács 2002) this conservative type of discourse also ends up being deflective. Kovács may well be right in emphasizing the dangers inherent for the failure of the "anti-Fascist argument" to make a distinction between "political antisemitism" (i.e., the MIÉP type of discourse) and "historical conservatism" (the MDF-FIDESZ discourse). However, both discourses are similarly, even if not equally, conducive to failing the task of what Michnik termed as "the ability to confront the dark episodes of one's own heritage," which he defined as "a test" for the "democratic maturity" of "each nation" (cited in Steinlauf 1997, 133). By this (granted, rather high) yardstick, Braham (2001) is perfectly legitimate in placing both types of discourse under the common category of the Holocaust's "history cleansers."

Many similar tunes are played in the other former Hitlerite allies, Slovakia and Romania. Pavol Šrnoga, who was a high official in the Tiso governance of Slovakia, claims in a euphemism that the "first anti-Jewish manifestation" in his country was registered in January 1939 in Nové Mesto nad Váhom, when local Germans donned the uniforms of the Hlinka Guards and prevented non-Jewish customers from entering Jewish-owned shops. His memoirs, published after the fall of Communism, were described as "spiced with unbelievably coarse anti-Jewish invective" (Mešán 2000, 105, 179). Šrnoga, who throughout the independence period of the Fascist-clerical state held different high positions, has, among other things, been in charge of removing from schools Jewish and Czech children and replacing them with Slovaks displaced from lands lost to Hungary in 1938 (Cohen 1999, 206 n. 11). He is the father of Jan Šrnoga, who was Slovak premier in post-Communist Federal Czechoslovakia between April 1991 and June 1992 and became leader of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), a position from which he resigned in October 2000 (see *RFE/RL Newslines*, 23 October 2000), although he stayed on as Justice Minister. Family connections to Slovakia's war time government aside, Jan Šrnoga very much faces the same problems of "symbolic identity creation" that other conservative parties face in post-Communist East Central Europe. While on a visit to Jerusalem in February 1997, he said he distances himself from the "negative aspects" of the Tiso regime, but added that one must make a distinction between that regime and the independent Slovak state. Nobody, according to Jan Šrnoga, is blaming Germany for the crimes of the Nazi regime. As for his KDH, he described it as "sociologically the successor of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party (HSĽS)." He was genuine enough to admit that a clear denunciation of Tiso would amount for the KDH to a loss of voters (Mešán 2000, 177). Pavol Šrnoga, in any case, is far from being the only Slovak indulging in deflective negationism focused on the Germans. According to Gabriel Hoffmann, it was only after the visit to Slovakia of Marshal Wilhelm Keitel in 1942 that the deportation of Jews to extermination camps began (Mešán 2000, 164). And, as we shall yet note, that measure according to Hoffmann and others in Slovakia, had been the fault of the Jews themselves.

A rather sophisticated formula of deflecting the blame (though not entirely) onto the Germans was found in Lithuania. Holocaust Day is marked in that country on 23 September, the day of the 1943 liquidation of the Vilnius ghetto, rather than on 23 June, when the massacres of Lithuanian Jews were launched by Lithuanians *before* the arrival of the German soldiers in 1941 (Levin 2000).³¹

Romanian deflective negationism shares with Hungary the drive to transform the country into a victim, rather than a state sharing the Nazis' antisemitic ideological credo and participating in the perpetration of crimes. Unlike Hungary, however, the drive to do so in Romania dates back to Communist times. In 1986, for instance, the Bucharest weekly *Luceafærul* was telling its readers that "the main feature of the Holocaust in northern Transylvania was anti-Romanian and not anti-Semitic" (cited in Braham 1997, 51). After the fall of the former regime, a carefully selective collection of documents from the State Archives was published under the title *Romania, the Great Victim of World War Two* (Eskenasy 1997, 291). The roots of the perception must once more be traced back to the Communist period.

Ceauşescu-time historiography had Romania abandoned by the West and forced to enter the alliance with Hitler to defend what still remained sovereign after the loss of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union following Moscow's June 1940 ultimatum, and the loss of northern Transylvania to Hungary as the result of the August 1940 "Vienna Diktat." While acknowledging on rare occasions the plight of Jews, the role played by the Antonescu regime in the decimation of the Jewry independently of the Germans was passed over in silence, emphasis being instead put on Antonescu's refusal to hand over Romanian Jewry to the Germans. "Despite repeated pressure exercised by the Hitlerites on the Romanian government and on Marshal Antonescu in particular," historian Aurică Simion was writing in 1979, "he never permitted the Nazis to implement the 'Final Solution' on Jews *who were Romanian citizens*" (Simion 1979, 132. Emphasis added). The extermination of Bessarabian, northern Bukovinian and of Jews on Soviet territories under the jurisdiction of the Romanian army was thus ignored – not to mention the fact that some Romanian citizens of Jewish origins from Moldova and southern Bukovina were also transported and perished in the Transnistria camps, or the fact that Jewish Romanian citizens *were* deported to Transnistria (though allowed eventually to return).

Gheorghe Zaharia and Nicolae Copoiu, both high-ranking staff of the Communist Party's Institute for Historical and Sociopolitical Studies, were shortly after claiming that the number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust in Romania was as low as 3,500. For this purpose, they engaged in what can be called "historical gerrymandering": in their eyes, the territories of Bessarabia and Bukovina, which had been regained from the Soviet Union in 1941, were

³¹ On Lithuanian participation in the Holocaust and ensuing disputes between Israeli and Lithuanian authors see also Shner-Neshamit 1997 and Ycikas 1997.

rightfully Romanian, but the Jews there were not Romanian by right. From a technical-legalistic perspective, this was actually true, since many Jews all over Romania had lost citizenship as a result of the Nuremberg-like legislation implemented since August 1940. Zaharia and Copoiu acknowledged that allegedly 68,000 Jews had perished in camps, but claimed that these had been moved "by the Nazis" from Romanian jurisdiction in Transnistria to territories beyond River Bug, where "they had been exterminated by the Gestapo, or had died as a result of epidemics or the absence of medical and prophylactic care" (cited in Eskenasy 1994, 189–90).

That was not the only instance of Communist deflection of guilt to the Germans. Nicolae Minei had acknowledged in 1978 the deportations to Transnistria, but claimed that they had never been motivated, "not even secretly," by any "intent to exterminate those affected." The victims, he wrote, perished as a result of three main reasons. First, "abuses committed by the local authorities," who had "embezzled funds allocated for the acquisition of food" (the national identity of the alleged embezzlers went, however, unmentioned). Second, "criminal excesses of degenerate elements belonging to the watching and supervision organs" (ditto); and, finally, "the intervention of the Nazi *Einsatzkommando* assassins who, while withdrawing from the East, forced their way into the camps, and exterminated the inmates" (Minei 1978, 25).

In the post-Communist period, at least two Romanian historians acknowledged Romanian responsibility for the perpetrated massacres. Dinu Giurescu (1999, 70, 91) concludes that 108,000 Romanian Jews were exterminated by the Romanian authorities but his figures do not include the extermination carried out among Ukrainian Jews. Florin Constantiniu (1997, 394) approximates the destruction (apparently of both) at "some 200,000." Andrei Pippidi tends to accept as more accurate the estimate of 120,000 by German historian Christa Zach (Zach 1991; Pippidi 2000, 241 and 2001, 15). Jewish historians of Romanian origin residing in the United States or in Israel produce figures that are considerably higher. Radu Ioanid estimates that some 250,000 Jews (as well as some 20,000 Roma) perished at the hands of the Romanian authorities, whereas Jean Ancel comes up with an estimate of 410,000, of which 170,000 are Ukrainian Jews (Ancel 1998). Finally, Raul Hilberg's estimate is of 270,000 (Hilberg 1994, 3:1300).

The "deflecting guilt onto the Germans" approach was not abandoned after the change of regime, being embraced by both nationalist historians and nationalist politicians. For example, General Ion Alexandru Munteanu, director of the Bucharest State Archives until November 1991 and a close friend of Corneliu Vadim Tudor till his death in 1995 (see Shafir 1997, 377–78), was writing that "what happened in Eastern Moldova [i.e., Bessarabia] and in Transnistria in 1941–1943" had been exclusively the responsibility of the Germans. Similarly, historian Maria Covaci, co-author of a tale of the Iași pogrom published in Communist times (see below), writing in the weekly *Europa* in 1991, could claim that "With regard to the fate of the Jews in the camps in Transnistria, some of them died because of the war, epidemics, and the

massacres perpetrated by the SS and the Nazi *Todt* Organization. The Romanian army did not commit any massacres or pogroms" (both cited in Eskenasy 1994, 215). This is basically the argument also produced in 1998 by Alex Mihai Stoenescu, a writer who worked for the Romanian Defense Ministry's Public Relations Department, in a volume entitled *The Army, the Marshal and the Jews*. Stoenescu claims that the Iași pogrom could only occur because Antonescu had made the mistake of "practically ceding" Romanian sovereignty in the town to the Germans on the eve of the war and that "the German secret services, as well as the *Todt* division units, acted as if they were at home" (Stoenescu 1998, 228).

Politicians were no different. For example Petre Ńurlea, representing the post-Communist National Salvation Front (FSN) "successor party" in the parliament was claiming in June 1991 that only 3,233 Jews had been murdered in Iași and responsibility for the deed squarely fell on the "special repression troops of the German army" (*Azi*, 15 June 1991). Ńurlea in the same year initiated a motion that resulted in the parliament's raising in a minute of silence tribute to Antonescu's memory, on the eve of the anniversary marking his execution. He eventually moved from the Democratic Front of National Salvation (FDSN), as the FSN was now called, to the radical continuity formation of the Party of Romanian National Unity, considering that the FDSN was not nationalist enough (Shafir 1997, 360–61). Yet two years later, FDSN Senator Gheorghe Dumitruøcu, was displaying the same deflective interpretation of Romania's recent history as Ńurlea had earlier done, and in the PRM weekly was attacking the late Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, accusing him of "creating antisemitism" in Romania by faking Jewish suffering in the country. "I can well understand," Dumitruøcu noted, that "some reprisals [against Jews] were carried out in Iași, but they were not committed by us, but by the Hitlerites" (*România mare*, 28 May 1993). Both Ńurlea and Dumitruøcu, one should add, were also university history professors.

3b) Deflecting Guilt to the "Fringe"

A slightly more versatile form of deflective negationism consists in admitting own-nation members' participation in crimes, but considering those perpetrators to have been "fringe" – in other words marginal "aberrations" in the country's otherwise spotless history of relations with the Jews. In Hungary, the "aberration" is considered to be Arrow-Cross *Nyilas* (Braham 2001); in Romania the role is played by the *Legiune*, as the Iron Guard was also called. For Ceauøescu-time historiography, the Iron Guard had nothing Romanian about itself, it only "slavishly emulated its Hitlerite tutors" and indulged into "antisemitic diversionism" (Minei 1978, 16). The treatment by the Communists, as well as by the post-Communists, of the pogrom carried out in Iași in late June 1941 is an example of deflection to fringe. In this particular case, however, the "fringe" is said to have been associated in perpetration with the Germans.

The pogrom was carried out by local authorities, the Romanian army, members of the Iron Guard, and the SS. Between 8,000 and 12,000 Jews perished in Iași and 2,793 perished in the pogrom's ensuing "Death Trains," in which Jews were packed in sealed cattle wagons and moved for days from place to place, being asphyxiated or dying of thirst (Ioanid 1994, 143–44; 1997, 112–13). Some Communist historians chose the "German deflection" to attribute guilt. For Aurel Kerefi and Maria Covaci only some "stray Romanian soldiers" had joined the perpetrators "at their own initiative" (Kerefi and Covaci 1978, 75). Minei, who prefaced the book by Kerefi and Covaci, wrote that the pogrom's initiative "fully belonged to Hitler's envoys and to the *Einsatzkommandos*" (Minei 1978, 26).

In actual fact, local authorities, particularly police, were deeply involved in carrying out the slaughter, as were some army units, and convincing evidence points to the involvement of the Secret Intelligence Service in its preparation (Ancel 1987; Carp 1996; Florian 1997; Ioanid 1997, 87–123).³² Yet in the book already cited – a volume that signaled the regime's intention to begin Antonescu's rehabilitation process – historian Aurică Simion was claiming that "in summer 1941 the Hitlerites, with the help of some Legionnaires and other declassed elements, organized a pogrom in Iași *over the head of the Romanian authorities*, which had practically lost control over the town, in which 3,233 Jewish citizens were killed" (Simion 1979, 132. *Emphasis mine*). Simion was "more generous" with the number of victims than Ceaușescu himself (1975, 570) was willing to admit (2,000), but four years before Simion's book was published, party historian Gheorghe Zaharia (cited in Ioanid 1997, 114) had mentioned over 8,000 victims. More than half had apparently been resurrected since!

That Mircea Mușat – a former Communist historiography-censor turned into a founding member of the PRM – would, after the change of regime, stick to the deflective interpretation was no surprise. In a book published in 1992, he was calling the Iași massacres a "Hitlerite-Legionnaire pogrom" (Mușat 1992, 217). But that President Ion Iliescu would embrace the "fringe approach" was somehow unexpected. Iliescu's contortionist exercises in dealing with the legacy of the Holocaust are worth contemplating.

In a speech at the Coral Temple in Bucharest on January 21, 2001, marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Iron Guard pogrom in Bucharest, the president said the Iron Guardist "aberration" had been a "delirium of intolerance and anti-Semitism." Yet, he added, that brief "delirium" excepted, there has 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 Holocaust." 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

³² Florian is an eyewitness and survived the "Death trains."

corrected when "Romanian [i.e., rather than Jewish] historians will tackle the subject" (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 22 January 2001).

Hardly six months had passed, however, when Iliescu's "unique aberration" of 1941 grew slightly larger. With Romania banging on NATO's doors, and against the protests in the United States and Israel triggered by the Antonescu cult in Romania, Iliescu attended a ceremony marking the Iași pogrom where he felt compelled to declare that "no matter what we may think, international public opinion considers Antonescu to have been a war criminal" (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 26 June 2001). Earlier that month, General Mircea Chelaru, a former chief of staff of the Romanian army, had been forced to resign from the military after participating in a ceremony in Bucharest at which a bust of Marshal Antonescu had been unveiled (Totok 2001). Iliescu's statement in Iași had triggered protests not only from the PRM, but also from among members of his own party, such as Senator Adrian Păunescu (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 1, 4, and 5 June 2001). Back in 1993, both the PRM and Păunescu (at that time first deputy chairman of the Socialist Labor Party) harshly criticized Iliescu for having participated in ceremonies marking the Holocaust at the Coral Temple, and the PRM protested when, earlier that year, Iliescu had attended the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, where, the PRM claimed, the "Romanian people" was unjustifiably accused of having participated in the Holocaust against Jews (Shafir 1997, 369–70, 390). "Utilitarian antisemitism," rather than any other explanation, accounts for Iliescu's repeated contortions on the Holocaust. And that motivation had also driven him into an informal (1992–1994) and even a formal (1995) coalition with the PRM.

Deflection to the fringe was also apparent in Poland on the occasion of the 2001 Jedwabne pogrom anniversary. Roman Catholic Cardinal Józef Glemp stayed away from the ceremony, although he announced that the Church would join the Jewish community in prayers. Glemp said that two "high ranking officials" had tried to contact him some time before the anniversary and to "dictate" to him how the Church should mark it. "I do not want politicians to impose on the Church how it should atone for the crime committed by a group of believers who had run morally wild," he said; and in an interview with a private radio station, he explained that "In the name of justice, we cannot label any nation as a nation of murderers. We cannot extend the derangement, which was provoked among people of Jedwabne and its vicinity, to the entire Polish nation" (cited in *RFE/RL Poland, Belarus and Ukraine Report*, 6 March 2001).

Suspensions of "anti-Polonism," "anti-Romanianism," "anti-Lithuanianism" or "anti-Hungarianism," in a word, of a Jewish conspiracy to bring about the culpabilization of the nation as a whole, surfaces every time the Holocaust is marked in one way or another.³³ Strangely enough, however, their partisans

³³ The famous pastoral letter of Polish bishops, read in all parishes in January 1991, is from this point of view emblematic. While including a moving passage acknowledging the "sin" of the "bystanders," it also emphasized that "In expressing our sorrow for all the injustices and harm done to Jews, we cannot forget that we consider untrue and deeply

never look "in the neighbor's courtyard" (except perhaps to throw the skeleton there) and are all persuaded that *their* particular nation has been picked up for the purpose. More often than not, in this particular context the "double genocide" argument (see below) is also regularly produced. "We want," Glemp told journalists just on the eve of the Jedwabne commemoration, "to apologize for all the evil that was perpetrated by Polish citizens on citizens of the Judaic faith" in Jedwabne (the prayer was said in a church near the Warsaw ghetto on May 27). However, Glemp added, "we want to include in our prayers the other evil, that was perpetrated *on* Polish citizens of the Catholic faith, and in which Poles of the Judaic faith had a part" (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 4 May 2001. Emphasis mine).³⁴

Lithuanian Premier Gedimanas Vagnorius in 1991 was deploring that a very small part of Lithuanian society had "cast a shadow over the entire Lithuanian people" by having participated in the crimes perpetrated during the Holocaust. His successor, Adolfos Slezevicius, on the eve of Holocaust Day in 1994, was likewise stating that he was compelled to "express words of regret and to ask the Jewish people for forgiveness" even though "no more than a hundred Lithuanians took part in the genocide of the Jewish people." President Algirdas Brazauskas, on a visit to Israel in 1995, told the Knesset he was bowing his head "in memory of more than 200,000 Lithuanian Jews who perished," and asked "forgiveness" for the action of "those Lithuanians who brutally killed, banished and humiliated Jews." Like Wa[ł]sa, upon returning home he was greeted by "a very tumultuous and aggressive response from many of his countrymen" (Levin 2000). So was former Hungarian (Socialist) Premier Gyula Horn after apologizing for the Holocaust in the name of the Hungarian people. Áron Mónus, an outright negationist who had returned from exile – and was the publisher of the Hungarian-language version of *Mein Kampf* – sued Horn, arguing that the premier had violated his personal rights by suggesting that he, Mónus, was a member of a guilty nation (Karsai 1999, 139; Kovács 2002). It must, however, be emphasized that Lithuania has traveled a long way since. On Holocaust Day 2001, former Lithuanian Ambassador to the United States, Alfonsas Eidintas, was telling his countrymen that alone in the summer and the fall of 1941, "some 130,000 Jews were slaughtered" and that "more than half were killed by local collaborators." The murderers, he added,

harmful the use by many of the concept of what is called 'Polish antisemitism' as an especially threatening form of antisemitism; and in addition, frequently connecting the concentration camps not with those who were actually involved with them, but with Poles in a Poland occupied by the Germans" (cited in Steinlauf 1997, 132).

³⁴ The above-cited pastoral letter also said: "We are aware that many of our compatriots still remember the injustices committed by the postwar Communist authorities, in which people of Jewish faith also took part," but was careful to add that "the source of inspiration for their action was clearly neither their origin, nor their religion, but the communist ideology, from which the Jews themselves, in fact, suffered many injustices" (cited in Steinlauf 1997, 132).

cut off the beards of rabbis, raped women, and stole Jewish property (*Baltic Times Online*, 27 September–3 October 2001).

Slovakia is not that far yet, and deflecting guilt to the fringe still looms large in that country. Štefan Polakoviã thus argues that the HS^aS and Tiso himself cannot be blamed for the party's eventual emulation of National Socialism. A chief ideologist of the HS^aS "clerical Fascism," Polakoviã was active in the U.S. exile as a prominent leader of the Slovak Liberation Committee (Meštan 2000, 30–35, 131; Cohen 1999, 209, n. 50). Like other postwar exiled leaders, he frequently visited Slovakia, participating in conferences and symposia aimed at "cleansing" Tiso's reputation and that of the state he headed. In an article published in the "respectable" *Literárny týždenník* in early 1993 under the title "What was Populism all about?," Polakoviã argued that the HS^aS' "populism" was, and continues to be, wrongly associated with Nazism. In fact, he claims, association with Nazi Germany was only a "cosmetic defect" and Tiso's state would have entered the annals of respectable statehood, were it not for what he calls in a euphemism "the deterioration of the political situation" after 1939. By that he understands the emulation of National Socialism, the introduction of anti-Jewish measures, and the subsequent deportations of Jews to extermination camps, though Polakoviã never calls the child by its name. It was, he claims, the fault of Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka and that of Hlinka Guard commander-in-chief Alexander Mach that "tainted the image of modern Slovak statehood." It was Tuka who embarked upon an emulation of National Socialism and "triggered off the inhumane solution of the Jewish issue." But in the same breath, Polakoviã also argues that Nazism in Slovakia had been merely "formal," inasmuch as the HS^aS was a single party with a "leader" at its head and the Hlinka Guard members were wearing uniforms (Meštan 2000, 67–68). Much of the same argument was brought out during his lectures in Slovakia by Dr. Jozef M. Kirschbaum, a major figure in Slovakia's wartime government and the secretary-general of Tiso's Party of National Unity (Cohen 1999, 207): there was no antisemitism in the Slovak state, and the "Jewish question" was solely in the hands of the Germans and Tuka (Meštan 2000, 147).

Like Polakoviã and Kirschbaum, Gabriel Hoffmann argues that the deportations of the Slovak Jews were entirely carried out at Tuka's orders and, moreover, that they took place against the will of Tiso. The fact is that Slovakia was the only state to have actually *payed* the Germans 500 Reichsmarks for the deportation of every Jew (Hilberg 1994, 2:777).³⁵ If one were to believe Hoffmann, this had somehow been concealed from Tiso. This "personalized" form of deflective negationism to the fringe is somewhat more sophisticated, but by no means original. In Romania, some (though not all) Antonescu apologists insist that the marshal's break with the Iron Guard after its January 1941

³⁵ The agreement was signed in December 1941. In it, the Reich agreed never to return evacuated Jews to Slovakia and undertook to raise no claims to Jewish property in that country. The 500 Reichsmarks were said to cover costs for "re-education and concomitant expenditure" (Meštan 2000, 233n).

rebellion had cleansed Antonescu and his regime of any association with Nazi ideology and crimes. A Slovak scholar, Dr. Anton Rákos, accurately depicted the purpose of the exercise: "by sacrificing the demon, we cleanse the angel" (cited in Mešán 2000, 231 n. 127). This joint Slovak-Romanian objective also transpires from the deliberate misinformation fed by the respective exiled apologists to their domestic readers. According to Hoffmann, Tiso's intervention on behalf of the Jews, indeed his having been a savior of Jews (see below), has earned him the pious recognition of the Israelis, who allegedly erected a monument in his memory in Jerusalem. Alas, one would in vain search for it, for, according to other Tiso apologists, it was pulled down in 1986 due to pressure from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (Mešán 2000, 89, 157). Similarly, leading Antonescu apologist Iosif Constantin Drăgan, a magnate who returned from exile and who was active in collaborating with the former regime's closet-rehabilitation of Antonescu (see Eskenasy 1994, 192–94 and 1997, 278–82; Shafir 1994, 337), was claiming in 1993 that a statue in Antonescu's memory had been erected in Haifa to honor the "protector and savior of Romanian Jews, of whom nearly 500,000 live happily in Israel" (*România mare*, 7 January 1994). Drăgan is the honorary chairman of the Marshal Antonescu League in Romania.

3c) Deflecting Guilt to the Jews

Deflecting guilt for the Holocaust onto the Germans alone and deflecting it to "fringe" must not, in theory at least, involve antisemitic postures. Shifting the blame on the Jews, however, is undoubtedly a reflection of the propensity. One can practically find in its different variations all the well-established forms of antisemitism, ranging from religious to the politically reactive. For the sake of simplification and clarification, I shall separately discuss five "explanations" of the Holocaust than pin blame on the Jews themselves. A sixth – widely popular – argument, namely that the Jews provoked the Holocaust because of their deep involvement with Communism, will only be touched in passing in this section, and will be extensively dealt with when discussing comparative trivialization.

At "scientific" colloquia, in volumes and in articles in the press produced by the defenders of extreme nationalism and/or its interwar record, the Holocaust is at times "explained" by *deicidal justification*. In a 719-page volume produced in 1997 by the Friends of President Tiso in Slovakia and Abroad association and similar groups in Slovakia itself, it is argued in a chapter entitled "On the Jewish Question" that the Holocaust is the price the Jews have had to pay for having crucified Jesus Christ. There is, however, room for hope, judging by the reflections of Jozef Ťitničan in an article called "The Jewish Tragedy." Having refused to acknowledge Christ, he writes, the Jews "over-valued themselves, believing they are more than the others." They thought that with the help of their Messiah, they would be able to rule the world. To this day, Jews

believe they are the chosen people. Even after "annihilation in the gas chambers," they still believe so and had "set up a state for themselves," to which they have no right. They can, however, be saved if "we win them over to collaborate in Christ's design" (Me%Èan 2000, 182–83). In a similarly-argued article in the PRM weekly *România mare* in 1993, a Romanian lady was writing that the criminal structure of the Jews is reflected in "the crucifixion of Christ" and their consequently being "a deicidal people" (cited in Voicu 2000b, 128–29). Paraphrasing (with *some* change!) André Malraux, Ovidiu Guleø, the editor-in-chief of a Timiøoara Iron Guardist publication, concluded in 1992 that "The Fourth Reich will be [Christian] Orthodox or will not be at all" (*Gazeta de vest*, no. 9, May 1992).

A second "explanation" for the Holocaust is taken straight from the "encyclopedia" of conspiracy-theories. According to it, it was actually world Jewish power that produced Hitler. Áron Mónus, the publisher of the Hungarian translation of *Mein Kampf*, makes this argument in an epilogue to the volume (Braham 2001), as well as in a book he authored under the title *Conspiracy: The Empire of Nietzsche*. The title of the first chapter in the volume is conclusive in itself: "Freemasonry Encouraged the Holocaust." Chapter two deems it that "Adolf Hitler Was in the Pay of Jewish Freemasons," and the following chapter is on "Adolf Hitler, the Quack Zionist Agent" (Kovács 2002). Similar views come out of Slovakia. According to an article on Freemasonry in *Zmena* in 1992, international Jewry and Zionism had nurtured Hitler and provoked the war in order to facilitate the setting up of the Jewish state. This was also the argument of historian Arvéd Grébert's contribution to the 1992 volume, *An Attempt at a Political Profile of Jozef Tiso*: it was Zionism itself that had the greatest interest in provoking antisemitism in order to prepare the ground for claiming the State of Israel. Róbert Letz, a senior lecturer at Bratislava's Comenius University also blames Zionism, but from a different perspective: were it not for Zionism, Jews would have assimilated and the Holocaust could have been avoided (Me%Èan 2000, 85, 119–20, 144). For Russian *Pamyat* leader Dimitrii Vasiliev, Adolf Eichmann was Jewish and, in supervising the Nazi extermination had acted in line with the *Protocols* (Tolz 1997, 181). Ladislav Pittner, who was Slovak Interior Minister representing the KDH till May 2001, and whose father was a committed Tiso supporter, in 1998 argued similarly that Zionism might have been behind the pogroms in Russia in order to convince Jews to leave for Palestine. Pittner went on to "reveal" that German Admiral Wilhelm Canaris had "very clear documentation indicating that Hitler and Himmler had Jewish ancestors" (cited in Me%Èan 2000, 194). In Romania, Theodoru argued that Hitler had been "merely a puppet" in Jewish hands (cited in Voicu 2000b, 129), and writer Ioan Buduca concurred, seeing antisemitism as a Zionist ploy to advance the purpose of Jewish emigration (Buduca 1998).

It matters little if the opposite argument – that *the Jews had forced Hitler into self-defense* – is produced by the same people. This was Buduca's case in 1999, when he plainly stated that the Jews were not only "historically guilty" for Germany's defeat in World War I, but also of having started a war on Hitler in

1934 by declaring a boycott of Nazi German goods. The argument is a "revisionist classic" (see Vidal-Naquet 1992, 88; Shermer and Grobman 2000, 40). It was first used by neo-Nazi R. Verral, later embraced by Faurisson and David Irving, and finally also by Ernst Nolte (see Vidal-Naquet 1992, 38–42; Nolte 1993, 152–53³⁶; Furet 1996, 177n). It took sixty years, Buduca wrote, to discover that Hitler had adamantly tried via diplomatic channels to avoid the war. It is obvious, then, as Romanian politologist George Voicu sarcastically notes in commenting on Buduca's article, who must be blamed for that debacle and implicitly for the Holocaust (Voicu 2000b, 81, 173). Ion Coja, the ultimate personification of what is described below as Romanian "selective negationism," may have been the one who introduced Buduca to this particular version of a conspiracy-theory. In a book published in 1999, Coja "dialogued" with an unidentified younger admirer, who might well have been Buduca. He "revealed" to him that Hitler and Ceaușescu had equally "sinned" before what he calls "the Grand Manipulator." The former had cut the Reichsmark from its bondage to gold, the latter had paid off Romania's foreign debt. In reaction, world Jewry had declared its boycott of German goods and had Ceaușescu executed. Just as "the money-changers had sentenced Jesus to death!," responded Coja's anonymous dialogue partner, adding a spice of deicide to the recipe (Coja 1999, 289). Back in 1993, Ilie Neacșu, editor-in-chief of the weekly *Europa* and a future PRM parliamentarian, had argued that "Hitler did not butcher Jews from the Jordan Valley, but from his own courtyard in Berlin, where after World War I Juda's descendants had become masters over German economy, culture and politics" (Neacșu 1993).

A somewhat different version of "Jews forcing Hitler into self-defense" was presented in Hungary by negationist Viktor Padányi. Not only Hitler, but all nations that fought as his allies had been forced into defensive postures. The showdown in World War II had been one between opposing moralities, philosophies, frames of national mind. On one hand, there were the ultra-individualist Jews – a small minority of rich people with a disproportionate share of wealth – which Padányi estimates in the case of Germany and Hungary to have ranged at between 40 and 80 percent of national income. On the other hand, there stood a collectivist philosophy and morality, a frame of mind putting community and collectiveness at the head of values. Antisemitism in general, according to Padányi, is thus a sort of "racial egoism," the defense of "country folk" against the international rootless individualism of Jews. When, after 1939, Jews were asked to make collective sacrifices proportionate to their wealth, rather than to their ratio in the population, they refused to do so and had to be forced into it by collectivism-ruled polities, be they Nazi (like Germany was) or merely "civilian" (like Hungary). The Jews labeled this "racial persecution" and incited the whole world to war against it. It was normal that the Jews, who had

³⁶ The article cited here was printed originally under the title "A Mere Inversion: Against Negative Nationalism in History: A Response to Jürgen Habermas and Eberhard Jäckel," in *Die Zeit*, 31 October 1996.

nothing to gain and everything to lose from a German victory, would work for the enemy. "The plain truth is that there was a real war between some states and their Jewish populations, who were intervening on the side of the enemy. And if the Jews were entitled to spy, pass on news, commit acts of sabotage, destroy supplies, endanger the currency, spread defeatist propaganda, plan armed assaults, and pray for the victory of the enemy (i.e., the destruction of the country), then the state surely had a right to take measures seeing that this does not happen" (cited in Kovács 2002).

While unwilling to admit own-nation participation in the Holocaust, some deniers in East Central Europe admit that "repressive measures" had to be taken against Jews, emphasizing that *Jewish disloyalty triggers a reactive response*. This was already reflected in the Pádanyi interpretation, but here I want to focus on those deflective versions that link Jewish disloyalty to a particular, well-defined point on the eve, or in the course, of the war itself. Many library shelves would be needed to store the countless number of books and articles in media outlets (many of them identified with pro-Western postures) that "explain" Holocaust-related events in Romania in reactive rationalizations. From outright negationists of the likes of Theodoru to the "selective negationists" discussed below, there is agreement that Jewish disloyalty is what had triggered Antonescu's punitive reactions. The main argument rests on the large-scale support allegedly rendered by Jews to the Soviet occupation forces in Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in 1940, and on the alleged Jewish participation not only in humiliating or torturing the retreating Romanian army, but in the physical liquidation of Romanian military personnel. Viewed from this perspective, the July 1940 Dorohoi and Galafli pogroms, the pogrom in Iași, the atrocities committed in Transnistria (whenever they are acknowledged, even in minimalist terms) can all be explained in terms of self-defense and/or spontaneous revenge on the Jews for their deeds in 1940.

That Bessarabian or Bukovinian Jews had little reason to mourn the departure of authorities whose official antisemitic policy had been by then legislated into law, there can be little doubt. It is also true that Bessarabian Jews (but not only Jews) were among those who had humiliated withdrawing Romanian soldiers and officers. Romanians (and Ukrainians) were also involved – and not all who engaged in the deeds were Communists. The Romanian authorities had unfortunately treated Bessarabia more as a colony than as a province that had opted to join Romania in 1918, and anti-Bucharest resentment was rather widespread.

This having been said, it must be added that the Romanian commanders of an army retreating in disarray undoubtedly found a convenient scapegoat in the "Jewish aggression." Many of their reports later turned out to have been made up in order to cover for the military humiliation. Among other things, an officer reported to have been killed by Jews turned out many years later to be

alive and well in Germany (Pelin 1994³⁷). The reports in the Romanian media on the events were inflammatory. To what extent these reports influenced Antonescu in his "Jewish policies" after 1941 is difficult to know. Some Antonescu apologists explain the difference he would eventually make between "Romanian" and "non-Romanian" Jews precisely in these reactive terms.

The June 1941 pogrom in Iași is likewise said to be a defensive reaction. Although an inquiry conducted by the Antonescu authorities concluded that the charge that Jews had signaled to "enemy" planes or had opened fire on Romanian and/or German soldiers had no basis in reality, the allegation continues to be reproduced by the likes of Theodoru (see *Europa*, no. 64, February 1992). There may be some truth in Jews having been caught among those parachuted by the Soviets near Iași after the outbreak of hostilities, and about Jews having been sent over the border to spy. There can be no doubt whatever concerning where the sympathies of Jewish Romanian Communists went, and that some of them had engaged in active spying. Yet not only were these Communists isolated from the Jewish community, but as Antonescu himself would admit, Jews (or rather "kikes," as he put it) had also spied for Romania on the other side of the 1940 border (cited in Stoenescu 1998, 237).

The reactive version, however, persists in producing the Jewish-deflective argument even as it admits that there has been no justification for atrocities. This, for example is Stoenescu's case. He purports to abhor the innocent victims of the Iași pogrom (whose number he minimizes as best as he can), and deplores the ensuing "Death Trains." At the same time, however, he claims that the thousands who died on the trains were the victim of "negligence" rather than intent, and that even those victims can ultimately be laid at the door of other Jews. Those who had been embarked on the trains were suspected of being Communists who had opened fire on Romanian and German soldiers, he claims. The "selection" (*triere*) had unfortunately been carried out under tension. It was not the first time in history that the many were paying the price for what only a handful – in this particular case a few Jewish Communists – had done, Stoenescu concludes (Stoenescu 1998, 280).

The reactive explanation was quite clearly backed from the outset of post-Communist Romania by historians who under the previous regime had worked either for the Communist Party's Institute of History, or for Army's Center for the Research and Study of Military History and Theory headed by the executed president's brother, Ilie Ceaușescu. It figured prominently in a volume published in 1992 by two Romanian historians from the army's own Academy for Higher Military Studies (Scurtu and Hlihor 1992). It was also prominently displayed in a volume by historian Gheorghe Buzatu as a sequel to a tome on the Second

³⁷ It must be emphasized that this book is by a rather dubious author, who radically changed sides. Pelin used to be a close collaborator of Iosif Constantin Drăgan, and was one of the editors of the first volumes exonerating Antonescu, published in exile with documents supplied from the Communist Party Archive.

World War's "secret history" published in the last years of Communist rule (Buzatu 1995c).

By then, the latter author's views on the Holocaust had already acquired notoriety (see below). They were succinctly expressed by the title of a booklet Buzatu published with the Iron Guardist publishing house Majadahonda. Rather than being a perpetrator of the Holocaust, Romania had been its victim. But not the victim of the Nazis, as others have already had it in Romania or in "competitive elsewhere." Romania underwent a Holocaust at the hand of the Jews, and the year 1940 marked its beginning (Buzatu 1995a). The booklet would eventually become a separate chapter in a volume based on research Buzatu conducted in Soviet archives (Buzatu 1996). Although this tome purports to deal with *Romanians in the Kremlin's Archives*, most of its "heroes" are Jews who served Soviet power and would later become prominent leaders in post-World War II Romania. The volume is therefore significantly relevant to the "double genocide" debates in post-Communist East Central Europe, which make up a core argument in the Holocaust's comparative trivialization (see below).

Although issued by a respectable academic publisher, *Romanians in the Kremlin's Archives* indulges into deflecting blame onto Jews even more stridently than the booklet published with the Iron Guard outlet had done. For example, it is no longer stated that the Jewish attacks on the Romanian army in summer 1940 "undoubtedly influenced" Antonescu's "ulterior behavior vis-à-vis the Jewish problem" (Buzatu 1995a 40. Author's emphasis). In 1995, Buzatu implicitly acknowledged that Antonescu in 1941 had ordered that Jews be deported from Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to Transnistria.³⁸ By 1996, that sentence had been cleansed out. Both in 1995 and in 1996 Buzatu cited Antonescu as having stated on 19 October 1941 that the crimes perpetrated in Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in 1940 against the Romanian army had been "essentially of Jewish inspiration and execution" (Buzatu 1995a, 40; 1996, 230). More important, in both versions one finds the assertion that July 1940 is the date marking "the Holocaust [directed] against the Romanian people during the 1939–1945 World War II and later on" (Buzatu 1995a 29; 1996, 222. Author's emphasis).

Buzatu only alludes in 1996 to the 1940 Dorohoi and Galafli pogroms, citing a military report that draws attention to the reactive anti-Jewish sentiment growing in the army and the Romanian population in general and warning against "possible antisemitic reaction within ranks of the military." This is then followed by a single sentence, in which he remarks that the warnings "unfortunately materialized." How that happened the reader would never learn from Buzatu – he or she is directed to a 12-volume documentation by Israeli historian of Romanian origin Jean Ancel. The volumes are difficult enough to get

³⁸ Jews, however, were also deported from southern Bukovina, which was within Romania's post-1940 boundaries. This was the case of Dorohoi, whose Jewish population one year earlier was subjected to a pogrom.

in the West, let alone Romania. But Buzatu hurries to add that whatever followed "*had certainly not been programmed by the [Romanian] authorities.*" (Buzatu 1996, 229. Author's emphasis). Former Ceaușescu court poet turned post-Communist politician, Adrian Păunescu, "explained" in 1994, "None of the Romanians who fought for the restoration of the Nation's Unity (starting from Marshal Antonescu down to the last soldier) has acted in the blood-stained manner in which wars force people to act against enemies because they were acting against Jews. The only – and fearsome – rationality for the terrible crimes in Bessarabia was to administer punishment to the Bolsheviks. Romania did not kill Jews [just] because they were Jews" (Păunescu 1994).

What the enforced evacuation of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina is for Romania's Antonescu apologists, is the Slovak National Uprising for Tiso's defenders in that country. The uprising, which started on 29 August 1944, was quashed by Nazi intervention in October that year. Some Jews did indeed participate in it. Yet the reactive Slovak version wants to have it that it was the alleged *massive* Jewish participation in the uprising that triggered their deportation. Somehow, this overlooks the fact that the deportation of Slovak Jews had started on 26 March 1942 (Hilberg 1994, 2:779). Jewish participation in the uprising must thus have been limited to the few who had somehow managed to escape from camps in Slovakia itself, where internment started earlier, or to individuals who had escaped abroad. Were one to believe Tiso's personal secretary, Karol Murín, in his *Memoirs and Testimony*, reprinted in Slovakia in 1991 by the Friends of President Tiso association, the interned Jews left their places of work and labor camps and "joined the partisans" (cited in Mešán 2000, 110). The reader may thus draw two conclusions: first, that Jews were free to move about Slovakia as they wished, and, moreover, that the camps themselves were some sort of facility from which one moved in and out at will. I shall yet return to this (not unimportant) aspect of Holocaust comparative trivialization. Just as important, an association is thus established between Jews and Communism, for the uprising had been a Communist-led event. Not only is this aspect shared by Slovak and Romanian providers of reactive explanations, but it is part and parcel of the centrality of the myth of Judeo-Communism which also plays a prominent role in the comparative trivialization of the Holocaust (see below).

Other examples are variations on the theme. According to Gabriel Hoffmann, Tiso had acquiesced only to Jews being "interned at home." How Tuka and Mach had managed to keep him in the dark about the deportations one never learns from Hoffmann and his like, but it was only "the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising [that] brought Jews further suffering." The German occupying forces arrested and deported them against the will of the Slovak government and Tiso (Mešán 2000, 165). Culpability, in this particular version, is thus deflected to Jews and Germans – in this particular order.

A yet more "original" version, seeking to overcome the lack of credibility of the Murín or Hoffmann interpretation of events was provided by Jozef Vrba in a book on Tiso whose telling title, *The Man Who Stood Up Hitler*, was published

in Slovakia in 1998. According to Vrba, when the deportations began in March 1942 "the Slovaks were convinced that it was only a matter of moving the Jewish population to parts from which they had come to Slovakia in the past century." Only one year later, in March 1943, did the Slovak government find out about the "extermination of people in concentration camps" and as a consequence deportations were then halted, it is claimed. Had the Slovak National Uprising not taken place, all of Slovakia's Jews would have been saved, the author writes, pretending not to realize that he has just liquidated one credibility gap in order to create a larger one. It was only after the uprising that the Germans deported and/or murdered Slovak Jews. Tiso by then had no choice, for he was now struggling against attempts to bring about "the liquidation of the Slovak state" (cited in Me%Éan 2000, 201). A rather "interesting" variation on the theme is encountered in Hungary and belongs to István Lovas, who happens to be Jewish. His ethnic origin, of course, helps those interested in propagating precisely such opinions. Lovas argues that Jewish suffering during the Holocaust is largely due to the fact that Jews had sided with the Allies, and, what is more, participated in revolts in ghettos and concentration camps (Braham 2001). Lovas's publishing outlets include *Kairosz Kiado*, which has brought up his "collected works." The same publisher puts on the market the works of "historians" associated with the official 21st Century Institute, headed by Orbán's senior adviser Mária Schmidt (see Kenedi 2001).

The common Slovak-Romanian reactive explanation notwithstanding, there are two important differences that set them apart. The Slovak version may be more perverse than the Romanian one, in the sense that Jewish disloyalty is constructed and timed at a historical point where Slovak Jews were simply not in a position to opt politically. Viewed from this perspective, Romanian reactive explanations are, though utterly distorted and/or exaggerated, somehow more credible. It is, for example, a fact that the June 30, 1940 Galaffi pogrom (400 victims) was carried out by Romanian military against Jews who were on their way to leave the country, having opted to live on what had now become Soviet territory (Ioanid 1997, 58). That Antonescu's disguised apologists of the likes of Stoenescu extend this incident to the many innocent Jews thrown out of trains and liquidated in those days for no other reason than that they were traveling from the southern part of the country to the north, which was closer to the new border, is another matter (see Stoenescu 1998, 138–40). Yet the Romanian version is, on the other hand, far more worrying. Its proponents are relatively young and politically active in Romania itself – as in the case of Buzatu. The Slovaks, on the other hand, are mostly aged (*The Man Who Stood Up Hitler* was published in Slovakia when its author was 98) and all belong to the exiled entourage of former Tiso officials, whose echo in the country itself should by no means be dismissed, but neither should it be overexaggerated.

The last – and by far most insulting to memory – deflective manipulation has *Jews being themselves the perpetrators of the Holocaust*.

In his *Wastelands of Historical Truth* (1988), late Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, who claimed to be a historian among his other calls, set up to

exonerate the Croats from responsibility for participation in the Holocaust. The infamous Jasenovac concentration camp, where several tens of thousand Serbs, Jews and Roma perished during the Pavelić regime, was for Tadjman a "myth" blown out of all proportion, whose main purpose was to back the theory of "the genocidal nature of every and any Croat nationalism," to "create a black legend of the historical guilt of the entire Croat people, for which they must still make restitution." While by no means original (the same "de-mystification" and "unmasking" of the alleged attempt at the "culpabilization" of the nation as a whole arguments are being heard in Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania in connection with the Horthy, Tiso, and Antonescu regimes), Tadjman nonetheless stands out in his deflectionist postures, which are not very far from outright negationism. This is less so due to his questioning of the figure of six million, which he deemed to be "based too much on emotionally biased testimonies, as well as on one-sided and exaggerated data resulting from postwar settling of accounts," as to his cynical allegations that Jews had actually been the main perpetrators in Jasenovac. They are said to have "managed to grab all the more important jobs in prisoner hierarchy," and to have taken advantage of the fact that the *Ustasha* trusted them more than they trusted Serbs. Whence Tadjman concluded that "The Jew remains a Jew, even in the Jasenovac camp... Selfishness, craftiness, unreliability, stinginess, deceit, are their main characteristics." To "demonstrate" that Jews rather than the *Ustasha* Croats were the main perpetrators, Tadjman must, however, make figures more plausible for prisoners to be able to accomplish the deed. He thus dismissed not only the 700,000 figure advanced by the Serbs, but also the 60,000 victims claimed by Croat historians. No more than 30–40,000 are said to have perished in the camp, some at the hands of the *Ustasha*, but most at the hands of Jews, who controlled the liquidation apparatus (cited in Milentijevic 1994, 234–36). In a letter to Croatia's Jewish community in February 1994, Tadjman, (who had put the word Holocaust in quotes when implicitly criticizing world Jewry efforts to prevent Kurt Waldheim's election as Austrian president, see Wistrich 1994b, 15n) eventually apologized for these sections in his book (Gruber 1995, 24), but in subsequent revised versions of *Wastelands*, the basic argument did not much change, though the more offensive sections were somewhat mellowed (see, for example Tadjman 1996).

Not that Tadjman is a unique case in the annals of Holocaust denial. He *does*, however, stand out for having made the allegation from the position of being Croatia's most prominent politician. Similar examples come from the obviously psychically deranged lunatic fringe that can by no means be compared with Tadjman. In Hungary, Padányi had also claimed that the management of the camps had fallen into Jewish hands (Kovács 2002). And this, according to Gabriel Hoffmann, was also the case of the Sereî forced labor camp in Slovakia where, he claimed in a 1998 article in *Zmena* that he had been interned himself before having converted. In Sereî, not only did Jews administer the camp themselves, but the place was run by a certain "Hauptobersturmführer Zimmermann," who in reality was no one else than "the

dreaded Simon Wiesenthal." Wiesenthal was there with a false identity and was wearing a German uniform. He ordered the murder of Jews suspected of collaboration with the Nazis and had forced Hoffmann himself to kill prisoners by lethal injection (cited in Me%Èan 2000, 188).

Not all deniers go that far when coming to address the existence of concentration camps. Many content themselves with "just" banalizing conditions in the camps and providing descriptions that compete with the famous show put up by the Nazis at Theresienstadt for the benefit of the International Red Cross. As such, these examples must also be discussed in the category of "Holocaust trivialization."

4. Selective Negationism

Selective negationism is a breed between outright and deflective negationism. It is *country-specific outright negationism* – in other words it does not deny the Holocaust as having taken place *elsewhere*, but excludes *any* participation of members of one's own nation in its perpetration. The fringe ceases to exist in selective negationism. It thus shares denial with outright negationism and at the same time it shares particularism with deflective negationism. It partakes with the latter its prominent function of externalizing guilt. And just as outright negationists may occasionally indulge in deflective denial, deflective negationists may embrace the discourse of selective negation (and vice versa).

At the risk of becoming tiresome, the reader is reminded once again that mobility from one category to the other is not a rare occurrence. When the Hungarian Albert Szabó claims that European Jews were not exterminated, having rather emigrated to the United States, he is engaging in outright denial. But when Szabó denies that the *Nyilas* carried out the well-known murdering of Jews on the banks of River Danube in Budapest in 1944, and adds that "a [genuine] Hungarian would not have left the shoes there" (Kovács 2002), he is obviously using the discourse of selective negationism. Likewise, a volume including "deflecting to fringe" argumentation in Slovakia may also carry the selective negationist claim that "not a single Jew left the Slovak state" for the extermination camps (Me%Èan 2000, 153 – making one wonder why (if so) should Tuka and Mach carry *any* blame at all.

However, nowhere in post-Communist East Central Europe – to the best knowledge of this author – is selective negationism so blatant as in Romania. According to its champions, not only Antonescu is innocent of any crimes against the Jews, but even the Iron Guard has never touched a Jewish hair. The Romanian champions of selective negationism are not (as one might have expected) semi-educated marginals. Two of the most emblematic figures among them are university professors, one being a historian specializing in modern Romanian history, the other teaching Romanian linguistics at the University of Bucharest. The Iași-based history professor, Gheorghe Buzatu, is also a deputy chairman of the PRM, deputy chairman of the Romanian Senate,

and chairman of the Marshal Antonescu Foundation, of which Theodoru is executive chairman.³⁹ Until September 2001 he was also director of a historical institute in Iași affiliated with the Romanian Academy. He was forced to resign from the latter position after the publication, at his own initiative and under the institute's auspices, of a venomous racist and particularly antisemitic book by a fellow-PRM deputy (see *RFE/RL Newslines*, 23, 24, and 28 August 2001; and Mediafax, 11 September 2001).⁴⁰ Ion Coja, the second emblematic figure of Romanian selective negationism, has traveled through many political parties belonging to either the radical continuity or the radical return shades of Romania's political spectrum, and at one point was even close to being designated a presidential candidate in the 1996 elections (see Shafir 1996).

As Buzatu put it in an interview with the Movement for Romania weekly *Miocarea* (no. 7, 1–15 April) in 1995, "there has been no Holocaust in Romania during World War II," with the exception of Hungary-occupied Transylvania. Until recently, Buzatu (who edited or prefaced a number of volumes presenting the Iron Guard and its leader in a favorable light: see Treptow and Buzatu 1994; Buzatu, Ciucanu, and Sandache 1996) was, however, willing to admit that the Guard had indulged in crimes. However, in Ernst Nolte-like fashion, these were presented as a Romanian national reaction to the rise of Bolshevism and its crimes, with which Jews had been prominently associated (see Shafir 1997, 383–84). As he put it in an article in the PRM weekly *România mare* "Crime Begets Crime" (Buzatu 1995b). He has since, however, embraced Ion Coja's selective negationism. For Coja, the Iron Guard never committed any of the atrocities attributed to it. Indeed, it was not even antisemitic! (see Voicu 2000a, 117–23). The January 1941 pogrom by the Iron Guard in Bucharest, Coja claims, never existed. Its 120 victims, some of whom were hanged on hooks at the slaughterhouse with the inscription "Kosher meat" on them are all an invention – the best proof being that when the Communists took over power, nobody was put on trial, although so many Jews were then in the party leadership. Jews may have died during the January uprising against Antonescu, but nobody has ever proved that the crimes were committed by the Iron Guard, he claims (Coja 1997, 156–69).

The assassination of historian Nicolae Iorga in those days has not been committed by the Iron Guard either. It was rather ordered by the KGB, which

³⁹ The Foundation was set up in 1990 in parallel with the Marshal Antonescu League and with Iosif Constantin Drăgan as chairman of both. The two organizations were merged on March 31, 2001 and Drăgan remains honorary chairman of the foundation (see Shafir 1997, 358 and *România mare*, 6 April 2001).

⁴⁰ Professor Buzatu's evolution (typical of the partisans of "radical continuity" in Romania) from a Ceaușescu-hagiographer to Antonescu's most active apologist has been analyzed (albeit in excessive political tones) by Ioan Constantinescu (1998, 59–68, 160–70) and in the sequel to that volume (1999, 182–201). The latter tome – an enlarged version of the first, prompted by Buzatu's reply to that volume – also shows that the Iași-based historian has signed articles using the title of "Academician" although he was never a member of that forum (Constantinescu 1999, 171–87).

had infiltrated the movement. And – Coja hints heavily in a 1999 book – it is a well-kept secret that the KGB was in the hands of the "occult." The same "occult" would eventually order the assassination of Nicolae Ceaușescu, as indeed it would commission the liquidation of Romanian-born scholar Ioan Petru Culianu in the United States in May 1991—being aware that the scholar had discovered the secrets of its world domination (Coja 1999). One more transmutation from deflective negationism (its Jewish variant) into – this time around – selective negationism. The performance, however, is quite unmatched elsewhere, although partisans of "conspiracy theories" (brilliantly analyzed by Voicu 2000b in the Romanian case) are not missing in other East Central European post-Communist polities.

In mid-2001 Buzatu and Coja chaired in Bucharest a symposium whose title – telling in itself – was "Has There Been a Holocaust in Romania?" The symposium was divided into two panels, the first examining the "questionable" occurrence of the *Shoah* in Romania; the second, the reasons for the existence of a "powerfully-institutionalized anti-Romanianism." As an outcome of the second panel, a Romanian League for the Struggle Against Anti-Romanianism, headed by Coja, was set up. The symposium's resolution was published, among other places, in the Iron Guardist journal *PermanenŃe* (no. 7, July 2001) in both Romanian and "Pidjin English." The document was signed "pro forma" by Coja and emblematically assumed the selective negationist posture. Its authors, it was stated, "want to make clear that we have nothing to do with those people and opinions contesting as a whole the occurrence of the Jewish holocaust [*sic!*] during World War II." It said that Jews "have suffered almost everywhere in the Europe [*sic!*] of those years, but not in Romania," and it added that "the testimony of trustworthy Jews" demonstrates that "the Romanian people had in those years a behavior honoring the human dignity [*sic!*]."

In support of their affirmations, the participants brought several "arguments." They started by presenting excerpts from what they claimed was the 1955 testimony before a Swiss court of the former leader of the Romanian Jewish Community in Romania, Wilhelm Filderman. The document has never been produced and whether it really exists at all is uncertain. The trial involved five Romanian exiles who had attacked the Bucharest diplomatic representation in Bern, briefly took it over and in the course of the attack killed the legation's driver. The authorities in Romania and abroad launched a large-scale campaign against the attackers and those Romanian exile personalities who testified in the attackers' defense. However, Filderman's name was never mentioned during that campaign.⁴¹

⁴¹ See Pelin 1997, 15–25. Furthermore, since the Romanian authorities wrongly sought to attribute the attack on the legation to the Iron Guard, it would have made little sense to have Filderman testify at the trial in favor of Marshal Ion Antonescu, who liquidated the Legion.

Filderman is said to have told the court that "During the period of Hitler's domination of Europe, I was in permanent touch with Marshal Antonescu. He did all he could to ease the lives of Jews exposed to Nazi Germans' persecutions. I must underline that the Romanian population was not antisemitic and that the misfortunes suffered by the Jews were the work of the German Nazis and the Iron Guard. Marshal Antonescu withstood successfully the Nazi pressure that was imposing hard measures against the Jews." Filderman added that owing to Antonescu's "energetic intervention," the deportation of more than 20,000 Jews from Bukovina was stopped, that the Romanian leader had given Hungarian Jews "blank passports," thus "saving their lives and enabling them to escape Nazi terror" and that it was due to Antonescu's "political strategies" that the assets of the Jewish people were placed under a transitional administrative regime, making them [seemingly] appear as lost, in order to conserve them and ensure their future restitution at the ripe time."

On the face of it, a shattering testimony. In fact, an obviously misleading one, which is highly unlikely to have been made by a man familiar with all the details of the events of those years. At Antonescu's orders, 90,344 Bukovinian Jews had been deported to Transnistria (Ioanid 1997, 233). The 20,000 Bukovinian Jews allegedly mentioned by Filderman (in fact, 19,689) owed their lives to the intervention of Cernăuți Mayor Traian Popovici rather than to Antonescu (Carp 1996, 189). And, above all, the Germans were never involved in the physical deportation of Jews from Romania, this being entirely a Romanian-handled matter, so whom could Antonescu's "energetic intervention" have possibly targeted? There might, indeed, have been a Romanian involvement in the saga of some Hungarian Jewish escapes via Romania to Palestine, but this occurred toward the end of the war, when the tide of the battle had turned against the Germans, which prompted Antonescu's turnabout in his anti-Jewish policies, with an eye to the Allies and the possible postwar settling of accounts; and it is unclear to what extent the Conducător was at all informed on the matter, which was apparently carried out by members of the Romanian embassy in Budapest, possibly with the knowledge of high-ranking staff in the Romanian Foreign Ministry. As for the safeguarding of Jewish properties with an eye to better times, it is sufficient to consult the many documents on Filderman's protests and interventions (see Benjamin 2001) to realize that, at best, this reflected a lost memory.⁴² But it is also sufficient to read the memoirs of Radu Lecca, the man in charge of "Aryanizing" Jewish assets (and who claims to have been the "savior of Romanian Jewry" after depleting it) to be edified to what extent the claim can hold (Lecca 1994).

That Filderman, who had been a classmate of Antonescu's, had been "permanently in touch with him" is true enough – save for the short period when

⁴² Israeli historian Jean Ancel, who is presently engaged in editing Filderman's memoirs for publication, has interviewed Filderman's personal secretary, Charles Gruber, who told him that a few years before his death Filderman suffered from Parkinson's disease and loss of memory. I am grateful for the information to Dr. Ancel.

Filderman himself was deported to Transnistria, from whence he was allowed to return. Filderman sought to ease the plight of his brethren and wrote to (on several occasions even met with) Antonescu. But rather than showing Antonescu's alleged compassion for the plight of Jews, the strained relation fully revealed the Conducător's hatred of them and his belief that the Jews were now paying for having allegedly killed and abused members of the Romanian army during its retreat from Bessarabia after the 1940 Soviet ultimatum. A letter of response by Antonescu to Filderman, who had lamented that Jews were being deported to "death, certain death...for no other fault than that of being Jewish," received a harsh rebuke from Antonescu, who, moreover, ordered its dissemination in the media, inciting even further the anti-Jewish sentiment after the outbreak of the war (Carp 1996, 3:144–45, 191–92).

At Antonescu's trial in 1946, Filderman testified that "The Antonescu governance resulted in the death of 150,000 Bukovinian and Bessarabian Jews," adding that "the actual number of victims might be larger." Antonescu himself said at the trial that according to "my own calculations, no more than 150,000–170,000 Jews were deported" to Transnistria (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum/Serviciul Român de Informații, 267 (270) and 16, respectively). But above all, as Lya Benjamin points out, the testimony attributed to Filderman fully contradicted his entire activity and correspondence with Marshal Antonescu and others during the war and in the immediate postwar period (Benjamin 2001). And it also contradicted the descriptions of Transnistria and the situation of Jews there as recorded in his own diary, which can be consulted at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (Schafferman 1986, 226).

What makes the accuracy of Filderman's testimony even more doubtful is the fact that it was first produced in Romania in 1994 in the introduction to a book edited in Iași by Kurt W. Treptow, a U.S. historian who lives in Romania and became involved together with Buzatu in the efforts to rehabilitate Antonescu and the Iron Guard.⁴³ Buzatu was the publisher of the volume, which was sponsored by the Romanian Cultural Foundation. It is from there that Coja first learned about Filderman's alleged defense of Antonescu (see Coja 1999, 298–99). But at that time, the alleged document purported to be no less than Filderman's "Testament." Treptow also claimed in his book's preface that the document could be consulted at Buzatu's Iași-based Center of History and European Civilization. When Jewish historian Lya Benjamin requested that Buzatu send her a photocopy, he promised to do so, but later reluctantly admitted that the "document" was only a reproduction from a scandal-publication, the weekly *Baricada*. The tabloid claimed to have received the

⁴³ The volume was Sabin Manuilescu, Wilhelm Filderman, *Populația evreiască din România în timpul celui de-al doilea război mondial* (Romania's Jewish population during World War II), where Treptow referred to the alleged "testament" in his "Editor's Notes," pp. 8–12. See Benjamin 2001. Treptow also cited *from it* but not *it* in an edited *History of Romania* volume, where he failed to source the citations attributed to Filderman (Treptow 1995, 485, 499–500).

"document" from Romanian historian Matei Cazacu, based in France, who emphatically denied it⁴⁴ (see *Baricada*, no. 26, July 1991 and Benjamin 1995, 42–43). Yet shortly after the "Has There Been a Holocaust in Romania?" gathering, where it had figured as "testimony," the alleged document resurfaced once more as "testament" in an article by Coja. The article was printed in the new *Marshal Antonescu Review*, which is sponsored by the Drăgan Foundation (Coja 2001b). Is it, then, a testimony or a testament?

In his address to the symposium (Coja 2001a) as well as in the *Marshal Antonescu Review* article, Coja brought another "witness" to the stand of "Romanian innocence": former Romanian Chief Rabbi Alexandru Øafran. Already in 1999, in his book, *The Grand Manipulator*, Coja had hinted that "a rabbi" who is an "important Jewish leader" has written a dedication on a book offered to the son of executed war criminal Gheorghe Alexianu, exonerating his father from any guilt. Alexianu was governor of Transnistria, and Coja claimed that the elderly Jewish leader had sworn Alexianu, Jr. to silence for as long as he was still alive, because "the poor man fears the reaction of the community, of his own faith brethren." And the apprehension was justified, he added – "witness that Filderman has also left his declaration exonerating fully and definitively Marshal Antonescu only in his testament" (Coja 1999, 299–300). The "old Jewish leader" was said to have offered Alexianu, Jr. a book with a dedication "in the memory of your illustrious father, who during his entire life and professional activity, but particularly during the dark period of the war, has done so much, wholeheartedly and generously, for the [Jewish] community. He paid a terrible and totally unjustified price at the order of the Communists. May he be delivered from his whole suffering!" (Coja 1999, 300; 2001b, 52).

Suddenly, however, the alleged identity was revealed to be Øafran's. No explanation was offered as to how the former Chief Rabbi had overcome his apprehensions. Intrigued, the author of these lines asked a relative of the 91-year-old rabbi now living in Geneva to clarify the authenticity of the claim. Instead of a response, Rabbi Øafran, who is almost immobilized by illness, directed me through his nephew to the relevant part of his memoirs. Alexianu, he wrote there, was "famous for his cruelty" (Øafran 1996, 86). Not long before he was called as a witness on behalf of selective negationism, Øafran, in an interview published in Romania, described the situation of Jews in Antonescu's Romania as "desperate" and "hopeless", with options varying between "slow or rapid extermination." He described Marshal Antonescu as a person of "strange psychological makeup" which was "the reason for the cruelty of his decisions to deport, yes to massacre the Jewish population of Bessarabia," and repeated that the Jews in that part of Romania had been "massacred, pitilessly massacred" (Øafran 2001). Whatever was done with Bessarabian Jews at Antonescu's orders was, of course, carried out by the governor of Transnistria. This was not, however, the first instance of Romanian negationists attempting to take advantage of Øafran's age and remoteness from post-Communist

⁴⁴ I owe this information to Lya Benjamin.

Romanian realities. Back in 1997, Iron Guard admirer and apologist Răzvan Codrescu was "citing" from Øafran's memoirs to demonstrate that "Captain" Corneliu Zelea Codreanu had impressed Rabbi Øafran to such an extent that he confined their meeting to his memoirs (Codrescu 1997, 171–72). The two had never met (Voicu 2000a, 121) and Codrescu was in fact citing a forgery earlier published in the Iron Guardist publication *Gazeta de vest* in January 1991. Codrescu said in a footnote that the encounter's records had been reproduced also in *Gazeta de vest*. One would in vain, however, search for them in Øafran's memoirs, from whence they were said to have been taken.

Alexianu's postwar "liquidation," according to Coja's presentation at the symposium, had a simple explanation: he would have been "dangerous" for those leaders of the Jewish community in Romania who had "made for themselves a nice little *gesheft*" by pocketing money sent by New York Jews in response to their desperate (and obviously false) cries for helping the brethren deported to Transnistria. "They requested money, money and money again.... The money arrived in Bucharest, but there it stayed! In the pockets of some Jews who should have been executed after the war. In their place, Gheorghe Alexianu was the one executed!"

The signatories of the symposium's declaration also embraced Coja's position on the Iron Guard's non-participation in the Bucharest 1941 pogrom. As Coja had already done in the past, they claimed that the Nuremberg tribunal had investigated "all crimes against humanity" perpetrated during the war and that the Iron Guard had been investigated and cleared of "any guilt, any genocidal crime." The tribunal, of course, had never done so. It only judged and sentenced the German Nazi war criminals and neither investigated, nor in any other way dealt with other nationals. Yet the declaration deemed that the Iron Guard's wartime record had not only been investigated in Nuremberg, but that the tribunal had even pronounced a "verdict" on the movement's innocence. The Romanian selective negationists were hardly original, but it must be admitted that they went one step further than their peers from Slovakia. In that country, it is simply claimed that the Nuremberg tribunal had investigated and cleared of any suspicion Slovakia's wartime leader. According to these claims, after examining evidence, the tribunal had "refused to try Dr. Jozef Tiso" (cited in Me%Èan 2000, 159). But no word of a "verdict" in Slovakia.

The signatories then challenged those who hold a different view to "produce evidence" and went on to say that they "respectfully ask" that where such evidence has been produced in the past and challenged, it should be reinforced with new proof. Here they were obviously indulging in universal negationist postures and hoping to provoke the scholarly legitimating of negationism. The response was provided long ago by Pierre Vidal-Naquet: "one can and should enter into discussion *concerning* the 'revisionists'...But one should not enter into debate *with* the 'revisionists.' It is no concern to me whether the 'revisionists' are neo-Nazi or extreme left wing in their politics: whether they are characterized psychologically as perfidious, perverse, paranoid or quite simply idiotic. I have nothing to reply to them and will not do

so. Such is the price to be paid for intellectual coherence" (Vidal-Naquet 1992, xxiv–xxv. Author's emphasis).

5. "Comparative Trivialization" of the Holocaust

By "comparative trivialization" of the Holocaust I understand the *willful* distortion of the record and of the significance of the Holocaust, *either through the "humanization" of its local record in comparison with atrocities committed by the Nazis, or through comparing the record of the Holocaust itself with experiences of massive suffering endured by local populations or by mankind at large at one point or another in recorded history.* In so doing, I am expanding on the concept of comparative trivialization first used by American historian Peter Gay. Gay employed the term to describe, in reaction to Ernst Nolte's *Germany and the Cold War* (1974), the production of conscious or unconscious arguments for a "sophisticated apology" for the Nazi record, through the device of "humanizing" it via "pointing, indignantly, at crimes committed by others – crimes presumably as vicious as those perpetrated in the Third Reich." The "sophistication" of the "technique," the American historian wrote, rested in its "appeals to liberal guilt arising from real inhumanities committed by Frenchmen, or Americans, in other parts of the world." Its "historical function," according to Gay, is "to cover up the special horror of German barbarity between 1933 and 1945, and to divert attention from studying that barbarity in its own – that is to say its German – context" (Gay 1978, xi–xii). In other words, comparative trivialization involves a great measure of "back finger-pointing." Where I diverge from Gay is not only in the extra-German context, but also in the focus on the objects of comparison. Comparative trivialization, as employed here, refers not only to the Holocaust vs. other atrocities, but also to its banalization by both comparing it to *regularly* occurring events involving violence, and by obliterating the difference between the victims of the Holocaust and victims of those regularly-occurring events. In the closing part of this section and of the study, I address the question of whether the assumption of Holocaust uniqueness is tantamount to the attempt to impose on the world at large a Jewish monopoly over human suffering.

Holocaust trivialization is not the monopoly of Holocaust deniers. People may, indeed *do*, indulge in it either because, like money, words suffer from "inflation" or because politicians use them to promote or justify immediate goals. Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer has pointed out that in that country it is not rare for a person stopped by police for a traffic offense to shout back to the officer "Gestapo," and that politicians from both Left and Right instrumentalize the Holocaust for their own purpose *"without realizing that they are doing so."* It is not uncommon, Bauer writes, for right-wingers in Israel to call Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat *Führer*, and it is not rare that left-wingers accuse the Israeli army of being cast in the model of the *Wehrmacht* when acting in the occupied territories (Bauer 2001, xii. Emphasis mine). Unfortunate as all these (and many other) forms of Holocaust trivialization may be, they certainly do not stem from Holocaust-denying motivation. It is for this reason that I have emphasized above that, in order to qualify for the category of comparative Holocaust trivializer, one must *willfully* distort its record. Which does not, of course, imply that all

comparative trivializers engage in their pursuit for the same reasons, nor that they pursue their objective with the same recurrent intensity.

Both deflective negationists and selective negationists, indulge in trivializing "*comparisons of conditions in own-country run camps with those in camps run by the Nazis*. Outright negationists may also join this crowd, although when doing so the comparative side of the equation is missing. The common ground in this case renders the camps (whether they were in actual fact enforced labor or extermination camps) as nothing short of some "Garden of Eden," and sometimes the argument goes so far as to claim that, compared with what the ethnic majority had to go through during the war, the Jews were in fact privileged.

Šurica claims that Jewish leaders had thanked the Slovak authorities, praising conditions in the Nováky labor camp, and that at Sereš the carpentry factory "was one of the most modern and most efficient factories in Slovakia." According to Ľudovít Pavlo, in 1944, "the Nováky labor camp had bath tubs, a swimming pool and a sports ground. A very unusual feature of the Slovak Jewish labor camps was that they had nurseries and elementary schools" (cited in Mešán 2000, 197 and 160, respectively). Even the deportation to German concentration camps, according to Šurica, had been carried out with humanitarian considerations figuring high, and due to such considerations, as of 11 April 1942, entire families were deported together "so as not to sever family ties" (cited in Mešán 2000, 146). And according to pro-Tiso émigré František Vnuk, who is often present in Slovak publications, conditions in the camps in Slovakia were so excellent that they suffer no comparison with the camps set up by the Communists after 1945 (cited in Mešán 2000, 163). Vnuk's comparative reference is already sliding into the "double genocide" arguments discussed below.

Between 40,000 and 45,000 Jewish labor servicemen perished under the Horthy regime in Hungary. Yet "established" Hungarian historians contribute to trivializing those losses, claiming that the system of enforced labor imposed on the Jews was quite equitable, their treatment tolerable and their losses far fewer than generally claimed (Braham 2001).

In Romania, Coja denounces as "a lie" that Jews were sent to the camps in Transnistria "just because they were Jews." Only two categories of Jews ended up in Transnistria: those who were not "Romanian citizens" and had "illegally crossed the border," which was "normal due to wartime conditions"; and "the Bessarabian and Bukovinian Jews, who were suspected of pro-Soviet sympathies." But such camps, according to Coja, had also existed in the United States during the war, for Japanese citizens suspected of non-loyalty to the nation. It might be true, Coja conceded two years later, that the "identification" of "traitor-Jews" had been carried out "with a certain amount of approximation." It may have led to the inclusion among those deported of Jews who had been loyal to Romania, while possibly leaving out non-loyal Jews. But again, this is to be explained by wartime conditions. "*À la guerre comme à la guerre!*," he commented (Coja 2001a). The camps in Transnistria, Coja claimed, "never

were extermination camps, since practically any Jew could leave for whatever destination, except Romania proper" (Coja 1999, 183). Or, as he put it at the 2001 symposium, "those *concentration camps* (how lugubrious this denunciation sounds!)...were nothing but villages. No barbed wire, no military watch. They only had a few gendarmerie, patrolling only during the night, *in order to defend the Jews* against Ukrainian civilians, who, out of various reasons, could have acted violently against the Jews" (Coja 2001a. Author's emphasis).

Although no swimming pools are attributed to the camps in Transnistria, one of the most infamous of them, Vapniarka, was described in an article published by one Tudor Voicu in *România mare* in August 2000 as having a movie-house (Voicu 2000). Antonescu, Tudor Voicu wrote, had been the "savior" of Romanian Jewry, only to find himself after the war accused by the ungrateful Jews of antisemitism. The "savior" argument was by no means novel, having been extensively heralded on the pages of a Păunescu-edited weekly as far back as 1996 (see Shafir 1997, 349–50). According to Tudor Voicu, Antonescu had in fact deported the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina to the Transdnier in order to save their lives from the population's wrath, triggered by the Jewish display of enmity in 1940. In other words, Jews should have been grateful for having been deported.⁴⁵ Păunescu (in *Totuși iubirea*, no. 12, 2–9 April 1992) did even better: Antonescu had sent the Bessarabian and Bukovinian Jews to Transnistria to save them from the famine that Romanians elsewhere had to endure.

Nor has the argument been embraced only by *Romanian* Holocaust deniers. According to Larry L. Watts, the Marshal had been the "*de facto*" protector of Jews against plans to implement the "Final Solution," because he shared the "Western standards...concerning human and fundamental civic rights" [*sic!*] (Watts 1993, 392–93). The alleged Vapniarka movie-house also figures in a volume by Radu Theodoru dedicated to the Marshal's memory, but

⁴⁵ To substantiate the argument, a letter by Antonescu to Jewish architect H. Clejan, in which Antonescu wrote on 4 February 1944 that he had been "compelled" to evacuate those Jews to hinder "the most horrible pogroms," was reproduced by Tudor Voicu. In fact, Antonescu wrote to Clejan that he had initially wanted to deport *all* Jews from Romania and had been "hindered" in doing so by "various pleas and interventions." He "*regretted*" now to having desisted from pursuing his initial plan because "the most numerous Country enemy-instruments are being recruited from among the Jews left behind." If this were to continue, the Marshal added, "*the Jews would suffer even more serious consequences than in the past*" (emphasis mine). Tudor Voicu is apparently unaware that by producing this letter he undermines the entire "argument" of Antonescu's alleged righteous distinction between Jews who must be punished and those who are innocent, let alone the staggering "explanation" based on that argument and produced by an American scholar resident in Romania that Antonescu had had to "struggle" against both the German plans for the "Final Solution" *and* against the "popular and brutal antisemitism" propagated by state authorities before he had taken over the helm of power. See Watts 1993, 394.

in the significantly altered form of "deflecting Holocaust blame onto Jews." Those who had committed atrocities in Vapniarka and elsewhere in Transnistria were "Jewish commissars made prisoner" and "Communists whom the authorities had failed to identify ahead [of their internment]" (Theodoru 2001, 38). Coja, on the other hand, in 1999 was still willing to admit that Jews *did* die in the Transdnister camps of hunger or illness, but added that Antonescu rightly saw no reason to spend the country's war-strained budgetary resources on Jews who were not Romanian citizens, at a time when hundreds of thousands of Romanians "were confronting hunger and a lack of medicine on the Eastern front" (Coja 1999, 184). By 2001, as we have seen, no such "concession" was still being made by Coja.

The transformation of wartime leaders into "saviors" of their country's Jewry is not singular to Romania. Sándor Püski, a publisher who returned from emigration, claimed in December 1988 that the Horthy regime had even *entered* the war in order to save Hungary's Jewry and that, moreover, the reason for Horthy's failure to end the alliance with Hitler was that the Regent had wanted to save a few hundred thousand Jews but "did not care about the interests of 14 million Hungarians." As Ivan T. Berend commented in an article where he cited Püski, this was a quite staggering statement concerning a regime that had "initiated Nazi-type anti-Jewish legislation, entered the war against the Allies to gain back territories with the help of Hitler, and assisted in the deportation and murder of more than half of Hungarian Jewry" (Berend 1993, 127–28). In Slovakia, this claim is made (among many others) by historian Stanislav J. Kirschbaum of York University, Toronto, a frequent participant in symposia glorifying Tiso and cleansing him of any antisemitic postures. Kirschbaum emphasizes that the Slovak parliament had given Tiso the right to grant exceptions to individuals who were thus exempted from deportation alongside their families and that "when Tiso learned that the Slovak Jews sent to Poland were being murdered, he allowed the extensive use of presidential exceptions to save as many as he could." Relying on Ďurica, he estimates the number of Jews thus owing their lives to Tiso at "anywhere from 30,000 to 40,000" (Kirschbaum 1995, 199–200). Perhaps as the son of Dr. Jozef Kirschbaum (see above), Stanislav Kirschbaum has an understandable personal stake in making the assertion (Cohen 1999, 207n), but in itself, the claim is nothing but, as Me%Èan puts it, "historical legend." Indeed, Tiso's apologists go as far as claiming that Tiso had wanted to resign as president in protest against the anti-Jewish legislation pushed by Tuka and Mach and that he refrained from so doing only at the request of three Slovak rabbis (Me%Èan 2000, 90).

Tiso's Slovakia is presented as being, as Vnuk put it, a "refuge haven for Jews" from other countries (cited in Me%Èan 2000, 99), an argument brought up *ad nauseam* by Romanian historians, and not only by them (see, for example, Pæunescu 1994).

Ion Coja's "*À la guerre comme à la guerre!*" seeks, of course, to demonstrate that Jewish suffering during the war was due to its being an armed conflict and nothing more. As Pæunescu had formulated it as far back as 1992

(*Totuși iubirea*, no. 12, 2–9 April), under wartime conditions it would have been impossible for Jews not to be among victims, as indeed everyone else was. This second form of trivializing comparison rests in the *transformation of Jewish victims into* regrettable but *banal casualties*. Perpetrators disappear, for the only great perpetrator is the war itself. There is no difference between a soldier who fell while obeying, say, Antonescu's orders at Stalingrad and a Jew killed by that hero's fellow-soldier, who was carrying out the *Conducător's* orders at, say, Sculeni, in Bessarabia, in June 1941, in a massacre that produced 311 victims (see Ioanid 1997, 129–30). Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and so on, had all been at war and how could the war spare victims on ethnic-identity grounds? If it did, Jews have to be thankful for that to their respective alleged "saviors" who had headed the war effort.

In Hungary, the effort to gear in this direction debates on the Holocaust can be directly attributed to the country's neo-conservative governments. Addressing a largely Jewish audience on Holocaust Day in 1994, former Foreign Minister Géza Jeszenszky remarked that apart from having its over half a million of Holocaust victims, Hungary had also given refuge to Jews. According to Jeszenszky, Hungary has also had its traumatic, Holocaust-like experience in the 1921 Trianon Treaty, which had torn apart large segments of the Hungarian nation from mother land (cited in Kovács 2002). Not surprisingly, the audience protested against Jeszenszky's implied comparative trivialization. As Randolph L. Braham observes, on many memorials erected in the post-Communist period by local communities, victims of the Holocaust are being amalgamated with losses from among the military and from among the civilian population during the war, and thus "transmogrify Holocaust victims into war casualties." The U.S.-based historian of the Holocaust notes that "The equation of martyrdom of armed soldiers, who died as heroes in the service of their country, and of Christian civilians, who were killed in the wake of the hostilities, with that of Jews, who were murdered irrespective of their age or sex, is often politically motivated." Among other things, it makes possible, in some local communities, to "demonstrate that the combined military-civilian casualties incurred during the Holocaust by the Christian population far exceeds those suffered by the Jews." A memorial book put out in Somogy County, for example, amalgamates Jews and Gentile victims among civilians and then separately presents figures for soldiers, "civilians," and Jews who perished during the war in the county. The end result is that Christian victims (soldiers and "civilians") appear to be three times as many (5,916 + 4498) as Jews (3,539) (Braham 2001).

Hungarian-like manifestations of trivialization can perhaps be labeled as *trivialization by parochial comparison*. They stand apart from *trivialization by generalized comparison*, in which East Central Europeans are no different from their counterparts in the West. The basic argument here, even among Jewish scholars in the West, is that between advocates of the uniqueness or singularity of the Holocaust (Katz 1994) and their critics (such as, for example, Peter Novick 1999). The terms of comparison here are other known instances in

history of mass murder, starting from the biblical period and antiquity, and continuing through instances such as the destruction of the Indians in America (by Spanish colonists and later by the future "American" whites); the Armenian genocide at the hands of the Turks before, during, and after World War I; the Cambodian massacres perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge; the more modern genocides of the Tutsis in Rwanda; the "mutual genocides" of post-Communist Yugoslavia, and, above all, the Communist mass murders. Since it is the last debate that is particularly acute in post-Communist East Central Europe (former Yugoslavia is, of course, different as a result of its *recent* genocidal past), I shall focus on them in the last part of this section.

Basically, comparative trivialization in this context comes in the shape of two main arguments. The first places the two grand atrocities of the twentieth century – the Gulag and the Holocaust – on relative *equal footing*. This has been called the "double genocide" or the "symmetry" approach (Vareikis 2002), and it can have a relatively benign and a more aggressive form; the purpose of both, however is, in fact, similar – to negate the singularity of the Holocaust. The second shape of comparative trivialization places the Holocaust *in the shadow* of the Gulag, by insisting that the latter's victims were far more numerous. Here one already faces the phenomenon that Vladimir Tismaneanu (2001) has fittingly termed as "competitive martyrdom." This time around, however, the competition over martyrdom is no longer about who suffered more at the hand of the Nazis, but (in an inverse Leninist equation), in terms of who did more wrong onto whom. *Kto kogo* is past rather than future oriented, though not void of implications for the future. Common to both approaches is the assumption that Jews have been and continue to indulge in a "monopolization of suffering," both in order to cover up for their own guilt in bringing about, and participating in, the perpetration of the Gulag, and in order to profit from an alleged "lucrative business."

The gist of the more benign form rests in submitting a "bill of mutual historical forgiveness" seemingly reflecting a *quid pro quo* principle (Vareikis 2002). Both sides have done terrible things onto one another, it is alleged, and time has come to close a long page of animosity and march on with mutual humility. For Slovak Australian exile František Vnuk, the deportations of Slovak Jews in 1942 are to be put on par with "what the Jews did in Slovakia with the Slovaks before 1939 and after 1945. Both Slovaks and Jews have transgressed against one another," though Vnuk makes it clear that the Slovaks only reacted to what was done onto them earlier (Mešán 2000, 100). Elsewhere, the argument is more contorted. In September 1990 István Benedek, a psychiatrist by profession, writing in the then-ruling MDF weekly *Hitel*, professed to "understand" and to "regret" Jewish suffering during the Holocaust, but at the same time emphasized that "Hungarian-Jewish relations were poisoned not by Nazism, but by Bolshevism." While the "angry revenge" of Jews after World War II was, to an extent, comprehensible, "some Jews...are proud of having been just as vile as the fascists and, then, became so accustomed to deprecation that they could not stop" (cited in Berend 1993, 130–31). Even in its most

benign form, then, the argument revealed, as Leon Volovici condensely formulated it, that "the real target of the Jew = Bolshevik propaganda was not the number of Jews in the communist elites, but the alleged Jewish collective culpability for the misdoing and disasters of the communist regimes. Marxism was and is presented as a 'Jewish' ideology, emanating from Judaism, as a tool to rule the world and enslave other nations. This propaganda points to an absolute and imaginary 'Jewish guilt' in order to balance it with the real culpability and real responsibility for crimes committed against the Jewish population" (Volovici 1994, 16–17).

The reluctance of Poland's Cardinal Glemp to participate in the Jedwabne commemoration (see above) was a reflection of this benign form of "symmetry" approach. It somehow overlooked that the pogrom at Jedwabne was in itself the outcome of Jews having been liquidated because, among other things, they were perceived as agents of Communism. Indeed, 75 of the younger Jedwabne Jews there were ordered to lift a huge statue of Lenin erected during the Soviet occupation of the area and to carry it, while being savagely beaten, to the Jewish cemetery. Their 90-year old rabbi was marched at the head of the column carrying a red flag and after the Lenin statue was entombed, those Jews were killed and buried along it (Brumberg 2001). The author of *Neighbors*, Jan T. Gross, is by no means oblivious to the argument that Jews had participated in the forceful imposition of Communism in Poland. In fact, he is the author of a volume that insisted on this important aspect (Gross 1988). But *Neighbors* shows that the liquidated Jews had nothing in common with the policies of Communization (Gross 2001, 41–54, 112–16, 163–67). Yet one of Poland's most respectable historians, Tomasz Strzembosz, insisted precisely on this aspect in his criticism of *Neighbors* (Strzembosz 2001). Furthermore, during their 1939–1941 occupation of eastern Poland, the Soviets were far from sparing the Jews from deportations to Siberia and other harsh measures, the criteria being (it is true) political rather than racial. No less than 22 percent of those deported had been Jews (Brumberg 2001). As Gross put it during a debate in which both he and Strzembosz participated in March 2001, "There were proportionately more Jewish victims of those deportations than Polish victims. Between one-fourth and one-third of the deported civilians were Jews" (*Rzeczpospolita*, 3 March 2001, in *Thou Shalt Not Kill: Poles on Jedwabne*, 274). *Mutatis mutandis*, this applies everywhere in the region. Jews were neither spared by Communist Jewish leaders, nor indeed by Moscow itself.

Yet the argument is brought up time and time again, and not only by radical return partisans. In Hungary, MIÉP leader Csurka is even willing to concede that the destruction of the country's Jewry has been "a tragedy for the whole Hungarian nation" but hurries up to add that after "the period of evil men gone wild with their execution squads, came the era of [Jewish Communist leaders (Mátyás)] Rákosi, [Ernő] Gerő, [József] Révai and [Mihály] Farkas, with its own unrestrained Bolshevik terror, among whose beneficiaries were considerable numbers of former Arrow Cross members, as well as former persecuted Jews." While Csurka is willing to admit that "the Moscovite Jews

persecuted [also] the [Holocaust] survivor Jews" (cited in Kovács 2002, emphasis in Csurka's original article), it is the seemingly less antisemitic conservatives that dare go further into a "symmetric" approach to the Holocaust and the Gulag. Orbán counselor Mária Schmidt, for example, wholly embraced the data presented by French historian Stéphane Courtois in his controversial preface to the *Black Book of Communism*, originally published in France in 1997. Courtois' figures show that between 85 and 100 million people perished as a result of Communist rule, whereas, as Schmidt put it in 1998, the Nazis exterminated only some 25 million (cited in Braham 2001). One has thus stepped right into "competitive martyrology."

The *Black Book* has met with considerable criticism in the West, not all of which is relevant to the purpose of the present discussion. It has been emphasized that Courtois's mesmerism on numbers ignores the eschatology of the Nazis vs. that of the Communists, and, as a result, also the basic fact that while, at least theoretically, under Communism it was possible to escape death by undergoing genuine or faked socialization, no such escape existed for the victims of Nazism, and certainly not for the Jews. The *telos* of the two regimes, Courtois' critics claimed, remained different despite all their common features. This different *telos* could produce, under Communism, the phenomenon of dissidence that contributed so much to the regime's demise. This was not, and never could be, the case of Nazism – a "dissident Nazi" would instantly cease to be a Nazi, which was not the Communist case.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Courtois was suspected of inflating figures to demonstrate, as it were, the far worse criminality of the Communist regime; and it has been suggested that, in order to do so, he added to the number of victims of the Communist regime those who died in natural calamities that occurred under Communist rule. He was also said to have willfully overlooked the "detail" of the far-greater longevity of Communism and the fact that it can be easily assumed that the 12-year-long Nazi regime would have produced a far larger number of victims, had it lasted beyond 1945. On these grounds, two of Courtois's joint authors, Nicolas Werth and Jean-Louis Margolin, went so far as to publicly disassociate themselves from the volume as a whole (Tismaneanu 2001). But no less important was the fact that Courtois's preface, by insisting on the *precedence* of Communist evil and on its emulation by the Nazis, would (at least indirectly) vindicate the reactive "justifications" of the Holocaust in their "double-genocide" forms.

Yet it must be emphasized that the *Black Book's* massive impact on some Central and East European countries has by no means *generated* in those countries the "double genocide" perspective. That interpretation of recent

⁴⁶ As Romanian-Jewish writer Radu Cosașu, a former Communist, put it, "I could not care less about the primary sources of *Mein Kampf* and do not care about them today either. But I am highly interested in everything that "Communist renegades," from Koestler to Furet and Morin demonstrated to be out of line with the embodiment of the *Manifesto*. Nazism=Communism? But where are the Nazi dissenters from Nazism?" (Cosașu 2001, 206).

history predated the *Black Book*, which only reenforced it. In Lithuania, for example, the "double genocide" thesis penetrated post-Communist society as a result of the writings of exiled Lithuanians, which is also to a large extent applicable to Slovakia as well. When President Brazauskas made his apology in the Israeli Knesset (see above), on return he was met with an oft-repeated question in the media: "Who will apologize to the Lithuanian nation?" Writer V. Jasiukaitė, for example, emphasized that "there has been a genocide of the Lithuanian nation, and this has had its executors," adding that "not a few Jews had worked in the special services." Another popular Lithuanian writer, Jonas Avyzius, at that time a member of the Conservative Party, wrote that while Brazauskas had apologized for Lithuanians who had murdered Jews during World War II, "there was not the slightest hint that the President of Israel would do something similar, condemning his Jewish countrymen, who worked in repressive institutions in Soviet-occupied Lithuania, and sent thousands of Lithuanians to concentration camps." A third writer, Jonas Mikelinskas, in an article in the Writers' Union publication *Metai*, combined a plethora of sources (including the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) to prove that Jews had played the most prominent role in the anti-Lithuanian Soviet genocide (all cited in Vareikis 2002).

Like his Lithuanian peers, Vnuk deplored that "so far not one Jew has been found who is ready to ask Slovaks for forgiveness for all the humiliation, suffering and misery caused the Slovaks by the Jews." After what Jewish Communist leader Rudolf Slánský (executed by the Communists in 1952 as a Zionist and imperialist agent) has done to Slovaks, according to memoirs by Professor Václav Štěrba, "the Jews here ran up a lasting debt...it is not they who are our moral creditors, but we theirs: let them not forget that" (both cited in Mešáan 2000, 100, and 126, respectively). What made the publication of Štěrba's memoirs remarkable was neither the event in itself, nor indeed the contention, which was clearly reflected in its title: "Who is Whose debtor?" Rather, it was the fact that it was not a marginal radical return periodical ran them, but the government's own mouthpiece, the pro-Vladimir Mešáar *Slovenská Republika*.

Just as in Slovakia, Romanian comparative trivialization cuts across the political spectrum. It is hardly surprising to find PRM leader Tudor stating that Romanians "are awaiting the time when the holocaust perpetrated against Romanians, by no means a lesser one than the holocaust perpetrated against the Jews, will be officially acknowledged" (*România mare*, 22 June 2001). It is, once more, not surprising to find PRM Senator Mihai Ungheanu authoring a long series of articles in *România mare* in 1992–1993 "The Holocaust of Romanian Culture," which was eventually published as a book attributing to Jews – and only to Jews – the plight of imposing the Zhdanovist line and of destroying the postwar Romanian intelligentsia both physically and spiritually. But the opposite side of the Romanian political spectrum embraced the "double genocide" approach with no lesser enthusiasm, as Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, a French expert on the history of ideas in Romania, shows in a comprehensive

essay (Laignel-Lavastine 1999). A gigantic volume entitled *The Red Holocaust*, authored by German-exiled Florin Mătreșcu, was enthusiastically reviewed in the respectable Writers' Union weekly *România literară* in January 1996. On April 27, 1993, columnist Roxana Iordache was wondering in the daily *România liberă* when will Jews "kneel down" before Romanians and ask for pardon for what they had done to them.

By 1998, one witnessed a carbon-copy repetition of the Lithuanian saga. President Emil Constantinescu had made a rather courageous declaration acknowledging Romanian responsibility for the Holocaust in May 1997, not long after being elected (a similar statement was made during a visit Constantinescu paid to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington a year later). As a result, Floricel Marinescu, a historian with connections to the previous regime, in March 1998 published a furious article in *România liberă's* *Aldine* weekly supplement in which not a single cliché employed in the "double genocide" argument was missing. As he 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 unlike Constantinescu, "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 coming 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." Were one to give credence to Marinescu, the Jews were, albeit indirectly, also guilty for present-day Romania's dire economic situation, for it was due to them that the Romanians had "lost the habit to work" (*România liberă*, 7 March 1998). Not long after the publication of the tract, Marinescu was appointed a presidential counselor.

Other Romanian intellectuals chose an apparently less confrontational path to express the same thoughts. Take, for example, the address by philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu, delivered before members of Romania's Jewish community on April 13, 1997, when the community was marking the Holocaust. A few months earlier, in 1996, Humanitas, the publishing house that Liiceanu heads, had published Romanian Jewish writer Mihail Sebastian's *Diary*, covering the years 1935–1944 (Sebastian 1996). Purporting to be an expression of fraternization with the writer's ordeals under the Antonescu regime, the conference was a hidden indictment of the ethnic community to which Sebastian had belonged.

Drawing a parallel between his own alleged suffering under communism and those of Sebastian under fascism, Liiceanu's "fraternization" was aimed at suggesting that Jews, having made themselves collectively guilty of Romania's communization, had obliterated any ground for claiming their suffering during the Holocaust was in any way singular. Were Sebastian to have survived (he

died in an accident in 1945), he "would have" (emphasis mine) undoubtedly written in his *Diary*, the following, Liiceanu claimed:

How is it possible for one who, at a certain moment in history had to wear the victim's uniform, to don today the garment of the executioner? Indeed, he who marched furthest on the long road to suffering, should he not have turned into a guarantee making suffering no longer possible from now on? With some of the former victims being now, strangely enough, in the position to make another disaster in history possible (or at least to profit from it), had they not forfeited the chance to have ended suffering once and for ever by precisely their extreme suffering? How was it possible that his own kin, who knew everything about pain, would participate in a scenario of provoking pain? (Liiceanu 1997).

From here, the road was short to claims that Jews were bent on claiming a "monopoly over suffering" just because they feared their role in bringing about Communism would otherwise be revealed, and was traded in Romania by such intellectuals as Nicolae Manolescu, editor in chief of *România literară* and, at the time, the PNL's second most important leader, as well as by Dorin Tudoran, a former courageous dissident under the Communist regime (see Shafir 2000). The alleged link was also repeatedly emphasized by *Adevărul* editor-in-chief Popescu. What is more, Popescu eagerly translated and wrote an approving introduction to a chapter from Norman Finkelstein's negationist book *The Holocaust Industry* (2000), which was reproduced in the daily's literary weekly shortly after its publication in America (*Adevărul literar și artistic*, no. 517, 9 May 2000). The full text of the book, it was announced at the "conference" organized by Buzatu and Coja in 2001, was about to be marketed as well. Finkelstein, so it seemed, was the Jew the Romanian comparative trivializers had eagerly been waiting for.

Does the applause with which the arrival of the "negationist Messiah" has been met invite the conclusion that comparative trivialization is an insurmountable obstacle – at least in the former Communist states? The trivialization is entrenched in both *fact* and *legend*. It is a *fact* that a minority of Jews were attracted to Marxism, and that at the outset of the Communist regimes there were many Jews among their leaderships. It is *legend* that the *Zydokomuna* (or whatever other local denomination has been or is being used to label "Judeo-Communism") had created the ideology, installed it in power, and above all, that were it not for the Jews, these countries would have been spared this dark episode of history. It is *fact* that many Jews had welcomed the Soviet army, which they regarded as a liberator. It is *legend* that, were it not for Jewish collaboration with Moscow, the Communist regimes would have collapsed in no time.

Within the comparative trivialization debates, however, this argument is leading to a dead end. It is indisputable that many early Bolsheviks, commissars in the Hungarian 1918–1919 Soviet Republic (13 out of 49), and leaders in the

first years of imposed Communism on East Central Europe were Jews (Wistrich 1994a, 151; Gerrits 1995). The evidence most often cited against the "double genocide" approach by (mostly Jewish) historians and political scientists is that these people did not consider themselves to be Jewish, having replaced the religious messianism of their forefathers with the secular messianism whose prophet was Marx. In this particular context, I believe this is not very convincing. The argument overlooks the fact that history, including recent history, is and will remain "imagined." To reject out of hand comparability is to overlook the fact that collective memories are by definition dissimilar. *What is remembered* depends to no little extent on *who is remembering*. The problem is not whether Jewish Communists (even if they form a small and unrepresentative minority) had acted as Jews when perpetrating crimes, just as it is not whether the Nazis and their East Central European collaborators had acted as Germans, Lithuanians, Romanians, and so on. The problem rests in whether a convincing argument can be produced that would both acknowledge the enormity of the Gulag and at the same time reveal the singularity of the Holocaust.

Let us at this point recall that the notion of comparative trivialization has been borrowed and expanded from the concept devised by Peter Gay, and that Gay used it in reaction to Ernst Nolte's obvious efforts to bring about a relativization of the Nazi atrocities. Much of the debate over the Holocaust in post-Communist Eastern Europe, as Kovács (2002) observes for Hungary's specific case, can be viewed as a continuation of the *Historikerstreit* between Nolte and his critics, but in a different geopolitical context. Nolte's "reactive" apology of Hitler, shifting the blame onto Bolshevism, which the Nazi leader allegedly emulated, remains, of course, inadmissible. But does this make inadmissible comparison between different genocides? And does this comparison necessarily lead to the negation of Holocaust singularity? Is it not possible at all to both acknowledge the singularity or uniqueness of the Holocaust and *at the same time* realize unprecedented genocidal dimension of the Gulag?

Arguments produced by Jewish historians ruling out comparability in the name of singularity are sometimes not only counterproductive in the sense that they offer the partisans of "Jewish monopolization of suffering" ammunition to convince domestic audiences, but also objectively unconvincing. Was the Gulag, as Steven T. Katz has put it, nothing but "a vast slave empire created in large part to finance the modernization of Russia?" Is it really only the utilitarian aspect ("dead slaves bring no profit") that was behind the setting up of the Gulag and its maintenance throughout most of the Communist period in both Russia and the states that emulated the Russian model? Is it really exhausting its purpose to argue that "Stalin needed his *Gulag* population...so that he could exploit them—he did not set out purposely to murder them"(Katz 1993, 7)?

Katz rules out any ideological motivation. In his view, it was the "utilitarian motives, however base" that prevailed under Communism over "ideological fantasies and death." The "justification for violence" is to be found in "collective gain, wealth, production, industrialization, and socialist modernization" (Katz

1993, 19). But such a perspective surely ignores that only an ideological justification that allows all and everything in the name of "class struggle" could produce such a recipe for "modernization." It also ignores that both the Nazi and the Communist regimes were *totalitarian* and that a totalitarian regime in which ideology is not a prevailing feature is an impossibility. Subordinating "ideological fantasies" to utilitarian motives is—to reduce the argument *ad absurdum*—tantamount to claiming that a liberal ideology dedicated to the same developmental purposes could presumably also transform individuals into "slaves" that would labor in the name of freedom, as Stalin did. Furthermore, from the perspective of those whose grandparents and parents went through the Gulag atrocities (regardless of whether they died in camps or managed to survive the ordeal), Katz produces arguments that to a large extent consist in turning exceptions into the rule. He thus writes that the Gulag inmates "in many cases" could be visited by relatives "once a year" and that "even when this was not possible, or in between visits, mail was allowed into and out of Camps, even 'care' packages including food, and the sending of money, though an uncommon occurrence, was also permitted." In contrast, he writes, Jews who underwent the ordeal of the Holocaust "neither visited nor corresponded. Their loved ones were either already ashes or living dead in another segment of the Kingdom of Night" (Katz 1993, 19–20).

To claim, furthermore, that the existence of the so called Cultural and Education Section (KHCH) in the Gulags attested to the ultimately "distinctive political consciousness that was implicated in the organization of the *Gulag*, which made class and status transformation— as compared to an uncompromising program of physical genocide— an ideological, if not practical, goal" (Katz 1993, 20) is to take a *valid* argument (the impossibility for Jews to escape their fate under Nazi ideology) to an *invalid* conclusion that ignores two important aspects: the *self-deceiving* Communist ideological justification (precisely the same justification that, under less horrid conditions had oppressed intellectuals *thanking* the Communist Party for their liberty); and the fact that the Nazis also had their window-dressing camp shows, designed (as the KHCH mainly were) for the purpose of outside consumption— witness the report of the Red Cross after visiting Theresienstadt.

Comparability, in any case, is by no means tantamount to sameness; there is little purpose in comparing identical objects. Furthermore, before it can be established whether or not objects of comparison are identical or not, the inherent separate traits of each object must be established. It took more than forty years to do so for the Holocaust, and the task is not over yet. Research on the Gulag is just beginning and it is for this reason that comparative trivialization is, from a Jewish perspective, just as insulting as is the dismissal of the Gulag's genocidal aspects from a Gentile perspective. And vice-versa. The dialogue risks being turned not only into one of the deaf, but also into one over the dead. Whose "dead" count more is by definition a matter of who does the counting, and who does the counting is, at this stage, clearly reflected in "who does the accounting."

In his seminal work, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer provides, I believe, a corridor leading out of the dilemma. But the corridor has to be freed of some remaining hindrances. The notion of genocide was originally confined to the physical annihilation, or intent to do so, of members of whole nations. If it were to have remained confined within these boundaries, the Communist genocide would, perhaps, be arguably applicable to the mass deportations and large-number annihilation of Ukrainians, Balts and other Soviet nationals, but it would leave out the mass extermination of own-nationals. The Cambodian Khmer Rouge, among others, could thus never be indicted for "genocide," which is absurd. Although Bauer seems to disagree with the decision, the UN eventually extended the notion to also embrace the intent to annihilate religious groups as well as the destruction of political groups (see Bauer 2001, 10). This certainly allows for the consideration of the phenomenon generally referred to as Gulag as being a genocidal one.

Bauer then suggests – and I believe the suggestion must be followed – that we consider "genocides" as being acts of "selective mass murder" or the "partial murder" of targeted groups, differentiating such acts from the Holocaust, which is an intended "total destruction" of the targeted group. He then shows that unlike the Holocaust, other genocides were primarily driven by "pragmatic" considerations, above all by the quest to physically take over the territory and assets of the targeted groups. He then ends by producing three main reasons for the Holocaust's singularity: a) its being primarily motivated by "ideological" rather than pragmatic considerations; b) its "global, indeed universal character" rather than a limited geographical one, and finally, c) "its intended totality. The Nazis were looking for Jews, for all Jews" (Bauer 2001, 47–49).

It is not difficult, as I just argued, to demonstrate Communism's ideological character, and it should be just as obvious that "global universality" applies to Communism no less than it applies to Nazism. What does, indeed, make the Holocaust unique is the third dimension, which, unlike the Communist one, allowed no escape for the targeted victim. No Jew could ever become a "Nazi New Man," no matter how much he or she might have been willing to undergo the transformation. Not so with the Communist "class enemy." This difference, I believe, pales all others, including the dispute on whether or not industrial mass murder is essentially different from other forms of physical destruction.

Why is this important, however? Not because the distinction would do away with the phenomenon of Holocaust denial. Outright negationists need not, indeed should not, become partners for dialogue. But other implicit deniers may find it easier to reconsider their perspective, once the plight of own-nations is no longer dismissed out of hand. But Bauer provides another persuasive argument that may help establish dialogue. The Holocaust, he writes, is unique because it was an "extreme form of genocide." But that does not make it into an inrepeatable act, and, even more frightening, "*The horror of the Holocaust is not that it deviated from human norms; the horror is that it didn't.*" What has happened "may happen again." To others, not necessarily Jews, perpetrated by

others, not necessarily Germans. "We are all possible victims, possible perpetrators, possible bystanders" (Bauer 2001, 42, 67. Author's emphasis).

Viewed from this horrid perspective, I believe that for trivialization of the Holocaust to lose its largely East European prevalence, we (meaning Jewish historians, political scientists, social scientists) might well stop and ask whether we do not sin ourselves in trivializing other genocides. This author can only reiterate his own position, expressed publicly some time ago: "Comparisons, to be sure—including comparisons in the social sciences – may be a scientific instrument serving the purpose of widening the perspective of analysis. There is no reason why the Holocaust should not be compared with the Gulag, were it only for the fact that they both undeniably belong to the genocide phenomena, and genocide studies, alas, are an emerging discipline in our world. However, when the comparison is made for the purpose of denying or belittling either of them, and/or for that of obliterating that which is inherently unique to either the Holocaust or to the Gulag, then one has ceased to look for similarities and has entered the odious minefield of historic negation. Such endeavors have nothing in common with science, 'social' as they may still remain" (Shafir 2001c).

November 2001

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