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## **Romanian Nationalists and the Holocaust: The Drive to Refurbish the Past**

The dissolution of the communist system and the consequent disintegration of the Soviet bloc just 44 years after the defeat of the Third Reich engendered considerable historical controversy. Perhaps the most vocal debate has followed from the provocative conclusions reached by Francis Fukuyama, a political scientist associated with a Washington think tank. Among Fukuyama's conclusions was the argument that the destruction of the two rival totalitarian systems of the twentieth century denoted not only the worldwide triumph of liberal democracy but also the end of history as we know it.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, Fukuyama's optimistic conclusions have proven unfounded. They have been negated, among other things, by the persistence of ethnic-nationalist political and military conflicts, as well as by the racial and religious animosities that continue to bedevil many parts of the world. While Fukuyama correctly identified the defeat of the Axis in 1945 and the collapse of the Soviet system in 1989 with the bankruptcy of both Nazism and communism, he failed to properly consider the continuing—and in many places increasing—vitality of nationalism, a social ideology that preceded the totalitarian doctrines of the Left and Right by more than a century.

The resurfacing of xenophobic nationalism in East Central Europe almost immediately after the collapse of the Soviet empire is a case in point. The ethnic-national conflicts and territorial disputes that plagued this polyglot area during the pre-First World War and interwar periods had been suppressed during the Soviet era under the veneer of "proletarian internationalism". After the dissolution of the communist system, these conflicts were rekindled with a vehemence that induced many scholars to observe correctly that the post-1989 political developments in East Central Europe denoted a *return back to history* and the *failure* of liberal democracy.<sup>2</sup> This regression in the political evolution of the area has been exacerbated by the social conflicts that were brought to the fore by the relatively rapid marketization and privatization programs initiated by the post-communist regimes.

The political opportunities offered by the failure of the capitalist experiment to provide instant economic gratification were—and continue to be—exploited by xenophobic nationalist elements opposed to both liberalism and constitutional democracy. Reflecting the techniques used during the fascist and communist periods, these nationalists, including many 'professional historians', are engaged in a political-ideological campaign designed to create an authoritarian future of their own liking. Identifying constitutional democracy and parliamentarism as both "foreign" and undesirable, they are actively involved in what Arthur Schlesinger Jr. calls "the writing of exculpatory history". With political habits formed during the nationalist-socialist regimes most of them had previously supported, these xenophobic nationalists are clearly involved in a calculated drive to carry out an ideologically defined political agenda. This includes the whitewashing of their countries' record during the Nazi era in general and their involvement in the Final Solution program in particular. Toward this end, they exploit history by corrupting the truth and distorting the realities of the past. In their rewritings and reinterpretations, these practitioners of exculpatory history appear to be guided by the party slogan in George Orwell's celebrated work *1984*: "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past."

Their treatment of the Holocaust is a case in point. Recognizing the significance of this tragic event in their national, Jewish, and world histories, extremist elements—ranging

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<sup>1</sup> F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Sh. Avineri, 'The Return to History and the Consequences for the Jewish Communities in Eastern Europe', in *The Danger of Anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe in the Wake of 1989-1990*, ed. Y. Bauer (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1991), pp. 95-101.

from the charlatans who call themselves “historical revisionists” to many elected party, government, and state leaders—have been engaged in a history-cleansing campaign designed to discredit the Holocaust. They are resolved not only to absolve their wartime leaders and their collaborators of all responsibility for the crimes committed against the Jews, but also to blur the historical record—and memory—and make the world forget the nature and consequences of their involvement in the Nazis’ war against the Jews. By denigrating, distorting, or actually denying the Holocaust, these extremists, who pursue differing and often conflicting political–ideological objectives, have reinforced both the traditional religious and the more modern racial components of anti-Semitism with new, and perhaps even more virulent, strains of intolerance.

Subdued and controlled during the communist era when it was camouflaged under the guise of anti-cosmopolitanism and anti-Zionism, this new form of anti-Semitism was brought to the fore after the collapse of the Soviet system. Although the scope and intensity of the campaign has varied from country to country, xenophobic intellectuals, nurtured and trained under the discredited fascist and communist regimes, have launched a seemingly concerted campaign to whitewash their countries’ wartime genocidal record.

While the history-cleansing campaign is clearly discernible in all countries formerly dominated by the Third Reich, it is particularly intense in Croatia<sup>3</sup> and Romania—the two countries that tried to “solve” the Jewish question on their own terms even before the Nazis launched their Final Solution program. In Romania, ultra-nationalist intellectuals have dedicated themselves to convincing the Romanian people—and the world—that there was no Holocaust in their country. They distort the historical record of the wartime era in general and falsify the anti-Jewish policies of General (later Marshal) Ion Antonescu in particular. Dedicated to the rehabilitation of the Marshal, the pro-Nazi dictator who was executed as a war criminal in 1946, these history cleansers “overlook” the single-mindedness with which the Antonescu regime tried to “solve” the Jewish question in Romania during the euphoric phase of the anti-Soviet war. They emphasize the Marshal’s policies of the post-Stalingrad era, when his regime, no longer convinced that the Axis Powers would win, began to look upon the Jews as possible sources of revenue and as a potentially useful bargaining chip in a postwar settlement.

The wartime tragedy of Romanian Jewry reemerged as a public topic in the mid-1970s, presumably in response to a political decision by Ceaușescu’s regime to clean up the historical wartime record of Romania. The decision was apparently designed to further both domestic and foreign political objectives. Domestically, it aimed to bring about, among other things, the gradual rehabilitation of Antonescu and the purification of the country’s wartime historical record. In the foreign political sphere, it was designed to improve the country’s image abroad by contrasting Romania’s wartime self-proclaimed “humanitarian” record on the Jews with the “barbarism” of the Germans and, above all, the Hungarians—the Romanians’ traditional enemy.

The broad policy guidelines for this history-cleansing campaign were provided by Ceaușescu himself. In a policy statement that dealt indirectly with the wartime ordeal of the Jews, Ceaușescu completely distorted Romania’s record on the destruction of nearly 270,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews. He minimized the number of “persons” (a term he used rather than “Jews”) killed in Iași as well as the number of those “interned” in the “occupied Soviet territory”. (The latter was a bleak reference to Northern Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria, the Romanian-occupied territory between the Dniester and the Bug, where Romanian army and gendarmerie units murdered a large number of Jews.) In contrast, Ceaușescu emphasized that “during the Horthyite and Nazi occupation, 170,000 citizens [sic]

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<sup>3</sup> The treatment of the Holocaust in Croatia and elsewhere in the former Soviet bloc is beyond the scope of this study.

from Northern Transylvania were sent as forced laborers to Germany to concentration camps, and of these more than 100,000 were killed.”<sup>4</sup>

Guided by these directives, the Party-supported ‘official historians’ undertook in an exculpatory fashion to portray Antonescu’s Romania as a country that not only prevented the Holocaust, but also afforded haven to thousands of foreign Jews and allowed their emigration to Palestine. The methodological approach to this distorted historical portrayal of the situation of the Jews during the Antonescu era is as sophisticated as it is scientifically flawed. Specifically, this approach:

- Generally minimizes or distorts the anti-Semitic policies and anti-Jewish laws that were adopted by successive Romanian governments, beginning with those initiated by the Goga–Cuza regime in late 1937 and culminating in those enforced during the Antonescu era (1940–44);
- Virtually ignores or rationalizes Romania’s role as an Axis ally that provided the second-largest army in the war against the Soviet Union—an army that was largely destroyed at Stalingrad—and emphasizes the country’s contribution to the Allied war effort after August 23, 1944, when Romania switched sides;
- Distorts the role played by King Michael and the leaders of the antifascist parties in the *volte face* and identifies the punitive measures taken against Marshal Antonescu as acts of “treason”;
- Fails to acknowledge the murder of close to 270,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews by units of the Romanian army and gendarmerie in parts of Moldavia, Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria;
- Focuses on the opportunistic, “moderate” anti-Jewish policies pursued by the Antonescu government since the end of 1942, and especially after the crushing defeat of the Romanian army at Stalingrad, emphasizing its refusal to go along with Germany’s Final Solution program in Old Romania and Southern Transylvania;
- Fails to acknowledge or adequately deal with the fact that in Old Romania and Southern Transylvania close to 10 per cent of the Jewish inhabitants were killed primarily by Romanians loyal to the Iron Guard and Marshal Antonescu, and takes no note of the fact that the survivors, grateful as they were for having escaped with their lives, were deprived of their livelihood as well as their civil rights and liberties;
- Contrasts the country’s “humanitarian” wartime record with Hungary’s “barbarism”, identifying Romania’s record with those of Bulgaria and Denmark; Lays ultimate responsibility for some of the admitted anti-Jewish excesses in Romania proper on the Germans and “a few misguided and over-zealous Iron Guardists”;
- Rationalizes the mass murder of the Romanian Jews of Bukovina and Bessarabia as actions of self-defense against Judeo-Bolsheviks and Soviet collaborators; and

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<sup>4</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate* [Romania on the Road to Building the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society], Vol. 11 (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975), p. 570.

- Emphasizes and exploits the tragedy of the Jews in Hungarian-ruled Northern Transylvania as an integral part of a calculated political campaign against Hungary and the Hungarians.<sup>5</sup>

The historical accounts by xenophobic nationalist intellectuals aim at the exploitation of the Holocaust for political ends. These include whitewashing the crimes committed by Romanians and contrasting the wartime “humanitarian” record of Romania with the anti-Romanian and anti-Jewish “barbarism” of Hungary. The comparison was conceived as part of the political campaign against Hungary over the issue of Transylvania, including the contemporary treatment of the Hungarian minorities in the region—the basic source of conflict between the two traditional enemies.

With respect to the first of these two objectives, the historical accounts are generally exculpatory in nature. They offer an idealized portrayal of the Romanian people in general and provide an uncritically positive evaluation of the wartime positions and policies of the Antonescu regime. In a romantic, idealized fashion the nationalists characterize the Romanians as a gentle, kind, and magnanimous people whose humanitarianism was manifested toward the Jews during the Second World War. They make no attempt to differentiate between the three wartime attitudinal categories of Romanians—categories that were also clearly discernible among the peoples in all the other Nazi-dominated states: (a) the relatively large number of collaborators who were motivated by ideological convictions or, as was most often the case, by rapacious instincts;<sup>6</sup> (b) the pitifully low number of those who dared to save their Jewish friends or neighbors; and (c) the overwhelming majority who, for a variety of reasons, remained basically passive.

The nationalists are also dedicated to defending the integrity of the wartime leaders by denying or rationalizing their anti-Jewish policies. They are particularly brazen in “explaining” the campaigns of mass murder against the Jews as acts of self-defense, ignoring the evidence that the Romanian version of the Final Solution was in fact initiated by the Antonescu regime and was generally carried out by units of the Romanian army and gendarmerie. Their more sophisticated but equally distorted accounts attempt to minimize the tragedy of the Jews by shifting the blame almost exclusively to the Germans and “a few misguided Iron Guard radicals”.<sup>7</sup>

The anti-Hungarian political objective is pursued through accounts demonstrating Romania’s alleged wartime “humanitarian” record, emphasizing—not always without any justification—the brutality and eagerness with which the Hungarians collaborated with the SS in the implementation of the Final Solution program in 1944.<sup>8</sup> These accounts fail to note,

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<sup>5</sup> For accounts on Romania’s position toward the Jews, see *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*, ed. R. L. Braham (New York: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies of the City University of New York, 1994). See also the writings of J. Ancel, including *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry During the Holocaust*, 12 vols. (New York: The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986–87) and ‘The Romanian Way of Solving “the Jewish Problem” in Bessarabia and Bucovina, June–July 1941’, in *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 19 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1988), pp. 187–232.

<sup>6</sup> Many objective historical accounts and eyewitness testimonies provide gruesome details about the involvement of Romanians, Gypsies, and others in the murder of Jews and especially in the looting of their property. Perhaps the most vivid account was provided by C. Malaparte in his *Kaputt* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1946) in connection with the Iași pogrom of June–July 1941.

<sup>7</sup> A classic example in this category is M. Covaci and A. Karetki, *Zile însingerate la Iași* [Bloody Days in Jassy] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1978). The preface by Nicolae Minei contains a “historical revisionist” interpretation of the wartime plight of Jews in Romania. For some additional details, see V. Eskenasy, ‘The Holocaust and Romanian Historiography: Communist and Neo-Communist Revisionism’, in *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*, ed. R. L. Braham, pp. 173–236.

<sup>8</sup> The Holocaust in Hungary and the responsibility of the Germans and Hungarians in the destruction of

however, that the Jews of Northern Transylvania, like those of Hungary as a whole, while subjected to many discriminatory measures, survived almost intact until the German occupation of March 19, 1944.

The campaign acquired considerable momentum in the mid-1980s, when a relatively large number of sophisticated history-cleansing works appeared with the support of the Ceaușescu regime. These slanted accounts on the Holocaust deal primarily with the destruction of the Jews of Hungary with emphasis on those of Northern Transylvania, the area held by Hungary between September 1940 and October 1944.<sup>9</sup> One of the most popular pamphlets in this category was published under the authorship of the Central Jewish Federation.<sup>10</sup> Several wartime accounts and semi-fictionalized narratives were published in the same genre by survivors of the Hungarian Holocaust.<sup>11</sup> Others, and especially those written by ethnic Romanians, emphasize not only the Hungarians' responsibility for the destruction of nearly 570,000 Jews, including more than 100,000 Jews of Northern Transylvania, but also the "equally vicious" anti-Romanian policies of the Horthyite regime. Many of the latter accounts also focus on the revisionist policies Hungary had pursued against Romania during the interwar period.<sup>12</sup>

The history-cleansing campaign aimed at juxtaposing Romania's wartime "humanitarianism" with Hungary's "barbarism" received a boost in 1986. Pro-Ceaușescu propagandists began to take advantage of basically unfounded accounts of the mass rescue of Hungarian and other Jewish refugees across the Hungarian–Romanian border during the Second World War. These accounts were advanced by two elderly individuals who were motivated by their particular personal interests, Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, the former Chief Rabbi of the small Neolog community of Cluj [Kolozsvár], and Raoul Șorban, a painter and art historian.<sup>13</sup> The first public disclosure of their rescue accounts, emphasizing the generosity and selflessness of the Romanians, appeared over the signature of Adrian Riza, a man identified by several scholars as a Ceaușescu propagandist.<sup>14</sup> This was followed by published versions of the lectures and interviews given since 1986 by both these protagonists of the "rescue operation". These, in turn, emerged as sources for numerous other exculpatory

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Hungarian Jewry are detailed in R. L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies of the City University of New York, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> For some details on the destruction of the Jews of Northern Transylvania, see R. L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide...*, ch. 18. See also R. L. Braham, *Genocide and Retribution. The Holocaust in Hungarian-Ruled Northern Transylvania* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1983), and *Martiriul evreilor din România* [The Martyrdom of the Jews of Romania] (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1991), pp. 245–90.

<sup>10</sup> See *Remember. 40 de ani de la masacrarea evreilor din Ardealul de Nord sub ocupatia horthystă* [Remember. Forty Years Since the Massacre of Jews in Northern Transylvania under Horthyite Occupation] (Bucharest: Federatia Comunitatilor Evreiesti din Republica Socialistă România, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> See especially the writings of O. Lustig, including *Blood-Bespotted Diary* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988)—the English translation of *Jurnal însingerat* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, *Teroarea Horthysto-Fascista în Nord-Vestul României* [The Horthyite-Fascist Terror in Northwestern Romania], ed. M. Fătu and M. Mușat (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1985). English version: *Horthyite-Fascist Terror in Northwestern Romania* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1986).

Interestingly, many of the Romanian historical accounts focusing on Romania's "humanitarian" record on the Holocaust occasionally rely for their "documentation" on this author's works, including *The Politics of Genocide* and *Genocide and Retribution* cited above. The quotations used, however, are quite selective and generally out of context, ignoring the "negative" sections dealing with the Romanian involvement in the massacre of Jews in Romania and the Romanian-occupied parts of the Soviet Union.

<sup>13</sup> For details, see R. L. Braham, 'Romanian Nationalists and the Holocaust. A Case Study in History Cleansing', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (winter 1996), pp. 211–51.

<sup>14</sup> See his 'România pământ al speranței. Fascism și antifascism pe meleaguri Transilvane. Rețeaua omeniei' [Romania. Land of Hope. Fascism and Anti-Fascism in the Transylvanian Regions. The Network of Humanity], in *Almanahul "Lucașfărul" 1986* [Lucașfărul Almanach 1986] (Bucharest, 1986), pp. 63–92.

writings.<sup>15</sup>

A similar distortion of history is reflected in the nationalists' contradictory evaluations of the fates of the Jewish communities of Bukovina and Bessarabia, which fell to Soviet control in June 1940, as against those of Northern Transylvania, which came under Hungarian jurisdiction two months later. Although all of these communities were part of Greater Romania between 1918 and 1940, the interpretation of the tragic fate that befell them reflects the nationalists' ideological and political interests. While the mass murder of the Jews in Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria is rationalized as "acts of self-defense" against "communist and pro-Soviet" aliens, the destruction of the Jews of Northern Transylvania is attributed almost exclusively to the barbarism of the Hungarians. In contrast to the unsympathetic portrayal of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina, the nationalists depict the Jews of Northern Transylvania, whom they traditionally hated as pro-Magyar, in almost philo-Semitic terms. Exploiting the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry for their political ends, they disingenuously assert that during the four years of Hungarian rule in Northern Transylvania the Romanians and the Jews were united in a veritable symbiosis of suffering. Although most of the discriminatory measures Hungary adopted during the Nazi era were almost exclusively anti-Jewish, the nationalists describe the suffering of the Romanians at the hand of the Hungarians as even more intense than that endured by the Jews. One of them, in fact, claimed that "the main feature of the Holocaust in Northern Transylvania was anti-Romanian and not anti-Semitic".<sup>16</sup> Another, a high-ranking military officer, went as far as to state that "after the entry of the Horthyite troops in the northwestern part of Romania, special camps were established for the extermination of Romanians." He added that by October 1940, that is, within a month after the Hungarian annexation of Northern Transylvania, these camps included 13,359 Romanians.<sup>17</sup>

The history-cleansing campaign to whitewash the mass murder of Jews by units of the Romanian army and gendarmerie, and to emphasize the Holocaust in Hungary, is intertwined with the drive to bring about the rehabilitation of Marshal Antonescu.

The nationalists portray the dictator as:

- A patriot who strove to reestablish the territorial integrity of Greater Romania;
- A hero who waged war against the Soviet Union for the reacquisition of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia and for the protection of Christian Europe from the menace of Bolshevism;
- A diplomat-soldier who strove to reacquire Northern Transylvania from the Hungarians; and
- A humanitarian who not only saved the Jews of Romania, but also gave refuge to

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, M. Carmilly-Weinberger, '1940–1944. In acele vremuri grele, poporul român și-a păstrat demnitatea și omenia' [1940–1944. During Those Difficult Times, the Romanian People Retained Their Dignity and Humanity], *Magazin Istoric* [Historical Magazine], Vol. 13, No. 10(271) (Bucharest, October 1989); C. Mustata, 'Convorbire cu Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger fost Șef-Rabin al Clujului' [Discussion with Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, the Former Chief Rabbi of Cluj], in *Almanahul "Flacăra" 1989* [Flacăra Almanach 1989] (Bucharest, 1989), pp. 140–48; 'Salvarea evreilor din teritoriul de nord-vest al României, 1940–1944' [The Rescuing of Jews in the Northwestern Territory of Romania, 1940–1944], in *Almanah "Luceafărul" 1989* (Bucharest, 1989), pp. 114–38. (A roundtable discussion involving Carmilly-Weinberger, Raoul Șorban, Adrian Riza, and Mihai Ungheanu); and A. Riza, 'Arhivele încep să vorbească' [The Archives Begin to Talk], in *Almanah "Luceafărul" 1989*, pp. 139–62.

<sup>16</sup> See the review of 'Teroarea Horthisto-fascista în Nord-Vestul României', in *Almanah "Luceafărul" 1986* (Bucharest, June 21, 1986).

<sup>17</sup> I. Șuța, *Transilvania: himera imperialismului iredentist* [Transylvania: Chimera of Irredentist Imperialism] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei de Înalte Studii Militare, 1995), p. 131. The author is a retired lieutenant-general.

thousands upon thousands of Hungarian and other Jews, enabling them to go on to Palestine.

The depiction of Antonescu as a “savior of Jews” is part of the nationalists’ political campaign against Hungary and the Hungarians. Not only are the history cleansers silent about the Marshal’s personal involvement in the mass murder of the Jews of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, they also fail to provide the historical context that surrounded the eventual survival of the great majority of the Jews of Old Romania and Southern Transylvania. They conveniently ignore the Romanian leaders’ original agreement with the SS to subject these Jews to the Nazis’ Final Solution program and overlook the circumstances that led them to change their minds.<sup>18</sup> These chroniclers, moreover, fail to remember that many of Romania’s wartime humanitarian actions—such as the smuggling of Hungarian Jews and other refugees across the Hungarian–Romanian border, their emigration to Palestine, and the repatriation of the surviving Jews from Transnistria—were greatly abetted by the venality of various Romanian officials, payoffs by foreign Jewish organizations, and, above all, Marshal Antonescu’s realization that the Axis would lose the war.<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, Antonescu has also been credited with saving large numbers of Hungarian Jews by granting them refuge in Romania and permitting their emigration to Palestine.<sup>20</sup> He did all this, they emphasize, despite the law of May 29, 1944, which mandated the death penalty for Jews entering the country illegally. However, this account goes counter to the recollections of Radu Lecca, Antonescu’s Commissar on Jewish Affairs.<sup>21</sup> According to Lecca, the Marshal was not even aware of the presence of Hungarian Jewish refugees in the country. Had he been, the former Commissar emphasizes, Antonescu “would have given the order to shoot them [in accordance with the law then in effect] in order . . . to prevent other Hungarian Jews from trying their luck in Romania.”<sup>22</sup>

The campaign to rehabilitate Marshal Antonescu has gained momentum since the early 1990s. The rehabilitation campaign has, among other things, involved the glorification of the Marshal and the pressuring of the authorities for a judicial review of his conviction. Hailing him as an anti-Soviet hero, the Romanian parliament, including its few Jewish members, observed a minute of silence in tribute to the Marshal (May 1991). On October 22, 1993, one day after the U.S. Congress granted Romania most-favored-nation trade status, a statue of Antonescu was unveiled in front of the local police headquarters in Slobozia, a city east of

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<sup>18</sup> See J. Ancel, ‘Plans for Deportation of the Romanian Jews and Their Discontinuation in Light of Documentary Evidence (July–October 1942)’ in *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 16 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1984), pp. 381–420.

<sup>19</sup> For details on the distortions by Romanian historians, including those formerly associated with the now defunct Institute of History of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, see Eskenasy, ‘The Holocaust and Romanian Historiography: Communist and Neo-Communist Revisionism’ See also R. Ioanid, ‘Romania’ in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. D. S. Wyman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 225–55.

As Eskenasy demonstrates, many of the Ceaușescu -supported “communist historians” have switched their allegiance to the post- Ceaușescu chauvinistic nationalist and ultra-Right forces. See also M. Shafir, ‘Marshal Ion Antonescu and Romanian Politics,’ *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (February 1994), pp. 22–28.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, ‘Mareșalul Antonescu i-a salvat pe evreii din România. Un dialog Raoul Șorban–Adrian Păunescu, București, 17 Ianuarie 1996’ [Marshal Antonescu Saved the Jews of Romania. A Raoul Șorban–Adrian Păunescu Dialogue, Bucharest, January 17, 1996], *Totuși Iubirea* [Love Nevertheless], No. 2, January, No. 4, February 1–8, No. 5, February 8–15, 1996. (The titles of the last two segments of the interview vary.)

<sup>21</sup> His official title was *Imputernicitul Guvernului Pentru Reglementarea Regimului Evreilor din România* [The Government Commissioner for the Regulation of the Status of Jews in Romania].

<sup>22</sup> See his *Eu i-am salvat pe evreii din România* [I Saved the Jews of Romania] (Bucharest: Roza Vânturilor, 1994), p. 289. On the background and character of the publication, see L. Benjamin, ‘Radu Lecca și salvarea evreilor din România’ [Radu Lecca and the Saving of the Jews of Romania], *Revista Cultului Mozaic* [Review of the Jewish Religion], Bucharest, November 16, 1994.

Bucharest on the Ialomița River. The unveiling ceremony was attended by Mihai Ungheanu, the State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture who was formerly Ceaușescu's aide, and several members of the parliament, including Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Ungheanu's presence, which reflected President Iliescu's tacit consent, aroused considerable controversy both in Romania and abroad. In a letter addressed to President Iliescu, 50 members of both houses of the U.S. Congress emphasized that "the presence of Ungheanu cannot but lead to the conclusion that the ceremony had benefited from the official support of the Romanian government."<sup>23</sup>

Another statue of Antonescu was erected in Piatra Neamț (November 12, 1994). The inaugural ceremony was marked by the parade of a military unit and the laying of a wreath sent by the prefect, the representative of the central authorities. On June 1, 1996—the fiftieth anniversary of Marshal Antonescu's execution as a war criminal—a monument, consisting of a large cross on a marble base, was "secretly" unveiled in his memory within Jilava, a prison near Bucharest. Erected on the spot where the Marshal was executed, the monument was presumably authorized by the Ministry of Justice which has jurisdiction over prisons. Containing patriotic references to the Marshal, the monument has reportedly emerged as a popular pilgrimage site for neo-fascists. Still another statue is being prepared for erection in the town of Bacău, reportedly in conjunction with the establishment of a "Ion Antonescu Museum".<sup>24</sup>

One of the most controversial—and clearly anti-Hungarian—plans relates to the erection of an Antonescu monument in Cluj-Napoca, the capital of Transylvania. Spearheaded by Gheorghe Funar, the fiercely anti-Hungarian mayor, the plans for the erection of a 10-meter high bronze statue were discussed on January 25, 1996, at a meeting attended by some 60 people, including Iosif C. Drăgan and Raoul Șorban.<sup>25</sup> Streets and squares were—and continue to be—named after the Marshal in many towns and cities. Chief Rabbi Rosen incurred the wrath of many xenophobic nationalists when he noted in one of his speeches that while on a visit to Budapest he had seen no streets named after Miklós Horthy, the Hungarian Regent of the Nazi era.<sup>26</sup>

The Marshal is often glorified in state-owned media and films. Sergiu Nicolaescu, a senator belonging to former President Iliescu's party and formerly the official film director of the Ceaușescu regime, produced a motion picture—*Oglinda* [The Mirror]—in which Antonescu is depicted as a martyr and Hitler is portrayed as a wise politician. Another film—*Destinul Mareșalului* [The Marshal's Destiny]—was produced and distributed in December 1994 by state-controlled companies. The film portrays Antonescu "as a great patriot and justifies the massacre of the Jews during his rule with the claim that the victims were communists and Russian sympathizers."<sup>27</sup>

Concurrently with the glorification of the Marshal, in early 1993, Romanian extremists also succeeded in publishing and disseminating a Romanian translation of Hitler's *Mein*

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<sup>23</sup> As quoted by M. Shafir in his 'Marshal Antonescu's Postcommunist Rehabilitation. Cui bono?', in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews During the Antonescu Era*, ed. R. L. Braham (New York: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies of the City University of New York, 1997). For a reference to President Iliescu's tacit consent, see A. Codrescu, 'Fascism on a Pedestal', *The New York Times*, December 7, 1993.

<sup>24</sup> According to a leading daily, the museum is reportedly being built through the support of the Bacău County Council, under the guidance of Viorel Căpitanu, its director, and Rozela Burnea, an architect. *Azi* [Today], Bucharest, May 8, 1996. However, according to a July 5, 1996, communication by Dr. Mircea Dan Geoana, the Romanian Ambassador to Washington, the *Azi* report was incorrect: the museum is being dedicated to someone named "Iuliu Antonescu".

<sup>25</sup> K. J., 'Törvényen kívüli szobor és zsűrije' [Illegal Statue and Its Jury], *Szabadság* [Freedom], Cluj-Napoca, January 1996.

<sup>26</sup> M. Shafir, 'Anti-Semitism Without Jews in Romania', *Report on Eastern Europe*, June 28, 1991, p. 28.

<sup>27</sup> For details on the post-communist glorification of Antonescu, see Shafir, 'Marshal Antonescu's Postcommunist Rehabilitation'. See also Ioanid, 'Romania', pp. 251, 253.



*Kampf* with the authorization of Vasile Manea Drăgulin, the Prosecutor General.<sup>28</sup> This was coupled with the serialization of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the notorious anti-Semitic forgery, by *Europa, Romania Mare*, and *Oblio*, a tabloid. A few years later, the viciously anti-Semitic works of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Horia Sima, the top leaders of the Iron Guard, were also republished.<sup>29</sup>

A short while earlier, the Prosecutor General was requested by various patriotic/xenophobic nationalist groups to help bring about the judicial rehabilitation of Marshal Antonescu through the initiation of extraordinary proceedings. The initiative was taken by the Pro-Marshal Antonescu League [*Liga Pro Mareșal Antonescu*], a “patriotic” group set up by sundry veterans on June 1, 1990.<sup>30</sup> In September 1992, this League appealed to the Prosecutor General and to other governmental agencies for a retrial of the Marshal. The same objective had been pursued by a rival group—the Marshal Antonescu League [*Liga Mareșal Antonescu*], which was set up (together with a foundation bearing the same name) on October 16, 1990, by Iosif Constantin Drăgan, a former Iron Guardist, and his neo-fascist cronies, including Corneliu Vadim Tudor, Gheorghe Buzatu, Radu Theodoru, and Ilie Neacșu, with Drăgan serving as president of both.<sup>31</sup> In June 1992, the League approached Drăgulin to initiate an extraordinary legal appeal and demanded that parliament annul the sentences against the Marshal and his co-defendants and pass a law “honoring the memory of the martyr–hero Ion Antonescu.”<sup>32</sup>

Although not yet successful, these extremists appear to have some friends in the Prosecutor General’s office who are sympathetic to the idea of Antonescu’s rehabilitation. One of them is General Ioan Dan, a member of the military section of the office, who even wrote a book fully exonerating the Marshal.<sup>33</sup> Another politician pushing for the Marshal’s rehabilitation is Petre Țurlea, a member of the Chamber of Deputies, who had initiated the parliament’s tribute to Antonescu in May 1991.<sup>34</sup>

As former President of Romania Ion Iliescu was reminded on July 18, 1995 by Senator Alfonse D’Amato and Christopher H. Smith, the leaders of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, “no other European nation has erected statues of a war criminal since the end of the Second World War.” Protesting “the lack of official condemnation and

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<sup>28</sup> Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen lodged a protest with the Minister. *Revista Cultului Mozaic*, No. 760 (Bucharest, June (1), 1993).

<sup>29</sup> C. Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari* [For the Legionnaires] (Timișoara: Editura Gordian, 1993); H. Sima, *Doctrina legionară* [The Legionary Doctrine] (Bucharest: Editura Majadahonda, 1995). Romanian nationalists also published a Romanian translation of Jan von Helsing’s anti-Semitic work on the alleged conspiracy of the Jews to dominate the world: *Organizațiile secrete și puterea lor în Secolul XX* [The Secret Organizations and Their Power in the Twentieth Century] (Bucharest: Editura ALMA, 1996), 168 pages.

<sup>30</sup> One of the leaders of this group is Major General Marin Popescu.

<sup>31</sup> At the November 23, 1996, Congress of the Marshal Ion Antonescu League and Foundation, Dragan was re-elected Honorary President. Also elected were Nicolae Baciuc as Honorary President of the League’s National Council, Gheorghe Buzatu as Executive President of the League, and Radu Theodoru as Executive President of the Foundation. ‘Congresul Ligii și Fundației “Mareșal Ion Antonescu”’ [The Congress of the Marshal Ion Antonescu League and Foundation], *Natiunea* [The Nation], December 6–12, 1996.

After the collapse of the communist regime, Theodoru emerged as a vicious, Holocaust-denying anti-Semite. A Ceaușescu hagiographer with ties to the *Securitate*, he was for a while the editor in chief of *Socialistul* [The Socialist], the organ of the left-fascist Socialist Party of Labor. Shafir, ‘Anti-Semitism Without Jews in Romania’, p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> For some details, see Shafir, ‘Marshal Antonescu’s Postcommunist Rehabilitation’.

<sup>33</sup> See his “*Procesul*” *Mareșalului Ion Antonescu* [The “Trial” of Marshal Ion Antonescu] (Bucharest: Editura Tempus, 1993). For some additional details on General Dan, see Shafir, ‘Marshal Antonescu’s Postcommunist Rehabilitation’.

<sup>34</sup> For some additional details on Țurlea’s activities and the American reaction to the drive for Antonescu’s rehabilitation, see Shafir, ‘Marshal Antonescu’s Postcommunist Rehabilitation’.

vigorous investigation of the desecration of the main Jewish cemetery in Bucharest”,<sup>35</sup> the American officials also asked the Romanian President for “a public statement denouncing Antonescu as a war criminal and Nazi ally”, warning that by “the continuing efforts to honor Antonescu as a national hero . . . the foundation is being laid in Romania for a resurgence of fascism, anti-Semitism, and crude ethnically based nationalism.”

The American officials expressed their disappointment over the crass expediency that appeared to guide the government’s cooperation with the extremist parties. Their anger was clearly reflected in their letter: “We were startled to learn that there are periodic programs on government-controlled television that support the rehabilitation of Antonescu and other Romanian war criminals. *The production and broadcast of these programs implies government sponsorship of this effort.*” (Italics supplied.)

In spite of assurances from the official leadership of the country, the tragedy that befell the Jews of Romania during the war continues to be generally distorted. The belief that Romania’s wartime record was “humanitarian” and that the Antonescu regime protected its Jews and offered asylum to many tens of thousands of refugees is held not only by xenophobic nationalists but also by ‘moderate’ political figures, including current and former parliamentarians and governmental leaders. The belief is based upon the contention that the anti-Jewish operations in Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria were actions of self-defense against pro-Soviet “saboteurs” and that the only Holocaust that took place on Romanian soil was the one perpetrated by the Hungarians in Northern Transylvania.

A classic example of the ‘moderate’ view is represented by Petre Roman, the former Prime Minister and leader of the Front of National Salvation. Roman’s views on the tragedy that befell the Jews of Romania during the war may have subconsciously been induced by the desire to conceal his background. Of Jewish origin (the grandson of a rabbi and the son of a former high communist official under Ceaușescu), Roman spent considerable time after his dismissal in September 1991 attempting to ‘prove’ his Christian credentials. (His mother was a Spanish Roman Catholic.) He even published a photocopy of his certificate of baptism issued by the Romanian Orthodox Church. But despite his efforts, his political opponents continue to remind him—and the public at large—about his Jewish origins.<sup>36</sup>

A young and charismatic academic, Roman has consistently condemned manifestations of anti-Semitism. During the worldwide Holocaust remembrance period, he even expressed his sorrow over the tragedy that befell European Jewry during the Nazi era—expressions that were probably motivated more by political expediency than personal conviction. His personal views on the Romanian Holocaust were revealed during a visit to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on April 16, 1991. These were fundamentally not very different from those advanced by the ultra-nationalists.<sup>37</sup> The Prime Minister unmasked his insensitivity to the tragedy of Romanian Jewry in his response to a reminder by Mark Talisman, one of the officials of the Museum, that Romania and Albania were the only countries in Europe that had failed to respond to the Museum’s appeal for artifacts and archival materials. Like other nationalists, he attempted to generalize the destruction of

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<sup>35</sup> Jewish cemeteries and synagogues were also desecrated in several provincial cities, including Alba Iulia, Brașov, Fălticeni, Galați, Oradea, and Târgu Mureș.

<sup>36</sup> A candidate for the presidency in the November 1996 elections, Roman was once again a target of anti-Semitic attacks. Leaflets distributed by his opponents called on the voters to prevent the country from being led by a “kike”. *OMRI Daily Digest*, Prague, No. 201, Part II, October 16, 1996.

Roman received 20.54 per cent of the vote. His party, the third largest, obtained 13.16 per cent of the vote in the race for the Senate, gaining 23 seats, and 12.93 per cent in the race for the Chamber of Deputies, gaining 53 seats.

<sup>37</sup> The Prime Minister’s entourage included Virgil Constantinescu, Romania’s Ambassador to Washington, Andrei Busuioceanu, the Cultural Attaché, and Neagu, Deputy Director of the USA desk in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Romanian Jewry with the suffering of ethnic Romanians at the hands of the Hungarians. Roman also tried to de-emphasize the tragedy of the Jews in Transnistria and in Iași, claiming that only a few hundred Jews were killed during the pogrom. He attempted to ‘balance’ the suffering of the Jews with the massacre of Romanians in the villages of Trăsnea and Ip during the Hungarian occupation of Northern Transylvania in September 1940. When this writer attempted to enlighten him about the fundamental difference between the regrettable killing of a few hundred Romanians and the Holocaust, emphasizing that the Jews had been killed in “all the Trăsneas and the Ips” of Northern Transylvania, Hungary, and elsewhere, he snapped back, asserting that I had tried to differentiate between the Jewish and Romanian victims of the Hungarian occupation.<sup>38</sup>

A more recent example of a ‘moderate’ politician’s anti-Semitism is that of Senator Vasile Dumitru, a member of President Iliescu’s then ruling Party of Social Democracy of Romania. Borrowing a page from the Nazis’ propaganda handbook, Senator Dumitru used the remnant of Romanian Jewry as scapegoats for all the economic and social problems that were engendered by the government’s ill-conceived policies, rampant mismanagement, and wide-scale corruption. During a plenary session of the Senate (June 18, 1996), Senator Dumitru used language reminiscent of the Nazi era, while pleading for the reintroduction of the death penalty:

Hundreds of aliens who cheat, kill, deplete the country of its wealth, a country in which an Itzik lays his hands on the money bag of a great Romanian merchant killed by a vaccine bullet, buries industry, brings agriculture to its knees, sinks the country into debt, and gorges himself.<sup>39</sup>

In response to an open letter published by the leaders of Romanian Jewry protesting the Senator’s anti-Semitic statements, Adrian Nastase, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, assured the heads of the Jewish community that the Senator’s views did not represent those of his party, the Romanian parliament, or the majority of the Romanian people.<sup>40</sup> The moderates, especially those in positions of power, are clearly worried about Romania’s image abroad. They are relatively sensitive to world public opinion and tend to publicly condemn all manifestations of anti-Semitism. However, many among them share the xenophobic nationalists’ views on the Holocaust in Romania although they express them in a more sophisticated manner.

The anti-Semitism of the neo-fascist nationalist extremists includes the denigration and denial of the Holocaust. One of their standard positions is that the mass murder of Jews during the withdrawal of the Romanian forces from Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia in June–July 1940, were, in fact, acts of self-defense against pro-Soviet collaborators. A major vehicle for the propagation of these views is the prestigious *Revista de Istorie Militară* [Review of Military History]. One of the most influential among the proponents of this view is Major Constantin Hlihor.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See reports prepared by Radu Ioanid and this writer on the meeting with Prime Minister Roman, dated April 16 and April 17, 1991, submitted to Michael Berenbaum, then Project Director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Ce știți cu adevărat despre Itic, domnule senator?’ [What Do You Really Know About Itzig, Mr. Senator?] *Realitatea Evreiască* [Jewish Reality], Bucharest, July 16–August 15, 1996. In his response to a protest by the leaders of the Jewish community, Adrian Nastase, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, assured them that the attitude of Senator Dumitru was an isolated case and did not represent the views of his party or of the Romanian Parliament as a whole. See also J. Szász, ‘Egy fasiszta a Szenátusban’ [A Fascist in the Senate], *Romániai Magyar Szó* [Hungarian Word of Romania], Bucharest, June 24, 1996.

<sup>40</sup> *Realitatea Evreiască*, July 15–August 15, 1996, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> See his ‘Calvarul retragerii armatei române din Basarabia și Bukovina de Nord’ [The Calvary of the Romanian Army’s Retreat from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina], *Revista de Istorie Militară*, Bucharest, No. 1(12), 1992, pp. 13–17.

A second major thesis involves the denial of the Holocaust in Romania by ‘overlooking’ the liquidation of close to 270,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews during the euphoric, pre-Stalingrad phase of the war, and focusing on the survival of most of the Jews in Old Romania and Southern Transylvania. The only chapter of the Holocaust on Romanian soil these revisionists will concede as having taken place was the one perpetrated by the Hungarians in Northern Transylvania, the region that had been part of Hungary between 1940 and 1944. Their ‘historical’ technique involves the twisting of statistical data and out-of-context quoting from the writings of leading Holocaust scholars and pro-Romanian sympathizers.<sup>42</sup> The group of Romanian “historical revisionists” includes both former and neo-fascists associated with the Iron Guard.

One of the most influential Holocaust deniers with academic credentials is Gheorghe Buzatu, a well-known historian associated with the Center of European History and Civilization of the Iași Branch of the Romanian Academy—an institution reportedly supported by Iosif Constantin Drăgan.<sup>43</sup> He even expropriated the term ‘Holocaust’ to depict the alleged suffering of Romanians at the hands of the Hungarians and the Soviets.<sup>44</sup> In the case of the latter, Buzatu collectively portrays the Jews as having sympathized or collaborated with the communists. A leading figure of the Marshal Antonescu League and other right extremist causes,<sup>45</sup> Buzatu claims that the idea that there was a Holocaust in Romania was invented by the Jews, “who had been in the first lines of the communist movement”. A pro-Iron Guard revisionist historian, he exploits every opportunity to warn against the dangers represented by “Russian imperialism, the Magyars, and Jewish propaganda” to contemporary Romania. Buzatu attempts to “balance” the “alleged” crimes committed by the Iron Guard with those inflicted by the communists (read Jews) against the Romanians. He wrote: “One cannot and should not forget the [assassinations] committed by the communists in the pay of Moscow, for the genuine Holocaust has been that launched and implemented against the Romanian people.”<sup>46</sup> Buzatu believes that the same linkage between the Jews and Moscow is responsible for the drive against Antonescu. He claims that “the portrayal of the Marshal as Hitler’s servant and as a war criminal was due to the Kremlin’s propaganda, which is largely directed by Jews.” Buzatu was quick to add a “benevolent warning” that the preoccupation with the Jewish problem of the Antonescu era and, especially, its “exaggerations . . . risked provoking—and have actually provoked—manifestations of anti-Semitism.”<sup>47</sup>

One of the most obscenely anti-Semitic Holocaust-denying nationalists is Radu Theodoru, the Executive President of the Marshal Antonescu Foundation. He synthesized his anti-Jewish diatribes in a ‘scholarly monograph’, which incorporates the standard anti-Semitic views about the Jewish conspiracy to rule the world, the lies of the charlatans who call themselves “historical revisionists”, and a number of specifically Romanian elements of contemporary anti-Semitism.<sup>48</sup> Theodoru aims at convincing his readers that the Jews, pursuing the establishment of a “Universal Republic under the leadership of Judaistic

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<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Constantin Botoran, ‘1940–1944. Holocaustul evreilor din România?’ [1940–1944. The Holocaust of the Jews of Romania?], *Revista de Istorie Militară*, Vol. 4(10), pp. 20–22.

<sup>43</sup> Drăgan reportedly also supports the Center’s publishing house, the European Institute for Scientific Cooperation.

<sup>44</sup> See his *Așa a început holocaustul împotriva poporului român* [This Is How the Holocaust Against the Romanian People Began] (Bucharest: Editura Magadahonda, 1995).

<sup>45</sup> His extreme Rightist ultra-nationalist orientation is reflected, among other things, in the following book he edited in cooperation with C. Ciucanu and C. Sandache, *Radiografia dreptei românești, 1927–1941* [The Radiography of the Romanian Right, 1927–1941] (Bucharest: FF Press, 1996).

<sup>46</sup> For some details on Buzatu’s background and activities, see Eskenasy, ‘Historiography’ and Shafir, ‘Marshal Antonescu’s Postcommunist Rehabilitation’.

<sup>47</sup> G. Buzatu, ‘Mareșalul Antonescu și problema evreiască’ [Marshal Antonescu and the Jewish Problem], *Revista de Istorie Militară*, No. 6(28), 1994, pp. 23, 26.

<sup>48</sup> See his *România ca o pradă* [Romania as a Prey] (Bucharest: Editura ALMA, 1996).

plutocracy”, have already succeeded in dominating and exploiting the United States, England, and France. Like his counterparts elsewhere, he identifies the Jews with both capitalism and communism, “proving” that the leaders of world communism, including “Lenin-Ziderblum”, have been Jewish. As to the Holocaust in Romania, Theodoru denies any responsibility on the part of any Romanians and claims, like Buzatu and others, that all the military measures that had been taken against the Jews during the Antonescu era were exclusively in self-defense against pro-Soviet collaborators. He attempts to “prove” that Romania was an oasis for Jewish refugees during the war. Theodoru contrasts Romania’s wartime “humanitarianism” with the “great harm” the Jews caused the country throughout the ages, and especially after the Second World War. He blames the Jews for all the “sufferings” the Romanians had to endure both before and after the Ceaușescu era and, following Buzatu’s thesis, claims that the real Holocaust was that experienced by the Romanians. He stated:

I affirm with all responsibility that the Judaic minority of Romania constituted and continues to constitute one of the long-term noxious factors responsible for a long series of crimes against the Romanian people beginning with the Holocaust in the extermination camps and ending with the cultural Holocaust.<sup>49</sup>

The idea that it was the Romanian people rather than the Jews who suffered the “real Holocaust” was also conveyed in a daily of the National Peasant Party: “The Jewish Holocaust with its loss of 6,000,000 lives paled against the ‘Holocaust of the Romanian people’ with the 20,000,000 ‘psychic victims of communism’ . . . and these 20,000,000 had all been the victims of a doctrine brought to Romania by the Jews.”<sup>50</sup> Șerban Suru, a neo-fascist Legionary leader, was just as blunt: “There was neither a Holocaust against the Jews nor a fascist regime in Romania.”<sup>51</sup> Ovidiu Gule, another anti-Semite in this category provided an old “Christian” explanation: “Jewish suffering, including the Holocaust, was nothing but the outcome of the earlier Jewish ‘original sin’, that of having refused to recognize Christ as the Messiah.”<sup>52</sup>

Besides whitewashing the Romanian involvement in the mass murder of Jews, Buzatu and his colleagues aim to keep alive the nationalists’ territorial ambitions relating to Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, currently parts of the republics of Ukraine and Moldova, respectively.<sup>53</sup>

The Holocaust denial by the Romanian “historical revisionists”, like that of their counterparts elsewhere in the world, is both part and parcel of their deep-rooted Judeophobia and represents a new virulent strain in postwar anti-Semitism. Writing about the “perverse ingenuity” of the Holocaust deniers, Walter Reich, the Director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., stated:

The primary motivation for most deniers is anti-Semitism, and for them the Holocaust is an infuriatingly inconvenient fact of history. After all the Holocaust has generally been recognized as one of the most terrible crimes that ever took place and surely the very emblem of evil in the modern age. If that crime was a direct result of anti-Semitism taken to its logical end, then anti-Semitism itself . . . is inevitably discredited . . . What better way to rehabilitate anti-Semitism, making anti-Semitic arguments

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<sup>49</sup> *România ca o pradă*, pp. 316–17.

<sup>50</sup> *Dreptatea* [Justice], February 16, 1990 as cited by Shafir, ‘Anti-Semitism Without Jews in Romania’, p. 24.

<sup>51</sup> See his ‘Mișcarea legionară și noua putere din România’ [The Legionary Movement and the New Power in Romania], *Cronica Română* [Romanian Chronicle], November 29, 1996, as cited in *Realitatea Evreiască*, No. 39(839), November 1996.

<sup>52</sup> *Gazeta de Vest* [Western Gazette], Timișoara, No. 52, 1991, as cited by Shafir, ‘Anti-Semitism Without Jews in Romania’, p. 25.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Buzatu’s *Românii în arhivele Kremlinului* [The Romanians in the Kremlin’s Archives] (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1996).

seem once again respectable in civilized discourse and even make it acceptable for governments to pursue anti-Semitic policies than by convincing the world that the great crime for which anti-Semitism was blamed simply never happened—indeed that it was nothing more than a frame-up invented by the Jews, and propagated by them through their control of the media.<sup>54</sup>

Silviu Brucan, a former leading figure of the Ceaușescu and the Iliescu regimes, provided a complementary and more specific explanation:

The revival of anti-Semitism in Romania is part and parcel of the right-wing nationalist chauvinistic current that re-emerged in all former ‘communist’ countries with the collapse of Marxism–Leninism and the ideological vacuum left by that collapse . . . The need to find ‘scapegoats’ for the failures suffered under the new historical experience of the transition from ‘socialism’ to a market economy is so acute that anti-Semitic diversion is being encouraged even where there are no Jews left. In addition, there is also a phenomenon that is specific to Romania: since the overwhelming majority of Romania’s intellectuals had collaborated with the Ceaușescu dictatorship, one encounters among them what could be termed ‘retroactive dissidence’, meaning that while they lacked the courage to stand up against the dictatorship, they are trying to display ‘courage’ now, when there are no risks. And one of the handiest ways is to be a nationalist anti-Semite.<sup>55</sup>

History is a formidable weapon. It is particularly corruptive and dangerous in the hands of chauvinistic nationalists bent on shaping history. Romanian nationalist ideologues are engaged in a drive to refurbish the past, sedulously defending the wartime record of Antonescu, including his policies toward the Jews. They strive not only to bring about his rehabilitation, but also to lay the foundations of a new political and social order that would reflect the Marshal’s nationalist stance: an ethnically homogeneous Greater Romania which is at once national Christian, anti-liberal, anti-democratic, and anti-monarchical.

It is the responsibility of scholars and persons of good will everywhere to counteract them. For unless the history-cleansing drive is stopped or at least unmasked, it might, like a computer virus, affect genuine historical writing and tarnish the historical record of the Holocaust.

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<sup>54</sup> See his ‘Erasing the Holocaust’, *The New York Times Book Review*, July 11, 1993.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted from an interview published in *Minimum*, Tel Aviv, No. 51, June 1991, as cited by Shafir, ‘Anti-Semitism Without Jews in Romania’, p. 29.