

Unacademic academics: Holocaust deniers and trivializers in post-Communist Romania

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The Romanian Academy (and much of the country's historical establishment) is packed with Holocaust deniers and trivializers, many of whom indulge in Holocaust obfuscation against the background of the post-Communist "competitive martyrdom" between the victims of the Holocaust and the Gulag. Quite a few of these deniers and trivializers are also former secret police informers. On closer examination, however, it turns out that explaining the reluctance to face the country's "dark past" as being the independent variable resultant of the post "Romanianization" of the Communist Party and its Securitate is a partial explanation at best. A substantially more convincing one might be provided by scrutinizing the phenomenon as the product of post-mnemonic cultural traumas.

Keywords: Holocaust denial and trivialization; Holocaust obfuscation; competitive martyrdom; cultural trauma; Romania; politics of memory

A meeting at the academy

On 17 February 2014, the Romanian Academy – the country's most prestigious scientific forum – hosted a special public debate titled "Historical Information and Testimonies Concerning the Holocaust in Romania." The meeting was organized in collaboration with the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania (FCER) and the National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania "Elie Wiesel" (INSHREW) as part of the events marking the 27 January International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It had been originally planned for 28 January, but weather conditions had forced its postponement.

The meeting was chaired by Academy President Ionel Haiduc, who apologized for having to leave early due to other engagements. At that point, one of his deputies, historian Dan Berindei, stepped in for Haiduc. The gathering was not addressed by any of the hosting institution's members, except for the usually garrulous Berindei's brief remarks at its end. He commented that although the forum had heard "interesting things," it was "a pity that the historical context had not been taken into account."¹

There was no applause at the end or after any of the speakers' presentations, in stark contrast with an event hosted by the same forum one year earlier. At that time, a nonagenarian professor of Romanian origins teaching in Germany had been tumultuously applauded (Drăgan 2013) when he told the gathering that claims made concerning Romania's participation in the Holocaust were "a cosmic lie" that was nothing short of "besmirching." While

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some anti-Jewish “persecutions” had been registered, and while between (at most) 100,000–120,000 Jews had been murdered, history professor Vladimir Iliescu said, no extermination chambers existed and hence there was a huge difference between Germany (and Hungary, which had sent its Jews to Auschwitz) and Romania, where the rest of Jews were said to have led “quite a normal life” (Heinen 2013).² Obviously, Professor Iliescu was way behind with his definition of the Holocaust,³ not to mention knowing something about the “Holocaust by bullets” (Desbois 2008).

Neither was there any applause when, in February 2014, FCER President Aurel Vainer and INSHREW Director Alexandru Florian described this earlier incident as “inadmissible” and as an instance of Holocaust denial and trivialization. Indeed, the victims of the Holocaust in the territories administered by Romania during World War II had not been gassed. They had been “merely” shot by the Romanian and German military, or perished due to appalling sanitary conditions that triggered epidemic disease, or died from the extreme conditions of deportation.

An absent “guest”

As the audience was preparing to take its seats, it found on its chairs a mimeographed 22-page brochure titled “Audiatur et Altera Pars!” (Latin for “Listening to the Other Side”) and subtitled “Samizdat.”⁴ Its author was Ion Coja, Romania’s most active Holocaust denier, who is a retired senior lecturer in philology at the University of București, chairman of the extreme nationalist League for Combatting Anti-Romanianism and a former member (1992–1996) of the upper house of the Romanian parliament.⁵ The attempted association with Soviet dissidence and its persecution by the authorities in the 1960s–1980s by labeling this material “samizdat” was more than exaggerated. Aside from self-victimization, it obliterated the reality: although legislation against Holocaust denial has existed in Romania since 2002,⁶ it has never been enforced either against Coja or anyone else with one single exception, where the initial sentencing was quashed on appeal.⁷

Reiterating the claim that “no Holocaust has taken place in Romania,” Coja’s pamphlet called on Haiduc to organize a similar gathering where those denying that such atrocities ever took place in his country would be given the same opportunity to present their argument as the Jewish side. He promised to bring as a “witness” the deceased Jewish linguist Alexandru Graur who, he wrote, “would have been the first and the most vehement challenger of the alleged Holocaust if he were alive” (Coja, 2014a, 2). There was hardly any novelty in Coja’s “argument.” Apart from Graur (Coja 2007), other Jewish “witnesses” he has cited in the past were all dead as well, including figures such as Wilhelm Filderman, a prominent interwar leader of the community, former Chief Rabbi Alexandru Șafran, Nicolae Cajal, FCER President between 1994 and 2004 (whom he attacked while he was alive precisely for what he now praised) and even Romanian-born Holocaust historian Jean Ancel who, according to Coja’s fabrications, had asked on his deathbed to be pardoned by the Romanian people and by Coja personally (Coja 1997, 156–157, 163–170, 2009a, 2009b; see also Shafir 2002, 2009). It turns out, as I have written elsewhere, that in Coja’s eyes a dead Jew is always a good Jew upon whom he can call for testimony. That is the only point on which he differs from the Iron Guard, for whom a good Jew was a dead one (Shafir 2009).

Le style, c’est l’homme [the style is the man] as the French put it. Dismissing eyewitness accounts from among Jews who survived the Moghilev camp, who had described the atrocious conditions that had forced Jews to feed on feces and cadavers, Coja comments that for such liars the most fitting description was “*shit-eating Jews*” (Coja, 2014a, 19,

author's emphasis). Given Coja's notoriety and the fact that the seat of the Academy is under guard day and night, one might well ask how he managed to distribute his brochure to the meeting. According to Coja, the initiative belonged to a group of "young nationalists" who compiled some of his texts and distributed the brochure ahead of the event. Even so, it is highly unlikely that without the aid of insiders the operation would have ended in the success Coja boasts about on his blog (Coja 2014b). Checking the record of pronouncements on the Holocaust of some historians who are members of the prestigious forum might, however, provide some clues, though no hard evidence. This article will begin by examining some pronouncements on the Holocaust by Romanian historians after 2002, when legislation forbidding denial of the Holocaust and the cult of those who perpetrated it went into force. While some of these are (or were) members of the Academy, others were not. To the extent that information is available, I shall point out the "bizarre coincidence" (as theater of the absurd playwright Eugene Ionescu would have put it) that most of these Holocaust deniers, trivializers and providers of exculpatory arguments (what Berindei named as the "historical context") turned out to have collaborated with the former secret police (the *Securitate*) prior to the change of regime. In the concluding remarks I shall raise the question whether this collaboration is an independent (explaining in and by itself) variable of denial and trivialization or a dependent (needing explanation) variable of the same phenomenon.

Dan Berindei

A proper starting point, then, would be to examine the reaction of members of the Romanian Academy, historians in particular, to the legislation forbidding Holocaust negation in general. It might also be useful to examine the echoes of the same legislation among Romanian historians who did not make it to that prestigious forum, although such aspirations were notorious among them. With a few notable exceptions, it should be noted from the start that the Academy's Section of History and Archeology headed by Berindei has been, and remains, a bastion of nationalist tradition. Berindei (who was born in 1923) opined in 2002 that Romania needed no such legislation because "there has been no Holocaust in Romania. There have been some deportations to [the Romanian administered territory of] Transnistria, [Romania] was a anteroom of the Holocaust, but not [the place of the] Holocaust" (*Jurnalul național*, 8 May 2002). Or, as he put it at another public debate held at the seat of the Academy that year, the country had only been "a wing of a phenomenon that touched Romania as well" (Rompres 28 June 2002).

The nonagenarian head of the Academy's History Section is known to have had a Legionary (Iron Guardist) past.⁸ According to historian Marius Oprea, Nicolae Doicaru, chief of Direction for Foreign Information (DIE), recruited Berindei in 1962 (code name "Băleanu") as an informer. Doicaru himself was a former Iron Guardist and was recruiting from among former members of that organization ("Șeful istoricilor," 2003; Corlățan 2009). On top of this, Berindei was the son-in-law of an imprisoned leader of the outlawed National Peasant Party and his own wife was imprisoned for having given shelter to an opposition activist (Betea 2006). In jail she gave birth to Berindei's daughter. Though never arrested, Dan Berindei for some time was allowed to publish only under the pen name "B. Dan" (Constantiniu 2007, 137). Things began to take a turn for the better with the change in the Romanian Communist Party (PCR)'s line vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, which at the same time signified the return of Romanian historiography to its nationalist traditions that had been denounced and quashed during the early Communist period.

These traditions, as German historian Armin Heinen described them, “lack narrative concepts beyond those of nineteenth century historiography”⁹ (Heinen 2013).

In 1970 Dan Berindei was allowed to join the PCR, which opened his way to a spectacular career, his first major position being that of deputy director of the Academy’s Nicolae Iorga Institute. In 1976, Berindei would be enrolled in the Romanian response to Russian historian Artiom Markovich Lazarev’s claim that Bessarabia’s incorporation into Russia in 1812 had represented a “progressive” step and that in its aftermath the “Moldovan people” had developed separately from its eastern Romanian neighbor (Constantiniu 2007, 365).¹⁰ In time, he became not only a major exponent of Ceaușescu’s nationalist and exculpation policies (by which is meant always placing the blame for “dark spots” in the country’s history on “Others”¹¹) at international conferences abroad, but also a frequent activist in defense of the leader’s policies at home. He is on record as being the chief defender of the PCR’s “systematization”¹² policies when these were criticized by some of his peers (Oprea 2002, 410; Stan 2010, 266). To claw his way to the top, nothing was apparently unholy for Dan Berindei. Although he was just one among several top Romanian historians acting as informers of the secret police, as far as is known he was the only one to have informed the *Securitate* about the activities of his own son, Mihnea, a prominent member of the Paris-based League for the Defense of Human Rights in Romania and a thorn in the regime’s side (Corlățan 2009). Yet it was only after the fall of the regime that Berindei became a member of the Academy (1992), president of the Historical Section of the Academy (1993) and one of its vice presidents (2006–2014).

Shortly after the February 2014 symposium, INSHREW Director Alexandru Florian received a reply from the Prosecutor General’s Office in regard to his protests regarding the toleration of neo-Fascist groups in Romania. As in many other instances, Romanian prosecutors said they decided not to launch a procedure against one of the several revived Legionary Movement organizations, which was openly displaying the Iron Guard insignia on the building of its seat in Bucharest. The prosecutors specified that the decision was partly based on the testimony of Șerban Suru, the organizations’ leader, who said the Iron Guard emblem (representing a fence formed by several crosses) was not an infringement of the law prohibiting the display of fascist symbols, as it merely symbolized opposition to Soviet expansion. The second ground on which the prosecution refused to heed the complaint, however, was the opinion of one of the Academy’s vice chairmen, who said historians are divided over identifying the Iron Guard as a fascist organization. The prosecutor did not venture the name of this person, but he is more than likely to have been Dan Berindei, the only historian occupying that position.¹³

Florin Constantiniu and Dinu C. Giurescu

Similar to some extent is the case of Florin Constantiniu (1933–2012), who was a correspondent member of the Academy in 1999 and a titular member from 2006 until his death in 2012. Perhaps Romania’s postwar most gifted historian, Constantiniu was born in a family with extreme nationalist sympathies. When his parents were married, their best man was none other than Alexandru C. Cuza, founder and leader of the antisemitic National Christian Union, as Constantiniu would tell neo-Legionary Victor Roncea in an interview. As a young boy, he was so attracted to the Iron Guard that he became, in his own words, “probably the youngest boy to wear the green shirt uniform” (“Profesorul Florin Constantiniu,” 2012). By the time he became an adolescent, the times of the Guard were over and Romania was under Communist rule. In the late 1950s he was expelled from the League of Working Youth (UTM, as that version of the Komsomol

was then called) for “mysticism,” since (in Orthodox tradition) he used to make the sign of the cross each time he passed by a church (Constantiniu 2007, 197–201). One does not know how he managed to atone, but the end of the Communist regime found him as PCR secretary at the Iorga Institute. Like Berindei, he had meanwhile turned into a major battleship of the Ceaușescu trusted “front of historians.”

I personally met Constantiniu for the first time in 1982, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in Kansas City, where we argued publicly over the regime-condoned antisemitic manifestations of the future leader of the chauvinist Greater Romania Party (PRM), Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Meanwhile, it transpired that he was also a close associate of powerful presidential brother Ilie Ceaușescu,¹⁴ with whom he shared a deep fear and resentment of Russia.¹⁵ That Constantiniu was a nationalist was transparent for any of his readers, but until the 2008 publication of a book by historian Șerban Rădulescu Zoner who researched the *Securitate* archives, no one knew that he had also acted as an informer on his colleagues, under the code name “Chris” (Rădulescu Zoner 2008).¹⁶ When confronted with the evidence, Constantiniu denied having been an informer but admitted that, as PCR secretary, he had been obliged to pass on information to *Securitate* officers in charge of the Iorga Institute (Oprea 2008).

Constantiniu was, indeed, a lot more versatile than Berindei. At a symposium in Bucharest where I had the privilege to attend in his company, he did not even come close to denial. In his concluding remarks, referring to World War II and Romania’s wartime leader Ion Antonescu, he said the objective of restoring Romania’s 1918 borders was “legitimate” and added that “the marshal remains the only Romanian politician since 1940 who has attempted to restore Greater Romania, the Romanian unitary national state, within its natural borders.” For Antonescu to have stopped at the River Dniester, he added, was strategically and politically impossible – a claim he would also make in a jointly authored book (Constantiniu and Schipor 1995) – and added in what reflected the “symmetric approach” (or “Double Genocide” theory¹⁷) that “Antonescu cannot be reproached for his alliance with Hitler unless one reproached Churchill and Roosevelt for their alliance with Stalin.” On the other hand, he said, paraphrasing Talleyrand,

Antonescu’s policy regarding the Jews was both a crime and a mistake: a crime because it killed thousands of innocent people, and a mistake not only because it opposed the national interest, but because it still imposes a heavy burden on the Romanian people. (Constantiniu 2003, 120)

In the ensuing debates, however, he complained about attempts to impose “political correctness” and dictates from abroad, and wondered why foreign historians, political scientists and politicians in general display such “haste” toward Romania’s “Antonescu problem,” which, he claimed, would find its clarification and solution in due time.

Being a typical product of National Communism (including local historiography’s romantic tradition mentioned by Heinen 2013), after 1989 Constantiniu never managed to overcome his roots, despite some attempts. In his *A Sincere History of the Romanian People* (1997, 394), his estimated number of Jewish Holocaust victims (200,000) is close to the Elie Wiesel International Commission’s *Final Report*.¹⁸ Unlike many of his fellow historians and members of the Academy (for example, Dinu C. Giurescu), he does not indulge in producing statistics that take into account only Romanian Jews, leaving out Ukrainian or Russian Jewish victims in Transnistria and in Ukraine proper. In the eyes of the latter author, Antonescu’s rule had been of the “paternalist traditionalist” type, with “strong nationalistic accents, safeguarding private property, as well as the mechanisms of a market economy, as much as those mechanisms could function in those years.”

The “repressive apparatus functioned at a very moderate level, if one takes into consideration wartime conditions.” Giurescu admits, however, that there was “a single major exception: the antisemitic policy and the treatment imposed on the Jews from Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, out of whom over 108,000 died or were killed in Transnistria.” Nevertheless, he writes, Antonescu “has the merit of having saved from the final solution the life of over 300,000 Romanian Jews” (Giurescu 1999, 70, 91). In late 2013 it turned out that Giurescu has also acted as a somewhat controversial *Securitate* informer (code names “Neculce” and “Darius”) while working for the Romanian Foreign Ministry (in the late 1950s) and after he asked for political asylum in the USA (in the 1980s). Although he apparently refused to provide information on his colleagues,¹⁹ citing as reason his own father’s persecutions in the early years of the regime,²⁰ he agreed to do it abroad, where he sought the aura of an anti-Ceaușescu dissident. Among those he reported on was Romanian-born US historian Stephen Fischer-Galati. In 2014, Giurescu replaced Berindei as Vice President of the Romanian Academy.

The best response to Giurescu came from historian Lucian Boia:

The Antonescu regime exterminated just over 100,000 Romanian Jews and ‘saved’ some 300,000. Strictly arithmetical, the merit would be three times higher than the guilt. Were it not for the fact that there is no merit in not killing and it is criminal to do so.

But right after making this remark, Boia steps straight into the pitfall of Holocaust trivialization and sounds very much like Berindei at the February 2014 session at the Academy. Antonescu, he writes, *must be seen in the context of his times*, an epoch “dominated by discrimination, hate and violence. *Neither Dresden nor Hiroshima were noble acts (not mentioning Hitler and Stalin’s millions of victims.*” He (rightly) adds: “the Romanians perceive [the figure of] Antonescu differently than the Jews.” But he walks the Holocaust obfuscation’s thin rope²¹ when remarking: “The marshal led the war for Romania’s re-unification and fell victim to Communism” (Boia 2002, 194, emphasis added). Be that as it may, in a later book Boia dedicated just two pages to a chapter on the Holocaust in Romania, posed under a question mark that never gets an unequivocal answer (Boia 2012, 61–62).²² Constantiniu, Giurescu and even Boia seem all incapable of overcoming the exculpation syndrome, and the former intertwines that incapacity with the Ceaușescu legacy of resentment of “interference in internal affairs.”

Constantiniu insists that Antonescu was not a “fascist dictator,” arguing that “the absence of the single party from the start does away” with such depiction. His rule is said to have been “dictatorial” and “inspired by the traditional themes of autochthonous nationalism.” However, “Antonescu’s dictatorship never matched the aberrant forms of repression encountered in the Soviet Union or the Third Reich” (Constantiniu 1997, 394, 395). In 2007, Constantiniu would bitterly complain in a thinly veiled criticism of Israeli and US presence on the Wiesel Commission and its recommendations peppered with a dose of allusive antisemitism:

The debates on Marshal Antonescu’s activity cannot take place in freedom because the decision-makers worry lest they irk their “friends” from abroad. The Romanian people and it alone decides whether Ion Antonescu is a hero or a traitor; the Romanian people and it alone decides whether it wants or not monuments to be erected for him, and it alone decides what should be written in [school] manuals about Ion Antonescu. What [might the reaction be] if the Romanian people were to claim, as others do, the right to evaluate [historic] personalities by the yardstick of their behavior toward Romanians? (Constantiniu 2007, 131)

Nor did he miss the opportunity to publicly distance himself from former colleagues who, he claimed, were opportunistically marching to orders from above when agreeing to subscribe to the change of official memory. Mihail Ionescu, who headed the Romanian team

at the Elie Wiesel Commission and was one of its *Report's* three editors (the other two being Tuvia Friling on the Israeli side and Radu Ioanid on the US side), is described by Constantiniu as being (at the time he met him first) Ilie Ceaușescu's young "trustee" who fit into Alcide de Gasperi's depiction of a young Italian politician: "This youngster is so capable that he's capable of anything." Beyond other qualities, he writes, Ionescu had one particularly praised in military ranks: unquestioning discipline. "Whatever he was ordered to do, he did with maximal diligence." And he adds: "Successive superiors, before and after '89, found in him the ideal complier." Lest the reader still entertain the slightest doubt, he concludes: "Our relationship was undermined by natures structurally so different that ... it became antagonistic. *After '89 our paths separated irrevocably*" (Constantiniu 2007, 408, 409, emphasis added).

Gheorghe Buzatu and his admirers

The grammar of exculpation's legacy²³ was sensed by the Wiesel Commission itself when it pointed out that during debates in parliament ahead of approving Governmental Ordinance 31/2002 "two commissions of the Romanian Senate proposed amending the law by defining the Holocaust as limited only to actions organized by the Nazi authorities, thereby excluding the Romanian experience in which Romanian officials, not the Nazis, organized the exterminations" (International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania 2005, 390). Historian Gheorghe Buzatu (1939–2013) played a prominent role in these attempts, although he no longer was a member of the legislature (he was a member of the Senate and one of its deputy chairmen between 2000 and 2004, representing the extreme nationalist PRM). He proposed that, in the legislation prohibiting denial, the Holocaust be defined as "the systematic massive extermination of the Jewish population in Europe organized by the Nazi authorities during the Second World War" (Mediafax, 26 July 2002). Since there had been no "massive" extermination of Jews in Romania but in occupied Transnistria and since the Nazis had not perpetrated the extermination there, *by definition* the law would have applied only to those claiming that the Germans had not exterminated Jews. This was a typical example of what I had called "selective negationism" (Shafir 2002), which does not deny the Holocaust as having taken place elsewhere but excludes any participation of members of one's own nation in its perpetration. And even though the trick did not quite work, it is precisely in this spirit that prosecutors interpreted the legislation, refusing to launch proceedings against blatant Romanian Holocaust deniers.

Buzatu had been a *Securitate* informer since 1975.²⁴ On 16 October 1990, he became a founding member and deputy chairman of the Marshal Antonescu League and of a foundation bearing the same name, taking over the chairmanship in April 2001 when the League and the foundation were merged. To avoid being indicted after 2002, the League's name was changed to "League of the Marshals" (Shafir 2002, 53 n. 39; "A murit Iosif Constantin Drăgan Realitatea," 2008). Although competition was quite fierce, no one contributed more to the attempts to rehabilitate Antonescu as a national hero than Buzatu (Buzatu 1991, 2002, 2005, 2008a, 2009; Buzatu et al. 1990, 2002, Buzatu and Beldiman 2003, Buzatu and Rotary 2007; Buzatu, Cheptea, and Cîrstea 2008; Buzatu, Panagoreț, and Botez 2009).

But Buzatu's role did not stop here. His prolific publications after 1990 make him stand out in admiration and defense of Romania's interwar radical right as few did overtly, except amateur pseudo-historians and pundits. This includes the Iron Guard and its founder and leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (Treptow and Buzatu 1994; Buzatu, Ciucanu, and Sandache 1996). It also includes constant efforts to depict the Jews in general as subversive

Communist agents (Buzatu 1996, 2010; Buzatu and Chirițoiu 1998). Buzatu was also the first historian in Romania to claim that the only “real” Holocaust has been that perpetrated by Jews against Romanians during the Soviet takeover of Bessarabia and Bukovina in 1940 and the province’s subsequent Communization, and after Romania’s own Communization after the war. He did so in a brochure printed by a publisher with an unmistakable name: Majadahonda – the place where Legionary “martyrs” Ion Moța and Vasile Marin died in January 1937 while fighting on Franco’s side in the Spanish Civil War (Buzatu 1995). The spirit of Holocaust obfuscation, as well as exculpation, was thus fully reproduced by Buzatu: justification of crimes committed against Jews and the rehabilitation of the perpetrators by “demonstrating” that they were acts required by Romanian self-defensive postures.

One year before his death (2013), Buzatu edited jointly with neo-Legionary activist Victor Roncea 27 volumes of archival materials by and on the Legion’s founder, Codreanu (Roncea and Buzatu 2012). As it was revealed after his death, Buzatu, writing under the pen name “Koba” (Stalin’s underground nickname) to drive home a point, had also contributed many articles to the blog regularly published by Coja. It is not, therefore, surprising to find Buzatu referring with disdain to the *Final Report* published by the Wiesel Commission in a collective history volume published by the Romanian Academy.²⁵

Other historians would follow suit, such as Sibiu-based Corvin Lupu. In an article published in the journal *Transilvania* in 2005,²⁶ Lupu rejected the *Final Report’s* findings, specifying that

the idea that in Romania a genocide (Holocaust) has been perpetrated against the Jewish population cannot be accepted. On the contrary, in my opinion the Jewish people should be grateful to the Romanian people, a fact that has been acknowledged for several decades.

He went on to accuse the Jews of “complicity” in having staged a “coup d’état” in December 1989 “against the Romanian national body.” One of the components of this “aggression,” Lupu added, was “the accusation that Romania carried out a genocide against Jews.” And he ended by wondering: “Why are they acting with such pettiness? Is money capable of mutilating souls that much?” The Center for Monitoring and Combatting Antisemitism in Romania (an NGO), the FCER and even the United States Holocaust Museum demanded that the author be prosecuted, but the Prosecutor General’s Office replied that Lupu had not infringed on the legislation’s provisions, since he did not deny the Holocaust as such, but only its having taken place on Romanian soil. In other words, the Buzatu “interpretation” of the law carried the day.

Heartened by his judicial victory, in 2013 Corvin Lupu and his son, a junior lecturer at the same Sibiu Faculty of International Relations, Political Science and Security Studies that his father had for many years headed as dean, published a volume titled *History of International Relations. Europe between 1919–1947*. Not surprisingly, the tome was prefaced by Buzatu, who, among other things, wrote in a note of sarcasm that Corvin Lupu had “the unpleasant ‘historic chance’ of a judicial confrontation with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania.” His only sin, according to Buzatu, had been that of having displayed

the courage to demonstrate with scientific means, with documents and their accurate interpretation, that Jewish suffering in the Second World War must not be exaggerated and distorted, should not be utilized as means of pressure and of indicting peoples as a whole, that other peoples had suffered as well.

After this quite common exercise in trivialization by comparison, Buzatu notes with satisfaction: “with dignity, historical and judicial arguments” Corvin Lupu triumphed in court,

“which visibly disturbed the powerful Inquisitors of the Jewish world that *leads us today*” (Buzatu 2013, 7–8, emphasis mine). This was misleading from start to end. The case never reached “the court,” as the Prosecutor General’s Office did not heed the complaints. However, Buzatu warned readers that just as in the past, the contemporary world was masterminded by a grand conspiracy. The volume’s authors had nonetheless penetrated and torn down “the veil carefully woven by the world’s grand conspirators.” Lupu Sr. and Lupu Jr., he noted, “draw attention to the sometimes overwhelming role played by international Jewry both on world and on Romanian stage” between 1919 and 1947. The infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* might have been defended on the same grounds. According to Buzatu, the authors had the guts to demonstrate that the Jews “made a decisive contribution to setting up and the development of the Bolshevik regime in Russia and the dissemination of Communist ideology in Europe” (Buzatu 2013, 8). Indeed, a whole chapter in the volume is titled “The evolution of the world Communist movement. The decisive role of Jews” (Lupu and Lupu 2013, 77–88).

What is more, the preface’s author praises the two historians for showing how, unavoidably, this has triggered reaction on the opposite side (the revisionist German historian Ernst Nolte would have approved, one is tempted to remark) and for not hesitating to tackle aspects of Romanian history that others “deliberately avoid in order not to clash with the valiant hunters of texts that infringe on the directives of globalist political lines” (Buzatu 2013, 8).

Were Buzatu and a presumably small and isolated circle of admirers pursuing a quixotic war? Not quite. Outgoing President Ion Iliescu in December 2004 decorated both Buzatu and his party leader, Tudor, with high state orders, as he was ending his presidential term.²⁷ Both had been harshly criticized in the Commission’s *Final Report* (International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania 2005, 350–351, 353 for Tudor; 321, 348, 350, 355–359, 361, 367 for Buzatu). The inherited Romanian traditional narrative had thus prevailed over official memory even for the man who willy-nilly had changed official memory by endorsing the *Final Report*. In protest, the commission’s chairman, Elie Wiesel, returned to Iliescu the medal conferred on him in July 2002 (“Elie Wiesel îi trimite pachet ‘Steaua României’ lui Ion Iliescu,” 2004).

An important role in these events was played by historian Ioan Scurtu, at that time a presidential advisor. As a member of the commission, I can testify that all along Scurtu acted as chief defender of Iliescu’s positions and (far more importantly) that his presence on that body was due to the refusal by all members of the Romanian Academy to be involved. That should tell something about the Romanian Academy’s relevant Section of History and Archeology headed by Berindei. Scurtu had authored jointly with Buzatu in 1999 a *History of Romanians in the 20th Century*. In this tome, he does not miss any opportunity to depict Romania as a victim of the Great Powers, the Jews or both. Writing about the situation on the eve of King Carol II’s royal dictatorship, he tells readers that in the wake of the December 1937 parliamentary elections “governmental circles from France and Great Britain intervened with King Carol II to stop the Legionary offensive to power.” Earlier, “mighty pressure was exerted by international Jewish circles, particularly from the USA and France, who did not hesitate to inform the Council of The League of Nations about the [Octavian] Goga government’s antisemitic policy.”²⁸ This (quite unpatriotic?) step was accompanied, Scurtu tells his readers, by another undertaken by “a large number of Jews from Romania [who] withdrew their savings from Romanian banks, placing them in Western, particularly Swiss banks,” thereby “generating an internal financial crisis” (Scurtu, 1999, 337–338). From Buzatu one learns, among other things, that notorious Holocaust denier David Irving is an “international scientific authority in his field” (Buzatu 1999,

455). Still, this is better than the introduction Buzatu wrote to the Lupu *père et fils* volume, where he wrote that Corvin's persecutors had wished to see him "behind bars, side by side with the valuable researchers David Irving and Roger Garaudy" (Buzatu 2013, 8).

Upon Buzatu's death, Scurtu called him "a great historian and Romanian patriot, a precious scientific and moral reference point." He also proposed that Buzatu be accepted post-mortem as member of the Romanian Academy ("Pierderea unui titan," 2013; "Profesorii George Potra și Ioan Scurtu Propun," 2013). To date the attempt failed, but this did not signify that Buzatu was ostracized by Romania's highest and most prestigious academic forum. On the contrary although not included in the collective of authors tasked with producing the ninth volume of *History of Romanians* published in 2008 under the auspices of the Academy, Buzatu was present in the tome with an introductory article titled "Historiography and its Sources." It was an opportunity for him to renew many of the points made in the volume published jointly with Scurtu almost one decade earlier. From the first page onward, the author ridicules "the so-called political correctness" and its attempt to "impose all kinds of barriers and dubious models" in research conducting and publication. Anyone familiar with Romanian developments recognizes here an attack on the law prohibiting Holocaust denial and the cult of personalities sentenced at the end of the war for wartime crimes. But just as easily recognizable is Holocaust obfuscation. Those who "desperately" try to impose such restraints, he writes, are nothing but "simpleton sociologists and historians" acting as "former or current Comintern agents" (Buzatu 2008b, XXVII).

Alex Mihai Stoenescu

One more historian deserves attention. Alex Mihai Stoenescu teaches history at one of București's fledgling private universities. A genuine "historian must not necessarily be graduate of a History Department," he wrote in a chapter added in 2010 to the second edition of a book originally published in 1998 and titled *The Army, the Marshal and the Jews* (Stoenescu 2010, 699). Obviously, this reflected above all a pronounced intellectual inferiority complex, for at the time the book was first published Stoenescu was an amateur historian at best.²⁹ That did not hinder him for criticizing the authors of the *Final Report* (many of whom were historians of national and international reputation) for "abusive naming, mingling situations and opinions, slanderous attacks *ad personam*, falsehoods, and disinformation that destroy the *Report's* pretense to seriousness and authority" (Stoenescu 2010, 702–703). The author of these lines, whom Stoenescu correctly identified as the author of passages in the *Report* referring to himself, was even threatened with being sued (Stoenescu 2010, 769). Two years have hence passed and he is still waiting for notification. According to Stoenescu, alongside historian Jean Ancel, I apparently represent "Jewish extremism" – the mirrored image of Ion Coja's Romanian extremism. Jewish extremism was defined as

that person who, taking advantage of ethnic origin falsifies, distorts and disseminates theories and ideas accusing of genocide the Romanian people as a whole or large parts thereof, launching false claims about the criminal intentions of Romanian leaders disseminating such theses and ideas abroad with the intention of vilifying the Romanian state and nation. (Stoenescu 2010, 699–700)

Stoenescu was unable to specifically cite where any of the *Report's* authors make such collective accusations against the Romanian nation as a whole, yet he (like many other selective and/or trivializing negationists) seems persuaded that the one and main purpose of the "Holocaust activists" is to "impose the thesis of a generalized criminality of the Romanian people." He even "reveals" that behind that move is hiding Jewish greed, for back in 1993

international and local Jewish organizations allegedly demanded that Romania pay \$1.5 billion “for the Holocaust” (Stoenescu 2010, 722, 751). As attenuating circumstance, however, a good lawyer might tell a court of justice that he does not quite understand what he is reacting to.³⁰ Historian Dennis Deletant opines that in his book, Stoenescu “gives a sympathetic and sometimes partisan view of the Marshal’s intentions and motives” (Deletant 2006, 273). This might be a British understatement.

Let us now briefly glance at what the *Report* objected to in Stoenescu’s first edition of the book. To start with, it referred to the oft-repeated hoax of Jewish collaboration with Soviet forces, bringing the example of the Iași pogrom of June 1941 used as an explanatory excuse for the butchering of the town’s Jewish population and for the follow-up “death trains” in which male Jews were moved for several days on rail in crowded cattle wagons. The *Report* pointed out that Stoenescu minimized the scope of the massacre and that, moreover, he wrote that the Jews crammed into cattle cars had been suspected of being Communists, and “the process of selection occurred in a ‘tense’ atmosphere that led to the death of so many innocent people.” It also cited him as concluding that “this was not the first time in history that ‘hundreds or even thousands of innocents’ had paid for the deeds of ‘a handful of [Jewish communist] culprits’” (International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania 355). Not only is the minimization of the victims’ number maintained in the second edition,³¹ but Jewish membership in the Communist parties of the region is discussed at length as one of the reasons that brought about autochthonous collaboration with the Nazis. And though the author is careful to state that Jews in general “followed their religious leaders” rather than the Communist parties, there is an unmistakable “Double Genocide” embracement as well (Stoenescu 2010, 696–697). The reader is told that many Jews (Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman are cited as examples) gave vent to the Great Disillusion³² sentiment only when they approached their wordly end. But the Great Disillusion itself “is the end-product of a symbiosis at whose roots laid the substantial adherence of Jews at the construction of Communist internationalism and the Soviet state” (Stoenescu 2010, 774). Not to speak of the unsurprising criticism of the *Report* for ignoring, as it were, the “international circumstances” of the Holocaust (Stoenescu 2010, 753), in other words, for ignoring that Romania itself was an alleged victim of Soviet (hence Communist, hence Jewish), aggression; or of strident tones of comparative trivialization such as placing in the same category the Holocaust and the Allied bombing of Dresden – a favorite with all trivializers (Stoenescu 2010, 754).

Stoenescu’s sympathy for the Iron Guard has been articulated on numerous occasions, including the second edition of the volume on Antonescu and the Jews (Stoenescu 2010, 767–769). In a multiple-volume *History of Coups d’état in Romania*, Stoenescu tells his readers that at its starting days, the Legionary Movement on Romania was by no means antisemitic. “Captain” Corneliu Zelea Codreanu “was not born as an antisemite, but as an anti-Communist leader.” The Legion became so, however, when it realized that the many Jews who at that time attended Romanian universities were leftists (and thus carriers of the Bolshevik threat) (Stoenescu 2006a, 415–416). Even so, Stoenescu claims, it is wrong to describe the Movement as Right Wing just because of its antisemitism, and it is particularly wrong for Jews to do that, because “once you explain the position of the Legionary Movement as Right Wing, by implication you find yourself in the position of having stated that the Jews were of Left-Wing, thus provoking a Right-Wing antisemitic reaction” (Stoenescu 2006a, 422). Again, the argument is a classic: Jews provoke antisemitism and whatever Jews do is unavoidably wrong. Those who worked in the media are “the first who should be held responsible for the inauguration of hatred between Romanians and Jews.” For years they had claimed they were fighting for political rather than racial rights,

but when their political adversaries, dressed up in Iron Guard uniforms and carrying pistols, set up to hunt them, they started screaming they were Jews and the reason for their persecution was antisemitism, not anti-Communism, he writes. Whereas in the past they had distanced themselves from their rabbis, overnight they became Jews again. Many of them later took refuge in the Soviet Union, “only to return riding its tanks as victors” (Stoenescu 2006a, 423–424). In any case, there had been no reason for them to seek refuge. The Legionary “Death Squads,” according to Stoenescu, “were not set up as groups of assassins, organized to eliminate political adversaries,” as Communist propaganda portrays them. They had been set up “on the principle of self-sacrifice, being formed by Legionnaires willing to risk their life; hence their uninspired name.” These were people ready to die, “not to bring death on others. This is a fundamental distinction.” The Legion, Stoenescu tells his readers, has been persecuted by all regimes and its image distorted by all alike. And that persecution “continues eventoday, in 2002” (Stoenescu 2006b, 142).

Like Coja, Stoenescu has traveled through several political parties, some of which had obvious Iron Guardist sympathies. One of these parties is the New Generation Party (PNG) led by magnate George (Gigi) Becali, who is currently serving a three-year prison sentence for land fraud. At one point, this formation ran under the Iron Guardist slogan “Everything for the Country,” promising to transform Romania into “A country like the holy sun under the sky” (as the text of an Iron Guardist popular song put it), while PNG First Vice Chairman, Stoenescu, set up the Constantin C. Giurescu Center for the History of Romanians, financed by Becali, who boasted at the time that the Center’s historians would produce a “genuine history” of the nation (*Cotidianul*, 6 September 2006). What such “genuine history” would have looked like one shall never know for sure, for the project (financed with 400,000 euro by the magnate) never materialized. But one can guess it from some of Becali’s earlier pronouncements. Back in 2004, he had called on the Oglinda [Mirror] Television private television for the canonization of Iron Guard “Captain” Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, and on 28 August 2004 he said “the Legionary Movement has been the most beautiful movement in this country [incorporating] the country’s entire elite, [such as] priests, university professors and students” (Cristea 2004; Shafir 2004). On 25 May 2008, in an interview with the German daily *Der Tagesspiegel*, the PNG leader acknowledged that his father had been an Iron Guardist, and he would “always be my model.” I would “never deny my origins,” he emphasized. Still, “the Legionnaires were no extremist, but a religious movement,” he said. When journalist Keno Verseck reminded him of the Iron Guardist anti-Jewish pogroms, Becali countered:

Where did you fish that story? The Romanians are not a people who commit crimes. Do you know why? Look around, in neighboring countries, in the whole Eastern world. Romania is the bravest and the quietest of them all. There is no crime and no mafia here. We are not a people of criminals. When I watch those movies with the Jews, I cannot believe that Romanians, my people, did such things. Never! The Romanians are simply not capable of that. This is why I do not believe that a Holocaust has ever taken place in Romania. (Verseck 2008)

Members of the team established to write Romania’s “genuine history” were two other historians with whom Stoenescu shares either an ambivalent or a negationist attitude vis-à-vis the Holocaust: Dinu Giurescu and Gheorghe Buzatu. But he shares with them one more thing: all three had been informers for the *Securitate*. Whereas Giurescu had been a somewhat reluctant informer, Stoenescu had been an enthusiastic one. Recruited in 1984 and acting under the code name “Gavrilescu Adrian” (Andrei 2010; Jipa 2010), he provided a record number of some 33 annual deliveries in only three years, which made former Radio Free Europe journalist Nicolai Constantin Munteanu place him on spot number one among the *Securitate*’s “top five ‘most repugnant informers’” (Munteanu 2013).

After three years he became a Communist Party member. As such, his name disappeared from the institution's records of informers, though not necessarily from among the informers. And though Stoenescu readily admits acting for the *Securitate* on "patriotic" grounds while abroad in Sweden (Bichir 2006), his records show he eagerly reported on colleagues while in Romania and even on people's comments while lining for foodstuff, for which he was generously rewarded by the secret police.

Some tentative conclusions and many new questions

It is tempting to conclude that in most cases reviewed earlier in the paper, collaboration with the former regime's secret police is a sufficient explanation for these historians' adversity toward "bringing the dark past to light," as the authors of a tome on the reception of the Holocaust in post-Communist Europe call that adversity (Himka and Michlic 2013). But I question that this constitutes an independent variable capable of explaining the phenomenon in all its complexity. To do so, one would need to be able to demonstrate that all Romanian Holocaust deniers and trivializers were *Securitate* collaborators in the past. There are sufficient grounds to dismiss this claim out of hand, for some trivializers³³ are known to have been under surveillance themselves. And I do not mean those who were both informers and victims, which is a large category. Furthermore, the motivations of informers might have been different. That some measure of opportunism is likely to be found in all cases examined is probably true. Yet Stoenescu collaborated at a time when non-collaboration was possible without serious sanctions hanging above one's head. This is also the case of Buzatu, but here ideological beliefs seem to intertwine with opportunism to no little extent. Berindei might have started his informant's career out of a combination of fear stemming from a tainted Iron Guardist past, but once over that hurdle, he certainly kept on running and nothing stopped him. To a lesser extent, this seems to have been also the case of Constantiniu. But in all these cases, including that of Giurescu, there was more to it. And that was nationalism, the common ground on which the regime and its historian met.

That the secret police was encouraging coded antisemitism, being wary of Jews in general and of their influence on intellectual life in particular, is undoubtedly true. Stoenescu, who cannot be suspected of sympathy for Jews, bluntly tells readers that "before erupting in the post-Communist public discourse, the *Securitate* had been fighting for several decades against Jewish influence on Romanian politics" (Stoenescu 2010, 721). But that policy merely reflected the changed line of the PCR itself after its break with the Soviet Union. At this point in time – somewhere in the 1960s – the regime began to enlist the help of yesteryears' enemies. Exiled journalist Pamfil Șeicaru, who had been sentenced *in absentia* to death for his ultranationalist postures in 1945, for example, had his sentence secretly quashed and became an important influence agent (code name "Vlad"), who visited Romania secretly, meeting with high officials, such as Paul-Niculescu Mizil, in charge of international relations (Zamfirescu 2013, 93–243).

During the first decade or so of the regime, the line pursued had been precisely the opposite. In the field of historiography, Jews played a prominent role, resented by Romania's traditional historians. Before the late 1950s and early 1960s, names such as Iosif Chișinevschi (the PCR secretary in charge of ideology), Leonte Răutu (the country's "cultural Czar") and in particular Mihail Roller (all of them of Jewish origins)³⁴ triggered a Pavlovian-like shiver among the elderly generation of Romanian historians. The regime substituted gradually in the late 1950s an intra-systemic legitimacy for the former extra-systemic one (Shafir 1986, 127–129), becoming the main beneficiary of its earlier

failure to eliminate from Romanian political culture one of its pillars, namely, nationalism (Shafir 1985, 51). Although the seeds had been implanted under the rule of his predecessor, the turnabout must be sought in the speech delivered by Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1966 in which he first lambasted the Comintern for having advocated the dismemberment of Romania as a national state (Ceaușescu 1966). Without having pronounced the words “Bessarabia and northern Bukovina,” a green light had practically been given to Romanian historians to give vent to what turned into the dominant narrative of national collective trauma.³⁵ It was this trauma that facilitated exculpation when it came to the Holocaust, for Jews could once again be perceived as agents of a foreign power.

American sociologist Jeffrey Alexander’s concept of “cultural trauma” can help further elucidate this situation. He writes that a cultural trauma “occurs when members of a collectivity feel that they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memory forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.” The construction of such cultural traumas, he adds, makes it possible for “social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively [to] identify the existence and the source of human suffering, but [to] ‘take on board’ some significant responsibility for it.” This does *not* necessarily mean that these communities become inclined to accept responsibility for the suffering of those who are not members of the group. Rather, they perceive it as their duty to seek those responsible for those traumatic events outside the group itself. These groups

can, and often do, refuse to recognize the existence of others’ trauma ... By denying the reality of others’ suffering, people not only diffuse their own responsibility for the suffering but often project the responsibility for their own suffering on these others. In other words, by refusing to participate in what I will describe as the process of [general] trauma creation, social groups restrict solidarity, leaving others to suffer alone. (Alexander 2004, 1)

Collective memories, as a young scholar from Budapest recently put it, “are not the memories of a national collectivity.” They are rather “a narrative of the past through which memory-makers, such as public intellectuals, historians, journalists and politicians, select what should be remembered, how should this be done and why should we remember.” All these actors are “agents of memory” contributing to forging a particular “regime of remembrance” (Dujisin 2014). It is thus these memory-makers that determine the shapes of what Yael Zerubavel has termed as “master commemorative narratives,” by which she means a narrative that “focuses on the group’s distinct social identity and highlights its historical development,” thus structuring collective memory (Zerubavel 1995, 6). The Israeli-American scholar shows that “[s]ince collective memory highlights the group’s distinct identity, the master commemorative narrative focuses on the event that marks the group’s emergence as an independent social entity” (Zerubavel 1995, 7). Furthermore, “[a]lthough historical changes usually occur over a period of time and as a result of a process rather than a single event, collective memory tends to select particular events and portrays them as symbolic markers of change” (Zerubavel 1995, 9). In dominant commemorative narratives, “[the] power of collective memory does not lie in its accurate, systematic or sophisticated mapping of the past, but in establishing basic images that articulate and reinforce a particular ideological stance” (Zerubavel 1995, 8).

There is no reason not to apply what Zerubavel does in analyzing the context of the emergence of Zionist collective memory to post-Communist East Central Europe. Just as in the former case, in the latter one encounters communities of memory that underwent a cultural trauma. In search for positive heroes (who are readily available in figures such as Antonescu against the background of Communist Holocaust neglect and/or distortion),

the Double Genocide approach is fast becoming in these countries the master commemorative narrative, one in which the myth of anti-Communist resistance finds both hero-models and exculpation for the past.

Holocaust students are familiar with Marianne Hirsch's concept of "post memory," i.e. the process by which the memory of the Shoah is passed on and reconstructed from generation to generation (Hirsch 2012).³⁶ Is there any ground to assume that post-memories exist only among Jews or that posttraumatic experience is a phenomenon not encountered elsewhere? Constantiniu's "denouncer," Rădulescu Zoner (1929–2012), shared with him more than he wished to believe. As a former political prisoner, and particularly as chairman of the Civic Alliance between 2001 and 2007, Zoner was in the first line of those demanding that the crimes of Communism be officially acknowledged, its victims be compensated and perpetrators be punished. Zoner was certainly no Holocaust denier, but, just like Constantiniu, he equated the Nazi and Soviet regimes, landing among the partisans of the "Double Genocide" theory and sliding hence into Holocaust obfuscation. Soon after the Romanian parliament held a commemorative meeting on the Shoah, in an article significantly titled "Just the Holocaust?" Zoner addressed those who "regardless of where they are and who they might be" were turning the Holocaust into the "absolute" crime. There had been, he said, some "sinister figures" of Romanian ethnics guilty for the crimes of Communism. But there have been also Jewish "representatives" (*exponenți ai evreimii*) in Romania who had played a "baleful role" in setting up a "red dictatorship just as horrible and criminal as the Holocaust" (Rădulescu Zoner 2004, emphasis mine). "No few" of the "professional denouncers" who attacked democrats who had opposed Antonescu "and imported Bolshevism" had been Jewish. He went on to mention several Communist Jewish figures from the late 1940s and early 1950s active in politics or on the Stalinist intellectual scene "all of which had changed their name." In the academia, he added, such people had replaced respectable and accomplished professors who had "nothing in common with either the Legionnaires or with Antonescu's antisemites." Some of them were genuine intellectuals, while others "mere *politruks*." But regardless of the difference, both categories were "propagandists of the ideology of Romania's Sovietization, brainwashing the university young generation of the times, distorting the history of Romanians at the orders of ready-made 'Academician' M. Roller." It was far from his intention, he concluded to deny the crimes committed against Jews, but

at the same time, and due to my profession exercised in honesty, I cannot accept that just the victims of the Holocaust and their inheritors be lamented, shown empathy and be asked for pardon, while the Communist genocide is occulted by officials from Romania and not only from it. (Rădulescu Zoner 2004)

Rădulescu Zoner's article amply demonstrates the fact that the clash in post-Communist countries is not one among different historical narratives, but one among radically different collective traumas. There is no ultimate footnote waiting to demonstrate the correct facts. For collective memory is not based on facts, but on collective sentiment. The clash is ultimately constructed on "memory and counter-memory." This leaves little room for hope.

Notes

1. The author attended the meeting. He is grateful for the support extended through a grant of the Romanian Ministry of National Education, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-ID-PCE-2012-4-0620.
2. A good summary (though not necessarily always an accurate interpretation) is found in the two-page article by Professor Armin Heinen (2013). Heinen writes that Professor Iliescu is

- “neither an antisemite, nor a negationist.” Having personally met him many years ago, I can vouch that the first statement is accurate. The second, however, is not. Iliescu is both a “deflective” and a “selective” negationist. For the distinction, see my “Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization’: Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe,” Jerusalem, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism, ACTA no. 19, 2002.
3. For instance, see the definition of the Holocaust by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Introduction to the Holocaust,” 10 June 2013, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>.
 4. The text was later posted on the Internet on Coja’s blog. See Coja (2014b).
 5. It is not my intention to dwell too long on Coja, since I have done so in the past, as have others. See Shafir (2000, 2002, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2011) and Totok (2000, 2003, 2010). See also the documentation updated by Totok since 2007 on the online publication *Halbjahresschrift für südosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik* (2007–2014), <http://www.halbjahresschrift.homepage.t-online.de>.
 6. See Government Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002 published in *Monitorul oficial al României*, Part I, no. 214, 28 March 2002 and Law no. 107/2006, published in *Monitorul oficial al României*, Part I, no. 377, 3 May 2006.
 7. In mid-2006, the Braşov Appeal Court quashed the sentence pronounced against an Iron Guard apologist, ruling that the lower court’s sentencing of Gheorghe Opriţă in September 2005 to 30 months in prison on grounds of infringing Ordinance 31/2002 had amounted to an unconstitutional denial of freedom of expression. The Braşov Appeal Court said in its sentence that “in democratic Romania, expressing opinions or convictions concerning the doctrine [of] the Legionary Movement or the movement itself is not forbidden,” and it added that “The functioning of numerous organizations legally set up, such as the Legionary Movement, the New Right, etc., and the existence of publications [disseminated] by them is a fact that cannot be ignored.” See *Cotidianul*, 3 June 2006 and Shafir (2008a, 186).
 8. One of his Communist secret police files mentioned his Iron Guard membership. See Oprea (2002, 410). See also Stan (2010, 260, 271, 2012, 170).
 9. This tradition (I add) can be briefly summarized as “My country – right or wrong” or “My nation-right or wrong,” unavoidably resulting in exculpation.
 10. Members of the “old guard” of Romanian historians also joined this response. For example, Constantin C. Giurescu (who had spent several years in prison, see *infra*) wrote under a pseudonym a harsh response to “history counterfeiter” Lazarev, published in English at an emigre publishing house in Italy, with the approval of the Romanian authorities. Cf. Moldovan (1976). The owner of this publishing house, Iosif Constantin Drăgan, would become a prominent agent in the drive to rehabilitate Marshal Ion Antonescu, which was started by the Communist regime. He was also a key “agent of influence” in the *Securitate*’s machinery utilized (under the code name “Olteanu”) to influence, control and manipulate the Romanian emigration. See Zamfirescu (2013, 13–14, 123–124).
 11. By “Others” is meant either the Great Powers, or their allies (Romania excepted) or internal enemies from among the national minorities, utilized by these powers as a “fifth” column, where Jews and Hungarians figured prominently. It is somewhat amusing to note that one of the most prominent (publicity-wise) continuators of this line is an American historian living in Romania. See Watts (2011, 2013).
 12. The term refers both to Ceauşescu’s plans to destroy villages by semi-urbanizing them and to his destruction of Bucharest (including historical vestiges and churches or synagogues) in order to build the megalomaniac People’s House and other grandiose structures.
 13. I owe this information to Alexandru Florian.
 14. Historian Apostol Stan ventures the opinion that the Ilie Ceauşescu–Constantiniu association benefitted both. On one hand, the “learned historian” conferred “respectability” on the Institute headed by the presidential brother and, on the other hand, it satisfied the “versatile” historian “gnawed by ambitions” (Stan 2012, 95).
 15. “We won’t be that lucky,” Ilie Ceauşescu said upon learning from Constantiniu about H elene Carr ere d’Encausse’s prediction in her book *The End of the Soviet Empire* (Constantiniu 2007, 13).
 16. See also Stan (2010, 372–373, 2012, 135, 166). A document signed “Chris” appears also in Oprea (2002, 409–410), without the identification of the source.

17. A popular theory among historians, politicians and pundits in the former Communist countries, according to which Communism and Nazism were equally criminal but the crimes of the former are not treated with the same intransigency in the West.
18. Between 280,000 and 380,000. The International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania chaired by Professor Elie Wiesel was set up in October 2003, and in November 2004 published its *Final Report*, accepted and endorsed by the then Romanian head of state, Ion Iliescu. See International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (2005, 381). For the circumstances of the commission's setting up, see Shafir (2011, 269–270).
19. For the decision of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives (CNSAS) not to launch action against Giurescu, see “Giurescu și Securitatea” and Bogdan (2013); see also “Academicianul Dinu C. Giurescu, recrutat de Securitate în 1977, nu a fost colaborator, decide CNSAS” 2014 and Tudoran (2014a). In defense of Giurescu, see Oprea (2014). Tudoran's response in Tudoran (2014b, 2014c). The Romanian law requires revealing the identity of those who acted as “political police” and those who provided to that police information infringing on the human rights of those affected. On these grounds, the CNSAS deemed that Giurescu cannot be considered to have been an informer in the spirit of the legislation.
20. Dinu Giurescu's father, historian Constantin C. Giurescu, had served as Minister of Propaganda in King Carol II's 1939–1940 governments and was imprisoned by the Communist regime in 1950. He spent five years and two months as a political prisoner in the infamous Sighet jail. See Giurescu (1994).
21. The notion of “Holocaust obfuscation” has been first utilized by Katz (2009). Nazi hunter Efraim Zuroff calls Holocaust obfuscation “an attempt to turn everything topsy-turvy” and pinpoints to its objectives:

If Communism equals Nazism, then Communism is genocide, which it is not. If Communism is genocide, then Jews committed genocide because among the Communists some of them were Jews. If Jews committed genocide, then obviously it does undermine the arguments of Jews against the peoples in Eastern Europe, who helped the Nazis mass-murder the Jews. In other words, this is designed to deflect the criticism of Nazi collaboration in Eastern Europe, which was far more lethal than Nazi collaboration anywhere else. (Zuroff cited in Zlotowski 2010)

22. For fairness' sake it must, however, be added that this thin volume repeatedly mentions the anti-semitic background of the Holocaust. Moreover, the author was the first Romanian historian to have undertaken in 1997 and 1998 a serious deconstruction of the myths of both the Iron Guard and the Antonescu regime's stereotypes about the Jews. See Boia (1997, 1998a, the Boia-edited 1998b, 1999a, 1999b).
23. I borrow the term “grammar of exculpation” from Adrian Cioflâncă's remarkable article on the treatment of the Holocaust in Communist times. Cioflâncă (2005).
24. For details, see note 2 in Muraru (2011, 453) (book review).
25. Numerous other problems, but first of all economic evolutions, the situation of Jews and Gypsies in Romania between 1940–1944, and the beginning of Communization between 1944–1947, the purges and censorship, have been consistently under the attention of historians after World War II, and in particular during the last decade ... [The] discussions have been channeled toward setting up international commissions ... that rushed to produce *so-called Final Reports* ... ignoring the fact that definitive conclusions make no sense or viability in the investigation and judgment of the past. (Buzatu 2008b, LXVIII.-LXIX. emphasis added).
26. Corvin Lupu, “Impactul problematicei Holocaustului asupra României contemporane și aspecte ale relațiilor dintre români și evrei,” *Transilvania*, no. 3, 2005, 26, as quoted in Florian (2008, 209–210).
27. Tudor was awarded the highest Romanian distinction, “The Star of Romania,” while Buzatu was decorated with the order of “Faithful Service.” Mediafax, 13 December 2004.
28. The short-lived Goga-Cuza government (28 December 1937–10 February 1938) was the first cabinet to introduce anti-Jewish legislation in Romania.
29. He is an engineer by training and made his literary debut in 1991. In 1994, one of his fiction books won an award of the Romanian Academy. In 1992, he started working for the Defense Ministry with officer rank and headed the Army's Public Relations Department in 1997–1998. The position would facilitate his access to documents and to popularity as an expert in current history, specializing particularly in the events of 1989 and the army's role in them. See Florian

- Bichir's 3 September 2006 interview with Stoenescu. Stoenescu eventually obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Bucharest. See Stoenescu (2010, 755).
30. In response to an article of mine, for example, he claims that I wrote that tract in defense of US-based political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu (Stoenescu 2010, 761–764). My “defense” of Tismaneanu was that pronounced that it led to what seems to be an irreconcilable break in our decades-long friendship.
 31. 900–1000 at the police headquarters and on streets, plus some 3000 in the death trains, according to Stoenescu (2010). Compare with the *Report's* figure of nearly 15,000 for both. Stoenescu (2010, 745) vs. International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, 126.
 32. A reference to the disenchantment of intellectuals with the Soviet Union and Communism in general.
 33. For example, philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu. See Liiceanu (2013). On Liiceanu as Holocaust comparative trivializer, see Shafir (2002, 70–71).
 34. For biographical sketches of Chișinevschi and Răutu, see Tismaneanu (2003, 259, 267–268). For Roller, see the works published by exiled Romanian historians Rura (1961), Ghermani (1967), and Georgescu (1981). For works published in the post-Communist period by Romanian historians, Papacostea (1996), Zub (2000), Georgescu (2001–2004), Constantiniu (2007), Ioniță (2007) and Stan (2010). On Răutu, see also Tismăneanu and Vasile (2008).
 35. For numerous examples, see Verdery (1991) and Boia (2001).
 36. On post-memory, see Fuchs (2008, Chap. 3, 45–74) and Berdard-Donals (2009).

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