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ROTTEN APPLES, BITTER PEARS: AN
UPDATED MOTIVATIONAL TYPOLOGY OF
ROMANIA'S RADICAL RIGHT'S ANTI-SEMITIC
POSTURES IN POST-COMMUNISM*

Abstract:

Post-communist anti-Semitism in Romania and elsewhere in East Central Europe is not necessarily driven by the same motivations. Basically, each of the categories I employ in the taxonomy (updating earlier endeavors) acts out of a different motivation and has a different temporal orientation. What they all share, however, is precisely the attempt to respond to the need to produce what Benedict Anderson called an "imagined community," in albeit significantly different positive terms of reference. A distinction is made between the following taxonomic categories of "producers" of anti-Semitism: a) "Self-exculpatory nostalgic anti-Semitism;" b) "Self-propelling anti-Semitism;" c) "Neo-populist mercantile anti-Semitism;" d) "Utilitarian anti-Semitism;" e) "Reactive anti-Semitism;" and, finally, f) "Vengeance anti-Semitism."

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That anti-Semitism is one of the historic legacies that European post-communist societies are forced to cope with is apparently a truism verging on banality. Nearly two decades after *annus mirabilis* 1989, we may still be debating what brought about the collapse of communism and where these societies are heading. Those among us who admit to being fools rather than prophets and thus to have failed to predict the collapse, are nonetheless still trying to squeeze into the ranks to the Chosen who hold a monopoly over Truth. While the latter few privileged always knew communism was bound to disappear (though none can produce convincing evidence of such earlier knowledge) fools contend themselves with writing about truth (uncapitalized) and with rejecting the banality of truisms. They do not doubt that what is actual is rational, but have question marks as to the rationality of what is presented by the Chosen as actual. While the Bible attributed access to truth to both fools and prophets, it failed to take into account this pseudo-Hegelian distinction. Maybe this is simply due to the fact that the Holy Book does not use capital letters. Its editors should have been more circumspect and should have clarified the point with the author.

Till an amended edition becomes available on markets (the proverbial stubbornness of the author may be a hindrance, I might add), we shall have to accept that either fools are simply incapable of grasping the essence of Truth and that their only honorable solution rests in taking refuge in agnostic retreat, or that nothing deemed by the Chosen Establishment to

constitute the Truth is to be challenged, no matter how truistic or banal. Post-communist European anti-Semitism is illustrative for this dilemma. To contest its existence is to ignore reality—in other words, the actual. From Russia to former East Germany, from Hungary and Romania to Serbia and Croatia, from Poland to the Czech Republic and Slovakia, indeed even in Bulgaria and Albania, which can with some justification claim a lesser legacy of inter-war anti-Semitism than their neighbors, the presence of anti-Semitism or of anti-Semitic elements may be said to constitute a unifying feature. To leave it at that, however, is to transform truism into truancy. If anti-Semitism may be said to be a *dependent variable* (i.e. what needs to be explained), an examination of the reasons for its relatively successful post-communist dissemination is bound to reveal a variety of *independent variables* (what explains a phenomenon) in the postures of the different movements, associations and political parties displaying major or less obvious anti-Semitic nuances. These might be driven by different, indeed sometimes contradictory attitudes towards the past (the legacy of the interwar radical right), present (the legacy of communism) and future (orientations towards the “well ordered” society). They may be political and/or cultural foes, and the fact that they find themselves in the same boat, disturbing as it might be for the local remnants of the Jewish communities, should not make one jump to the conclusion that the rationality of this state of affairs is to be sought in the simplistic blind, ancestral hatred of what Alain Finkielkraut and later Andrei Oișteanu in Romania called the “imaginary Jew.”¹

While my study concentrates on Romania, I believe it has heuristic value for most, indeed perhaps all former communist countries in Europe. In fact, the first version of the motivational taxonomy I am trying to present had dealt with the entire area we once used to call “Eastern Europe.”² Inability to access sources on a daily basis as I used to do while working for Radio Free Europe (1985-2005) and the duties that I currently have as a professor at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, eventually determined my decision to reduce the scope of my taxonomy, which has since known an amended version.³ I hope the taxonomy has nonetheless gained in breadth. As anyone who deals with current history is aware of, I can by no means promise that this is its definitive version. Should it prove to be an improvement over the last one would be sufficient ground for personal satisfaction.

My axiom, then, is that post-communist anti-Semitism is not necessarily driven by the same motivations. Basically, each of the categories I employ in the taxonomy acts out of a different motivation and has a different temporal orientation. What they all share, however, is precisely the attempt to respond to the need to produce what Benedict Anderson called an “imagined community,”⁴ in albeit significantly

different positive terms. What I have in mind here is the need for political communities in general, and post-revolutionary communities in particular, to refer to what Jacques Rupnik (1992/1993, 4) calls a “usable past” or “usable history”⁵. To my knowledge, he never defined the precise connotations of this concept. I hence take the liberty of defining it as the search for positive past referents for the purpose of forging self-confident national identities. For as Sorin Antohi shows, post-communism entails, among other things, a crisis of national identity⁶. And within this crisis, coping with one’s anti-Semitic past becomes all the more difficult as it goes hand in hand with coping with the communist past at the same time. It is what I have called elsewhere a crisis of *double Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Which of the two unseemly pasts would be considered more “usable” (or less damning) than the other, and why, would to a great measure determine what group collective memory chooses to remember or to select out. Currently-sought political objectives, on the other hand, impact historical interpretation to no lesser extent, for as is well known, memory (and history) is primarily about the present, linked as it is with political legitimacy.

For these purposes, a distinction is made between the following taxonomic categories of “producers” of anti-Semitism: a) “Self-exculpatory nostalgic anti-Semitism” or what I have called in the past parties and movements of a “radical return” to models of inter-war radical right; b) “Self-propelling anti-Semitism”, or what I have called in the past parties and movements of a “radical continuity” based on models provided by exacerbated national communism; c) “Neo-populist mercantile anti-Semitism”, in which anti-Semitism is utilized or shed away as a function of perceptions of what “sells” and what not at both national and international level; d) “Utilitarian anti-Semitism”, which shares some characteristics with the former category but is nonetheless distinguished from it by the fact that it is employed by parties, movements and personalities who are on record for being “anti-anti-Semitic”; e) “Reactive anti-Semitism”, basically explained in terms of the “competitive martirology” between the Holocaust and the Gulag; f) “Vengeance anti-Semitism” represented by that category driven by the simple hatred of Jews for whatever they do or refrain from doing.

1. Self-Exculpatory Nostalgic Anti-Semitism: Orientation Past.

Self-exculpatory nostalgic anti-Semitism is a category largely occupied by political parties and personalities that belong to what elsewhere I called movements of “radical return.”⁷ The “nostalgic” attribute is warranted by the fact that the category looks upon the interwar authoritarian past as a model for solving the transitional problems of the present and constructing the country’s future. “Nostalgia”

should therefore not be comprehended as mere contemplation. It involves activism, at both grassroots and at central political level. The members of the category are by and large either very old or very young, with the middle-age bracket being thinly represented, though not wholly absent. Exiled personalities linked with the wartime regimes, many of whom established abroad associations, as well as people freed from communist prisons after long years of detention, are thus bridging a gap of generations with young would-be political leaders whose education under communism carefully avoided to address their own nation participation in, and responsibility for, the atrocities committed against Jews in that period. This is what Shari J. Cohen called “state-organized forgetting.”⁸

What I am basically claiming is that “self exculpatory nostalgic anti-Semitism” is based on two legacies: that of survivors of interwar far right attempting to defend their own record, but also on the legacy of communism itself. The latter aspect has been by and large ignored when dealing with the phenomenon of radical right resurrection in post-communist European countries. It has, if at all, been linked only with the category of “self-propelling anti-Semitism,” which shall be discussed below. But it is clearly wrong to perceive post-communist East Central Europe in terms of a “return to history,” for history has never departed from the region during the communist period. Since communist historiography has carefully avoided to tackle the issue of own-nation involvement in anti-Semitism and above all in the Holocaust, why should not figures such as Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Marshal Ion Antonescu in Romania, Admiral Miklós Horthy and Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi in Hungary, Andrej Hlinka and Jozef Tiso in Slovakia or Ante Pavelić in Croatia not re-emerge as “model figures” of national heroes whose only fault rests in their having (nilly rather than willy) supported or allied themselves with those who were fighting the enemy of their nation? Why, furthermore, would even lesser historically-tainted figures such as those of Roman Dmowski or Józef Piłsudski in Poland, Dimitrije Ljotić in Serbia or Alexander Tsankov and Ivan Donchev in Bulgaria, not re-emerge as the valiant defenders of their nations at a time when the entire region is undergoing an “identity crisis”? For “transition,” as is well known, indicates what is “left behind” (socialism or so-called socialism) but not what lies ahead. Unlike the post-communist “successor parties,” other formations do not benefit from what Michael Waller pertinently termed as “organizational continuity.”⁹ The appeal to “historical continuity” is therefore all the more appealing, and not only for these neo-radical parties, as we shall yet observe. Furthermore, some of the above-mentioned leaders had been executed by the Communists as war criminals. Antonescu or Szálasi or László Bárdossy or Tiso can all the easier be resurrected as valiant models.

Exemplifications of such political formations and associations are numerous. In general, however, it may be said that in the post-communist context they tend to be affective rather than effective and offending rather than offensive. Indeed, none of the political formations representing self-exculpatory nostalgic anti-Semitism has made it to any of the post-communist parliaments. This may be explained at least in part by the fact that the “imagined community” that they strive to create has little to do with current realities. The category includes the staunchest anticommunists around, but herein may lay precisely the reason for these formations’ failure to mobilize more than, at most, a few thousand members whose past-orientation is simply unable to address any of the immediately relevant issues on their countries’ social and political agenda.

Among such formations and associations in Romania one can mention the (now deceased) Movement for Romania (MPR) led by Marian Munteanu, which was set up in 1992 (publishing the monthly *Mișcarea*), Radu Sorescu’s Party of National Right, set up in 1993 (with its irregular publication *Noua dreaptă*), and the still-active neo-Iron Guardist For the Fatherland Party. These movements — and a plethora of associations established either in connection with them or independently, such as the Manu Foundation — have all had their successors, the most recent of which is an organization calling itself the New Right (*Noua Dreaptă*) Group, led by the young Tudor Ionescu and whose leadership is entirely made up by people in their twenties. Also in this category belongs the Iron Guard splinter movement led by Șerban Suru. Publications such as *Permanențe*, *Obiectiv legionar*, *Puncte cardinale*, *Noua dreaptă*, and others display an unconcealed identification with exculpatory nostalgic anti-Semitism, while other publications, such as *Rost* or *Jurnalul literar* barely display the fig of distancing themselves from what is taken to be the “non-emblematic” excesses of some political and cultural figures of the past. In most cases, however, an apologist explanation accompanies the distance taking. Enough, nevertheless, to provide justification for meritorious intellectuals of center-right political persuasion to lend their prestige by regularly contributing to such publications and thereby legitimize anti-Semitism and extremism.

Who finances such publications remains a secret. Some are obviously drawing on funds from exile. This appears to be the case of the Oradea-based Editura Almatip, financed from France by the Fronde Foundation. Once such funds run out, publication stops. This was apparently the case of the Timișoara-based *Gazeta de vest* and its highly visible production of Iron Guard literature at its own Gordian publishing house. Nonetheless, new financing outlets are somehow discovered. Publishing houses such as the Bucharest-based Editura Lucman seem to have a niche of their own, as does, under different names not always easy to associate, Editura Miracol,

Antet XX Press, Sânziana, Samizdat, and others, which apparently belong to a chain financed by gas tycoon and Antonescu apologist Iosif Constantin Drăgan, who died in 2008 aged 91. It is hard to believe that the market is large enough to support such entrepreneurial ventures. Financing might come under the table from local magnates uninterested in revealing their identity, but also from political parties claiming to belong to mainstream right wing. This, in any case, was (according to some, still is) the case of *Noua dreaptă*, sponsored by what used to be the Union of Right-Wing Forces, meanwhile absorbed by the mainstream ruling National Liberal Party. And according to some reports, is the case of the Suru wing of the Iron Guard, reportedly financed by New Generation Party (PNG) leader George (Gigi) Becali, who also considered financing the far-right New Right Group¹⁰. Be that as it may, there is an all too obvious emulation of Western radical-right propaganda outlets and techniques that cost money. For example, the New Right Group is organizing rock concerts where aggressive, racist music inciting to hatred against foreigners, minorities and “communists” are a regular feature. It has also its own rock formation, called “Assault Brigade”, whose CDs are on sale alongside music by similar formations from Germany, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, the United States, Serbia, Russia and Argentine, as are DVDs on the Legionary Movement, T-shirts and other accessories with the movement’s insignia, and books by Romanian chief Holocaust denier, Ion Coja.¹¹

Ingenuity may be also at work. Foundations were set up under perfectly democratic labels with financial support from the democratic West, where radical-right views are displayed for anyone carrying to access the sites. The financers are obviously not. This, for example, seems to be the case of the Independent Group for Democracy or the Civic Media Foundation, as well as Romanian Global News, all associated with the names of journalist brothers George and Victor Roncea. The Internet provides, in Romania as elsewhere, a relatively inexpensive and unregulated means for the distribution of such views, often in the name of freedom of expression. One such outlet is *AlterMedia Romania* (<http://ro.altermedia.info/>). Other outlets do not bother to conceal their purposes under democratic labels. Among them one may count the Iron Guardist *Sentinela* (www.-fgmanu.net/sentinela.htm) belonging to the George Manu Foundation, *Pagina României Naționaliste* (Nationalist Romania’s Page) of Șerban Suru’s Center for Legionary Documentation (<http://pages.prodigy.net/nnita/garda.html>), *NovoPress*, AIM (Active Information Media) and *Romanian Global News*.¹²

According to the daily *Curentul*, some 28 radical-right organizations were active in Romania under one guise or another, as well as 12 foundations and associations set up by supporters of the Iron Guard. The

daily cited information reportedly included in the Romanian Intelligence Service's report for June 1998-June 1999.

Several major themes dominate the political discourse of this category. First among them is Holocaust denial, followed by related conspiracy-theories in which Jews play either the single or the main part (in conjunction with other ethnic minorities) and the (also related) theme of the Jewish guilt for having created, nurtured and imposed communism on the world in general and on one's own country in particular.

2. Self-Propelling Anti-Semitism: Orientation Future

Self-propelling anti-Semitism shares with self-exculpatory nostalgic anti-Semitism the communist legacy but is in its debt a lot more. One could well speak in the former case of a legacy due to omission, while in the latter situation one deals with a legacy by commission. Parties that make up this category are the parties of "radical continuity."¹³ There are either personal or ideological links (or both) between these parties and the communist past. These formations exacerbate the implicit anti-Semitism inherited from the former regime and transform it into an explicit one. The transformation is not accidental but intentional. Anti-Semitism, for the members of this category, is instrumental, serving mobilization purposes. The purpose no longer is (as in the case of the nostalgics) to merely cleanse the past, but to prepare the future. The instrumentality of anti-Semitism consequently consists in providing potential electorates with "models" that rule out their political adversaries' alternative democratic constructs. Hence, also their different orientation, which is future rather than past oriented, and hence also their specific political discourse, which is both aggressive and offending when referring not merely to Jews but to political adversaries in general. Like the nostalgic anti-Semites, self-propelling anti-Semites indulge in the "Judaization" of political adversaries, but unlike them the exercise is aimed at the effective rather than at the affective aspect of politics. The past is important for the self-propelling anti-Semites, but its importance derives from its instrumentality. In other words, self-propelling anti-Semitism needs the "generic Jew" and, unlike self-exculpatory anti-Semitism, cares in fact little about the "really existing" Jew. For self-propelling anti-Semites the "genetic Jew" must become a "generic Jew," for in a situation where the physical Jewish presence is extremely reduced, the mobilization force of anti-Semitism would otherwise suffer. It is in this sense that Zygmunt Bauman (cited in Prizel, 2002, 289) observes that in post-communist Poland the term "Jew" has started being applied to anything disagreeable and has lost its real-reference to the Jews as a separate ethno-religious group.¹⁴ Yet it must be added that the generic sense has not, however, eliminated the

genetic one, which continues to be instrumentalized regardless of its numerical and above all sociological insignificance

Self-propelling antisemites “propose” alternative models to democracy, though they are usually careful to do so implicitly rather than explicitly. With democracy being viewed as a foreign implant aimed at establishing world Jewish power, “patriotic” figures of the recent past are resurrected and their rehabilitation is pursued with tenacity. Marshal Ion Antonescu serves this purpose in Romania. The post-communist political party that best fits this category is the Greater Romania Party (PRM). That the generic Jew is instrumental for no other purpose than power-seeking was demonstrated in the PRM’s case by the ease with which anti-Semitism was briefly abandoned shortly before the 2004 elections, when party chairman Corneliu Vadim Tudor’s electoral campaign was managed by an Israeli spin doctor, and by its re-emergence as a central feature of party mass-appeal once that EU-eyng recipe proved inefficient at the polls. I ought to add that this does not make Tudor and his party mere electoral anti-Semites. The party leader’s hate of Jews can be documented well back into the Communist era.¹⁵ It is precisely this difference that draws the borderline between self-propelling and “utilitarian” anti-Semites (see *infra*). What is important, however, is to note that anti-Semitism is in the case of self-propelling anti-Semites instrumental rather than teleologic.

Whether one views the political formations of self-propelling anti-Semites as “Right” or “Left” is very much a matter of personal perspective. Usually they combine elements of both radical right and radical left vision. But it cannot be merely accidental that in transitional East Central Europe leaders of formations that inscribe anti-Semitism among their most prominent slogans have all been somehow schooled in or by the former communist secret services or had under the former regime functions that implicitly involved contacts with those services. I have elsewhere demonstrated that in Romania’s case, the PRM leadership’s ties with the former Securitate are undeniable.¹⁶ The 18 December 2006 debates in the Romanian parliament, preceded by the anti-Semitic attacks on the chairman of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Communist Dictatorship in Romania in which the PRM played a prominent (though by no means singular) role, amply demonstrated how anti-Semitism can be used as an instrument of power-seeking or power-defending.

There is an important difference between nostalgic and self-propelling anti-Semites insofar as memory is concerned. The former are still engaged in a battle for their past’s rehabilitation. Therefore they tend to restrict the debate, or at least to focus it, on the role played by their predecessors in Romanian history, rarely venturing to more general venues. Self-propelling anti-Semites, on the other hand, extend the battle

to national dimensions. Whereas both categories engage in Holocaust denial, the latter tend to be paradoxically more emphatic than the former, as they perceive participation in the Holocaust as a national affront. While both categories claim that Romanian participation in the Holocaust is an invention of the “occult”, self-propelling anti-Semites bring in the dimension of the present more often than nostalgic anti-Semites do. For them, accusations concerning Romania’s participation in the genocide against the Jews are primarily aimed at enslaving Romanians through the cultivation of unwarranted guilt feelings and taking over local assets by way of no less unjustified compensation demands. Unlike nostalgic anti-Semites, who would often question the Holocaust in totality, self-propelling anti-Semites are “selective” Holocaust deniers. I have elsewhere defined this propensity as “country-specific negationism”. In other words, it is not the Holocaust as a whole that is being denied, but rather the participation of members of one’s nation in its perpetration.¹⁷ In Romania, it is PRM vice-chairman, historian Gheorghe Buzatu, who is the most prominent representative of this trend. Yet it must be immediately added that the border line between self-propelling and “vengeance antisemitism” (see *infra*) is rather thin and, in Buzatu’s case, is crossed quite often.

Both nostalgic and self-propelling anti-Semites engage in self-victimization and in the externalization of guilt. They both seek to present either their own group or the Romanian nation as a whole as being the victim, rather than the perpetrator and to attribute whatever black spots may have existed to other internal and/or external forces. They share with nostalgic anti-Semites the generic Jew in the role of the internal enemy, sometime along other national minorities such as the Hungarians, just as they share with them Russia and revisionist Horthy Hungary as one of the outlets for the externalization of guilt. Yet while some self-propelling nationalists such as Tudor occasionally distance themselves from the Iron Guard (though freely print its propaganda in the publications they disseminate), other self-propelling nationalists, such as Buzatu, collaborate with the nostalgics in the Iron Guard cleansing operation. Where Buzatu would, however, stop, is at the point repeatedly emphasized by the nostalgics that they were victims of both Marshal Antonescu and the communist regime.

3. Neo-populist Mercantile Anti-Semitism: Orientation Present, Future

By “neo-populist mercantile anti-Semitism” I understand the employment of anti-Semitism as a purchased merchandize to promote personal and/or party interests. I was tempted at first to call this category “populist anti-Semitism”. However, any anti-Semitism employed for the purpose of gaining votes is in more than one way populist. That

denomination would consequently also apply to the self-propelling and to the utilitarian categories in my taxonomy. Viewed from this perspective, most inter-war fascists leaders were, apart from whatever else, populists. What distinguishes those leaders from the category I have in mind are two main aspects. First, they might have promoted anti-Semitism, but not by mercantile means. Second, they were anti-system leaders in their relation to democracy.

It is precisely this latter aspect that calls for labeling mercantile anti-Semites “neo-populist” as well. I borrow the term “neo-populist” (but not its meaning) from Andrew Janos. Janos distinguishes between three traditions that have influenced the “strategic choices” made by post-communist political elites: the liberal/civic tradition, the technocratic tradition, and the neo-populist one. As he formulates it, however, the “neo” in populism resides in continuity, rather than in change. It refers to such aspects as the cultivation of a self-centered apprehensive perception of “the Other” and of a globalizing world and to the cultivation of “the symbols of the victim and the weak.”¹⁸ There is very little “neo” here for anyone familiar with the history of East Central Europe, indeed with the history of European radicalism in general. For the “neo” to become relevant, it seems to me that the distinction should rather introduce a different dimension: that of Sartorian “systemic” and “anti-system politics.”¹⁹ I am employing terminology originally devised for political parties, but I do that with a good reason. I believe that in the context of post-1989 politics, there is simply no way that these can be openly conducted by admitting an “anti-systemic” *telos*. That is not to claim that there are no “anti-system” parties, organizations or personalities in post-communist East European life. There are plenty of them. However, in one way or another, they are all conscious of the fact that such an admission would transform them into pariahs within, and particularly outside, their own political community. This explains to a large extent the fact that, as Alina Mungiu-Pippidi observed,

Radical populists from Central and Eastern Europe may be more violent in their language or more overtly anti-Semitic than West European populists, but none of their programs feature truly antidemocratic policies, such as abolishing the rights of minority groups. The values that they profess in their speeches are neither liberal nor democratic, but so far one cannot charge them with having taken any antidemocratic actions.²⁰

Thus “neo-populists” are different from both interwar populists and from the earlier populists of the *narodnik* or *völkisch* shades. Unlike their

predecessors, they no longer denounce the “evils” of capitalism, only the “rapaciousness” of capitalists who allegedly forgot where they stemmed from. In neo-populism, there are “virtuous” and “corrupt” capitalists, and the former engage in self-sacrifice by entering politics allegedly against their own personal interests. The image the neo-populists pursue is, as Cas Mudde pointed out, that of “reluctant politicians” where politics is presented as being a “necessary evil” in a self-sacrificing posture. Hence, neo-populists are, at least in appearance, “systemic”. Not only do they not claim, as their predecessors did, “system destructive” objectives, but, on the contrary, the claim is made that they do so in order to safeguard genuine democracy. The claim, as Mudde writes, is built upon a rigid dichotomy of the “pure people” whom they reluctantly took upon themselves to represent, versus “the corrupt elite.”²¹

None of the above rules out elements of continuation from populism to neo-populism. It is striking, however, that these elements are often denied when the neo-populists are confronted with uncomfortable parallels drawn by either domestic opponents or foreign political critics. Furthermore, not only is the democratic dress up considered to be inevitable, but neo-populists are particularly gifted in mobilizing support via self-transmogrification into the very personal embodiment of popular grievances or those of influential segments in their societies.²²

PNG leader George (Gigi) Becali is a populist who tries hard to model himself on the precedent of Silvio Berlusconi. Like Berlusconi, he is a highly successful businessman, and, like him, he owns the country’s most popular soccer team—in Becali’s case, Steaua Bucharest. Unlike Berlusconi, however, Becali lacks any formal education, and unlike him he is on record for having occasionally uttered anti-Semitic statements, as well as pro-Iron Guard views.

Professing to be a devout Christian, Becali engages in uncontested charities, claiming he has been picked up by God to become rich in order to help the poor and save Romania from its current travails. For some time, he managed to pick up the vote of the disoriented and the disillusioned, whose numbers run into hundreds of thousands. While in the 2004 elections he barely received 1.77 percent of the vote, by 2007 polls showed him and his PNG to be second in party preferences against the background of the mutual annihilation of Romania’s parliamentary parties and the deadlock in the confrontation between them and President Traian Băsescu. Back in 2004, Becali, who is also the most generous magnate financing the construction of Romanian Orthodox churches, said he was ready to help any religious organization except for the Jews, who were allegedly well infiltrated in Romanian politics and did not need his help.²³ By 2007, ahead of a cancelled visit to Israel, he was denying any such discrimination and

claiming he was ready to engage in charity for Jews in Romania and Israel as well. Like many other of his country's politicians, he had become convinced meanwhile that Jews could do and undo everything anywhere—including Romanian electoral contests. He also denied on the occasion any trace of anti-Semitism, claiming that it would run against his devout Christian beliefs to hate Jews.²⁴ Yet back in 2004, he had called on the OTV private television for the canonization of Iron Guard "Captain" Corneliu Zelea Codreanu²⁵ and on 28 August 2004 he said on television that "the Legionary Movement has been the most beautiful movement in this country [incorporating] the country's entire elite, [such as] priests, university professors and students."²⁶

While populist presidential candidates with a successful business record and employing anti-Semitism for support recruitment are not a new phenomenon in East-Central Europe (one remembers Stanisław Tymiński, who managed to place second in the 1990 Polish presidential elections), they tended to be returned émigrés. Unlike them, Becali is entirely a local product. He is a former shepherd who made his fortune right after the fall of the Communist regime. He attributes his wealth to fortune, belief in God, and (last but not least) to his family, from which (he said in an interview ahead of the 2004 elections) he received some \$150,000–\$180,000 as the regime fell. That was certainly a lot of money for anyone, let alone a simple shepherd at the down set of the Ceaușescu regime. According to the tabloid *Atac*, Becali's fortune can be traced back to his father, Tase Becali. A shepherd of Aromanian origins, Tase Becali was involved in lucrative black marketing with sheep, from which a network of communist officials, the secret police (Securitate), and Arab meat dealers all profited.

In 2004, Becali (born in June 1958) decided to enter politics. He did so by simply becoming president of a phantom party, established in January 2000 by former Bucharest Mayor Viorel Lis, who had resigned from the PNG after failing to gain representation on the Bucharest City Council. Becali simply bought the party from Lis, thereby sparing himself the trouble of registering a new political formation. Whether or not Becali bought the party for cash or decided to take it over at the urging of his friend, Social Democratic Party (PSD) official Viorel Hrebenciuc, as some journalists alleged, may never be known. According to this version, it was the PSD's intent to take voters away from the PRM by creating a Christian-Democratic formation that would be acceptable to the West and as a possible coalition partner. Hence Becali's unconcealed persuasion that whatever he lacks in education or political experience can be bought for cash. And he may be right.

Having hired political scientist Dan Pavel as a consultant in March 2003, Becali began employing the political discourse of the interwar fascist

Iron Guard. Pavel, who used to be a specialist (and a prominent opponent) in Iron Guard renaissance, never addressed this issue. He simply confessed that as Becali's consultant he would make more money than he would have made in 10 years as a university professor. Becali first came out with the slogan "Everything for the Country" (which was used at one point by the Legionnaires as the name of their party), then promised to "make Romania into a country like the holy sun in the sky." The words were taken almost literally from a famous Iron Guardist song and were based on a letter addressed by Iron Guard "hero" Ion Moța to fascist leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, shortly before Moța died in Spain in 1937. After the 2004 elections, Pavel cut his ties with Becali, claiming the PNG was becoming a "fascist party", having co-opted several members of the New Right Group.²⁷ But he soon rejoined the party and in March 2007 was appointed PNG executive president, while "historian" Alex Mihai Stoenescu was appointed PNG first deputy chairman.²⁸ Yet in November the same year Pavel once more left the PNG, this time claiming that he was the victim of "political schemes" by "cur colleagues", after Becali had reproached him he did not work hard enough to justify the position of party executive chairman.²⁹

When the list of PNG candidates for the 2007 European Parliament elections was released, it included Stoenescu and former PRM parliamentary deputy Vlad Hogeia. Both are notorious anti-Semites and Holocaust deniers and/or banalizers, with Hogeia being also on record for racist positions targeting the Roma. In a collection of articles published in 2001, he was praising an infamous Nazi ideologist, exclaiming: "[the] time has come for the nations to liberate themselves from the chains of Jewish slavery, lest it be too late! How right was Julius Streicher (tortured and killed by the Occult for his courage): *'He who fights against the Jews, fights against the devil!'*".³⁰ Incitement on deicidal grounds was not missing from the volume either:

Many ask themselves why the heads of the Judaic Occult are so revengeful and so acquisitive. The key of the problem is likely to be found in the killing of the Redeemer by the Jews. Unable to liberate themselves from the sin laying heavy on their shoulders for 2,000 years, the *Jewish-Khazar anti-Christ*s have been trying to break their spiritual inferiority complex by fully animalizing their affective experiences.

Finally, Hogeia was citing approvingly crowds shouting anti-Roma slogans at soccer games and calling for Antonescu to take care of "a million crows" in his old proven way.³¹

Stoenescu, who publicly admits to having worked for the Securitate's foreign espionage³² is on record for numerous attempts to whitewash both the Antonescu regime and the Iron Guard. He headed a team of five Romanian historians, reportedly paid by Becali 400,000 euro to produce a "genuine Romanian history."³³ The team also included Gheorghe Buzatu and Dinu C. Giurescu, the latter being on record for having admitted Romania's large-scale extermination of Jews in Transnistria.³⁴ Becali may thus prove to be right when he believes everything in Romania is on sale. But that does not mean that everything that sold is also delivered. By end June 2008, the magnate said that the team had not produced and the money was lost.³⁵

Just a sample of Stoenescu's ways of handling the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* suffices to know what one might have expected from Becali's historians team. He purports to abhor the innocent victims of the June 1941 Jassy pogrom (whose number he minimizes as best as he can), and deplores the ensuing "Death Trains." At the same time, however, he claims that the thousands who died on the trains were the victim of "negligence" rather than intent, and that even those victims can ultimately be laid at the door of other Jews. Those who had been embarked on the trains were suspected of being communists who had opened fire on Romanian and German soldiers, he claims without questioning this propaganda swindle. The "selection" (*triere*) had unfortunately been carried out under pressure. It was not the first time in history that the many were paying the price for what only a handful had done--in this particular case a few Jewish communists-- Stoenescu (1998, 280) concludes.³⁶

In a multiple-volume *History of State-Strikes in Romania*, Stoenescu tells his readers that at its starting days, the Legionary Movement on Romania was by no means anti-Semitic. "Captain" Corneliu Zelea Codreanu "was not born as an anti-Semitic, but as an anti-communist leader". It became so, however, when it realized that the many Jews who at that time attended Romanian universities were Leftists and thus carriers of the Bolshevik threat.³⁷ Even so, Stoenescu claims, it is wrong to describe the Movement as Right wing just because of its anti-Semitism, 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 find yourself in the position of having stated that the Jews were of Left wing, thus provoking a Right wing anti-Semitic reaction."³⁸ Stoenescu is a "reactive anti-Semite" (see *infra*), but of a particular kind: whatever Jews do is unavoidably wrong. Those who worked in the media are "the first who should be held responsible for the instauration of hatred between Romanians and Jews". They had for years claimed they were fighting for political rather than racial rights, but when their political adversaries, dressed up in Iron Guard

uniforms and carrying pistols, set up to hunt them, they started screaming that they were Jews and that the reason for their persecution was anti-Semitism, not anticommunism, he writes. Whereas in the past they had distanced themselves from their rabbis, they became Jews again overnight. Many of them later took refuge in the Soviet Union, “only to return riding its tanks as victors.”³⁹

In any case, there had been no reason for them to seek refuge. The Legionary “Death Squads”, according to Stoenescu, “were not set up as groups of assassins, organized to eliminate political adversaries.” Only Communist propaganda portrays these groups as such. 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 tell his readers, has been persecuted by all regimes and its image distorted by all alike. That persecution “continues even today, in 2002.”⁴⁰

The reason I insisted on citing rather at length these two authors is manifold. First, I wanted to illustrate the continuity element in the Romanian case of neo-populism. But to the same extent, I wish to demonstrate that this element does not necessarily play in neo-populism the pivotal role it once played in interwar populism. Antisemitism is not a central credo but a function of the needs of the hour. Once Becali became convinced that being portrayed as an anti-Semite might undermine his purpose of joining the European Popular Party (for which purpose he had added the name Christian Democratic to his Party’s denomination), he had no hesitation in dropping Hogeia and Stoenescu from the list of candidates to the European Parliament. This demonstrates that, as it has been pointed out, neo-populists insist on projecting the image of “systemic” rather than “anti-system” political formations. To be sure, neither Stoenescu, nor Hogeia were expelled from the PNG.⁴¹ They were, so to speak, on the “waiting list” and it was likely that their role would have once again become prominent, had political circumstances required it. Hogeia, nonetheless resigned from the party in late November 2007, reproaching Becali to have “humiliated” him and accusing the PNG leader of being a political, economic and sports “impostor,” describing the PNG as a “pseudo-party full of prejudice, [self-] seclusion, of bigotry and the domination of suspicion” rather than a “militant Christian [formation] concerned with the fate of many and the wretched.”⁴²

The PNG (or the PNG-CD) as it calls itself after undergoing the respectability baptism is also re-writing its own short history. In the interview with the Israeli Romanian-language daily *Viața noastră*, Cătălin Dâncu claimed that the use of Iron Guard slogans in the 2004 electoral

campaign has been due to the legacy inherited from Viorel Lis's party where, he claimed, some youngsters of extreme-right persuasion had managed to penetrate. Nothing is further from reality. Lis was a corrupt politician forced to form his own political formation after being expelled from the National Peasant Party Christian Democratic. But he never gave the slightest indication of pro-Iron Guard sympathies and never used such slogans when campaigning. Nor was he the leader who admitted into the party's ranks members of the New Right Group (who openly display Codreanu's portrait on T-shirts) or notorious anti-Semites of the Hogeia and Stoenescu sort.

In November 2007, the PNG-CD failed to gain representation in what were the first Romanian elections for the European Parliament. This time around, Becali and his party had campaigned under the slogan "In the service of the Cross and the People". Becali sent Dâncu to Israel, hoping to pick up some votes from carriers of Romanian passports among the largely uninformed community of Jews of Romanian origin; in page-long interviews (electoral adds) that must have cost a fortune,⁴³ Dâncu denied any trace of anti-Semitism in either the PNG-CD or his boss's personal views. To no avail. The PNG-CD garnered 4.8 percent of the vote in the scrutiny. This was just (but just!) below the 5 percent electoral hurdle. Instead of accusing electoral fraud, as PRM Chairman Tudor has done, Becali frankly admitted that, he had suspected the electoral outcome, he would have simply bought the missing votes. He also ventured the opinion that if anyone was to blame, this was Satan, who certainly disliked his numerous attacks on Romania's gay community. Anyhow, he said, the electoral failure might turn out to have been a blessing in disguise, since it had economized the price of a private plane he had been about to purchase for commuting between Bucharest and Brussels.⁴⁴

4. Utilitarian Anti-Semitism: Orientation Present

"Utilitarian anti-Semitism" refers to the occasional exploitation of anti-Semitic prejudice for the needs of the hour by politicians who, by and large, are probably not anti-Semitic. The category has often been dubbed "political anti-Semitism," but once more I believe this to be a misleading concept. In the modern (that is post-Emancipation) world, all anti-Semitic views (even latent anti-Semitism) carry either an explicit or an implicit political potential.

Utilitarian anti-Semitism is by no means a distinguishing feature of the post-communist world. It is no less spread in Western countries. It is not as much what utilitarian anti-Semites say that counts, as is what they *refrain* from saying. In other words, the political discourse of utilitarian anti-Semites is implicit rather than explicit. It is also quite often a coded

discourse, never going all the way of the self-exculpatory nostalgics or the self-propelling anti-Semites, but “signaling” to those able to encode the discourse its unmistakable intention. Failure to distance oneself from anti-Semitic views in the hope of enlisting the support of those who are obviously prejudiced, or even forging political alliances with them, can be just as telling as is embracing their view openly. That such political alliances are short-sighted and, more often than not, turn against the utilitarian anti-Semites themselves, is altogether another matter. But it is one that brings to fore the singularly present orientation of utilitarian anti-Semites, who seem to believe that what counts is only what serves the need of the hour, and that the future can always be dealt with starting from scratch. It is therefore not surprising to find the political discourse of utilitarian anti-Semites to be self-contradictory in a longer time perspective.

Utilitarian anti-Semitism is to be found at both the Left and the Right ends of the “mainstream” post-communist political spectrum. This is not a surprise either, since neither the Left nor the Right ends of that spectrum are oblivious to the dangers of being painted by more extremist political adversaries as lacking roots in the country’s past. The “imagined community” and the need to defend it are therefore just as central for utilitarian anti-Semites as they are for self-exculpatory or self-propelling anti-Semites. Utilitarian memory fine-tunes itself to that of the exculpatory nostalgics and particularly to that of the self-propelling anti-Semites for being potential political allies.

Former Romania President Ion Iliescu is a typical utilitarian politician. During his 1992–1996 mandate, Iliescu was ready to forge an informal, and later even a formal coalition with the radical continuity formations of the PRM, Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR) and Socialist Labor Party (PSM), all of which displayed anti-Semitism, though the PUNR combined that feature with a pronounced anti-Hungarianism and the PSM added to both a more open endorsement of Leftist postures.⁴⁵ That coalition was not void of tension, Iliescu being among other things reproached with having allegedly acquiesced in Romania’s “culpabilization” for the Holocaust when he visited the Choral Temple in Bucharest in 1993, and (later) on the occasion of a visit paid at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington.⁴⁶ Running again for the office, which he temporarily lost to President Emil Constantinescu in 1996, on 12 October 2000, in an interview with the daily *Adevărul*, Iliescu was keen to point to the electorate that he had valiantly defended Romania’s historical record. In other words– its shared memory. His detractors, he said, had blown out of any proportion the fact that he had covered his head in a gesture of politeness towards his hosts, but no one has remarked the difference between himself and Polish President Lech Wałęsa. Unlike Wałęsa, when visiting the Israeli Knesset he

had refrained from apologizing for his countrymen's participation in the Holocaust, the former and future president was keen to stress. The issue, he said, was one that still required elucidation by historians. Unlike Iliescu, during his term of office Constantinescu had acknowledged Romanian responsibility for the "genocide" perpetrated against Jews, even if at the same time insisting on his country's refusal to deliver its Jews to Hitler.⁴⁷

In a speech at the Choral Temple in Bucharest marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Iron Guard pogrom in Bucharest on 21 January 2001, Iliescu, now re-elected president, said the Iron Guardist "aberration" had been a "delirium of intolerance and anti-Semitism." Yet, he added, except for that brief "delirium", there has been no Romanian contribution to "the long European history" of persecution of the Jews, and it was "significant" that there was "no Romanian word for pogrom." Furthermore, he hastened to add, it was "unjustified to attribute to Romania an artificially inflated number of Jewish victims for the sake of media impact." Romania's distorted image, according to Iliescu, was likely to be corrected when "Romanian (read rather than Jewish) historians will tackle the subject."⁴⁸

By early 2002, Romania had been bluntly told by U.S. officials that the conditions for being admitted into NATO included facing the country's World War II past, and that an end would have to be put to the Marshal Antonescu cult that had been striving in Romania since 1990. On a visit to Romania in February, Bruce Jackson, chairman of the U.S. NATO Committee did not mince words: "Give me a bulldozer and I shall immediately destroy all Antonescu statues," he said, adding that adherence to democratic values includes facing the historical past and that this adherence is "not negotiable" in the NATO accession process.⁴⁹ Although the cult's main promoters were people associated with the PRM, its spectrum was in fact far wider, cutting across party lines and involving prominent historians and other intellectuals. Between six and eight statues had been erected in memory of the marshal, 25 streets and squares had been renamed after him, and in Jassy even the "Heroes' Cemetery" carried the dictator's name. The Defense Ministry on 18 March launched a syllabus on the Holocaust at the National Defense College in Bucharest and in a message to participants Prime Minister Adrian Năstase said that "the future cannot be built on falsification and mystification" and that the 1941 pogroms in Jassy or liberated Bessarabia and Bukovina, as well as the later deportation of Jews to Transnistria, had been "in no way different from [...] the Nazi operation known under the name of the Final Solution." In his message, Năstase announced that the government had approved an emergency ordinance prohibiting the display of "racist or fascist symbols," the erection of statues or commemorative plaques for those condemned in Romania or abroad for "crimes against peace" and for "crimes against

humanity,” as well as the naming of streets and other places after those personalities. Exceptions were to be made only for museums, where such statues could be displayed for the purpose of “scientific activity” carried out outside “public space.” Ordinance 31/2002, which was issued on 13 March, also outlawed organizations of “fascist, racist and xenophobic character” that promote ideas “on ethnic, racist, or religious grounds” and extended this prohibition to both registered and unregistered foundations or any other form of organization consisting of three persons or more. The ordinance provided penalties ranging from fines to 15 years in prison for those infringing its regulations or denying the Holocaust.⁵⁰

Had Romanian officialdom finally embarked on a course of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, even if that course was imposed from outside? The signals were contradictory, and those destined for internal consumption were quite clearly aimed at sweetening the pill that had to be swallowed on prescriptions by foreign doctors. In an obvious contradiction to its own ordinance, the cabinet decided to display at its official seat the portraits of all Romanian premiers. The gallery, of course, includes the marshal’s portrait, which triggered a letter of protest by the U.S. Helsinki Commission, objecting to both that step and to procrastination in removing the Antonescu statues. Culture Minister Răzvan Theodorescu, however, had claimed on 27 May that all Antonescu statues — except a bust displayed in Bucharest in the courtyard of a church built by him — had been dismantled. As for the governmental portrait gallery, Theodorescu explained that the exhibit was outside “public space,” and thus within the restrictions of the ordinance.⁵¹ One could just as well have argued that the official seat of the government was the very center of “public space.” According to Premier Năstase, by 31 July, 14 out of the 25 streets named after Antonescu had been renamed and the rest were to soon follow.⁵²

Far more important, the fate of the ordinance itself was becoming unclear. Emergency ordinances become effective upon their issuance, but must eventually be approved by the parliament in order to become laws. Debates in commissions had shown that this was by no means to be taken for granted. While the Senate’s Human Rights’ Commission approved the ordinance’s text without amendments on 9 April, in the Defense Commission representatives of the National Liberal Party or PNL (among them former party chairman Mircea Ionescu-Quintus) joined those of the PRM in demanding that the text be amended. It was claimed that the Holocaust is a diffuse concept that needs clarification; and it was also claimed that the article in the ordinance prohibiting Holocaust denial infringes on the human rights in general and on the right of freedom of expression in particular.⁵³ After twice postponing approval, the Judicial Commission agreed on 5 June to an amended text, based on the proposal made by Senator Gheorghe Buzatu, at that time a senator and PRM deputy

chairman. Buzatu proposed that 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.*” In other words, by definition there has been no Holocaust in Romania, since the extermination of Jews there had not been “organized by the Nazi authorities.” The same amendment had been approved on 29 May by the Senate’s Culture Commission, which had also heeded Buzatu’s argument.⁵⁴ The Judicial Commission also reduced the maximum penalty for setting up organizations of a “fascist, racist or xenophobe” character from 15 to 5 years in prison.

The definition was perfectly in line with Buzatu and his associate’s peculiar “selective negationism,” 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. The ordinance was finally approved by parliament, but only after a four-year procrastination.⁵⁵ The delay was obviously intentional. As approved, the new law did not carry the Buzatu-proposed amendments. Rather, employing the definition of the Holocaust included in the report issued by the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (see *infra*), it defined the Shoah as “the state-sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany, its allies and collaborators between 1933-1945”, adding to it the specification that the country’s Roma population had also been subjected to “deportation and annihilation”—a slight departure from the commission’s formulation, which also mentioned “people with disabilities, political opponents, homosexuals, and others”; while more comprehensive as a general definition of the Holocaust, the parts eliminated in the approved law would not have applied to Antonescu’s Romania.⁵⁶

The setting-up of the commission has its own peculiar saga. It followed an Iliescu blunder in an interview with a journalist from the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* published on 25 July 2003.⁵⁷ Engaging in “Holocaust trivialization”, the former president told the interviewer that “[T]he Holocaust was not unique to the Jewish population in Europe. Many others, including Poles, died in the same way.” But only Jews and Gypsies, the interviewer observed in reaction, had been “targeted for genocide” at that time. To which Iliescu responded: “I know. But there were others, who were labeled communists, and they were similarly victimized. My father was a communist activist and he was sent to a camp. He died at the age of 44, less than a year after he returned.” Although Iliescu admitted that massacres of Jews had been perpetrated on Romania’s territory proper, and observed that “the leaders of that time are responsible for those event,” he insisted that “[i]t is impossible to accuse the Romanian people and the Romanian society of this. When Germany declared [sic!] the Final Solution—a decision that was obeyed by other countries, including Hungary, Antonescu no longer supported that policy. On the contrary, he

took steps to protect the Jews. That, too, is historical truth.” He also went on to observe: “Antonescu also had his positive side. In 1944, when Hungary under Horthy was implementing the Final Solution and transported its Jews, including residents of northern Transylvania, which was then under Hungarian rule, to death camps, Antonescu was no longer doing that.” As to the historians’ claim that the shift in policies towards Jews was due to Stalingrad, Iliescu readily acknowledged that this “is correct” but deemed the detail to be “not important.” One thus witnessed both a clash between the president’s subjective personal memory (Iliescu’s father was hardly treated as the Jews had been) and Jewish collective memory as ventured by the interviewer (cf. next sub-chapter); and one obviously witnessed another attempt at comparative guilt externalization and self-victimization. In an attempt to hush the international scandal created by the interview, the president proposed the setting up of what became known as the Elie Wiesel commission, after the name of its chairman.⁵⁸

Most of the commission’s recommendations are yet to be implemented. What is more worrying, however, is the fact that hardly anyone has been sentenced under the provisions of the 2006-approved law against fascist propaganda and the cultivation of the Antonescu cult, although instances of blatant infringement abound (see *infra*). Quite the contrary, in mid- 2006, a Braşov tribunal 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 a 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.” The tribunal thus practically ruled that the Legionary Movement—hitherto registered only as a foundation—could apply for being registered as a political party.⁵⁹

Having been longest in power, most instances of readiness to employ utilitarian anti-Semitism have been illustrated in this part by examples from the Leftist PSD. Yet parties claiming to be centrist or even center-right are also ready to employ such tactics if it suits their purpose. The most recent examples were provided by the Democratic-Liberal Party (PD-L), which struck an alliance with Becali’s PNG-CD in the Bucharest City Council after the 2008 local elections. Furthermore, in parliament the PD-L in early September 2008 saved PRM leader Tudor from losing his senatorial deputy-chairmanship (which makes him into Romania’s fifth highest

official) in exchange for support from the PRM in grabbing some parliamentary commission chairmanships.

Romanian utilitarian anti-Semitism thus renders the impression that precious little has changed in elite political culture in that country in the 19 years that have passed since the overthrow of the former regime. What I had termed as “simulated change” in reference to the reforms the Ceaușescu regime claimed to have carried out remains just as prominent a feature of that political culture as was under the previous regime. It is thus due mainly to Western pressures and the need to display European or Western-like positions rather than to the internalization of those values that Romania has marched some steps on the road to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.⁶⁰

5. Reactive Antisemitism: Orientation Past-Present-Future.

The category of reactive anti-Semitism is perhaps the largest of all, and, at the same time, the most difficult to define. It is also the category that includes most overlaps with the four other postures discussed above. It warrants, however, separate discussion, because the category's members are neither chiefly motivated by nostalgia for a past from which they have no reason to exculpate themselves, nor by an attempt to forge “semites” in order to instrumentalize their democracy-undermining political agenda, nor are they blind to the dangers stemming from short-term political alliances with anti-Semites. And yet, reactive anti-Semites can easily be misperceived as belonging to one of the other four categories by anyone not familiar enough with their initial motivations. In short, reactive anti-Semites are anti-Semites despite themselves. To paraphrase Hegel, they are anti-Semites *in themselves* but not *for themselves*. But the more stubborn among them may, nonetheless, become anti-Semites “for themselves”, as the case of former anti-Communist dissident writer Paul Goma (see *infra*) demonstrates.

The political discourse of reactive anti-Semites is above all prompted by collective defensive postures geared at fending off recriminations concerning recent history. That discourse can be merely allusive but on occasion it can also turn into abusive and in all cases it involves a definite attempt at “back finger-pointing.” Indeed, nowhere is the role played by “collective memory” so central as in the case of the reactive anti-Semites, and, at the same time, nowhere are the limitations of that memory and its subjectivity more prominent than in their case. Perhaps the best way to understand this aspect is to go back to one of the pioneers of collective memory research. Maurice Halbwachs' distinction between individual (autobiographical), collective and historic memory is of particular relevance here. Halbwachs showed that while all three categories are

socially-constructed and while there is no memory outside social frameworks, the past is being constantly reconstructed and a very strong impact on the modality of this reconstruction is often carried by the socializing experiences of family life.⁶¹ The French sociologist's insights open the door wide to understanding one of the European post-communist societies' most striking aspects: the "competitive martyrdom," as Alan S. Rosenbaum fittingly termed it, between the Holocaust and the Gulag.⁶²

Having elsewhere dealt with this aspect⁶³ I only wish to stress here one of its most salient faces: reactive anti-Semites are precisely those (now in their forties, fifties, sixties and even seventies) whose family socialization — and therefore most influential factor in collective memory — recalls the years of early Stalinism and of the Gulag through which and where their grandparents and parents had to suffer and submit. The largely-shared perception of "Jews having brought Communism" — the *zydokommuna* in Poland, the *iudeocomunism* in Romania — is automatically associated with figures such as Jakub Berman in Poland, Mátyás Rákosi in Hungary or Ana Pauker in Romania. Even if the generalization is verging on the absurd — as Ilya Prizel, showed for the Polish case⁶⁴ and as it can be extended to every single country in Europe that fell under Soviet domination — it must be borne in mind that its acceptance is nearly axiomatic. Hence a "competition" has emerged about who did more wrong onto whom: the local perpetrators or even bystanders during the Holocaust or the Jews who had allegedly imposed or profited from the Gulag. This has been called the "double genocide" or the "symmetry" approach and has three temporal aspects. First, it is past-oriented in the sense that it "explains" anti-Semitism by alleged large-scale Jewish collaboration with the Bolsheviks both on the eve of World War II and after the imposition of communism. But at the same time and to no lesser extent it is present-oriented, inasmuch as it serves to reject either local or foreign (Israeli, Western) pressure to either launch a process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or to compensate victims, or both. Finally, it is also future-oriented, since it strives to establish a model of society that is genuinely perceived as no longer haunted by the specters of the past, regardless of the ethnicity of those ghosts. In an inverse Leninist equation, therefore, the "double genocide" approach poses the question of *Kto kogo* and either comes up with the reply that both sides have equally sinned towards one another (the benign version of "competitive martyrdom") or concludes that the balance weighs heavily against those "responsible" for the Gulag.

Reactive anti-Semitism tends to occur in the wake of some event with echoes abroad, perceived as putting the country's post-communist image into "distorted", negative light. One of the first such instances in Romania was the reaction in March 1992 by Monica Lovinescu, who objected to the

publication by exiled Romania Jewish writer Norman Manea in *The New Republic* of a tract on the fascist past of the internationally-famed historian of religion Mircea Eliade.⁶⁵ After the fall of communism, Eliade had been turned in Romania into practically an intellectual national idol. Enjoying tremendous prestige and influence in Romania, Lovinescu—daughter of Romania's most influential liberal-minded and Western-oriented literary critic Eugen Lovinescu—had been encouraging intellectual resistance to the communist regime from the microphone of Radio Free Europe between 1964 and 1992, when the then Munich-based station liquidated its Paris bureau. When the regime was indulging into its aberrant promotion of “National Communism,” Monica Lovinescu had been its most eloquent opponent in the West. She often denounced the echoes of Legionary ideology in the regime's propaganda, indeed came out in defense of Manea himself. But once the specter that had united all opponents of the Ceaușescu regime had vanished, Lovinescu (whose mother had perished in communist prisons), was at the head of those moved by the drive to have communist perpetrators subjected to a Nürnberg-like “Trial of Communism.” Not all of the former regime's opponents—whether in Romania or the West—were of her mind. They would be turned into her chief enemies. She would be particularly irritated by efforts to deal with Romania's fascist past, considering those attempts to be a deflection from the focus on which attention had to concentrate now. And she became persuaded that Jewish interests were behind the neglect of her country's more recent trauma. Her reaction to Manea's 1991 tract on Eliade's silence on that past in his autobiographical works was typical; and the personal friendship that had linked Lovinescu to Eliade was not the only, or the most important, explanation for her rushing to his defense. Reading Manea, she said, “one wonders if one is not the victim of a hallucination.” Was the Iron Guard at the helm for just a few months, or vice versa? Was it communist supporters who were imprisoned by Antonescu and left prison only in 1964, or were these Legionnaires? Was one dreaming in 1989 that Europe had rid itself of “communist terror” while in fact it had just emerged from a fascist terror? Manea and a few others who continued (or just began) to inquire into Romanian intellectual support of fascism and/or anti-Semitism (including Western scholars) would now be accused by their very respectable Romanian peers of wishing to “monopolize suffering.” The “either-or” argument that originated with Lovinescu would be embraced by her many Romanian admirers, as if dealing with both fascism and communism would be mutually exclusive, and as if fascist “terror” had been properly clarified by communist historiography, thus making superfluous any effort to re-examine it.⁶⁶ The echoes of this article by Lovinescu have not died off sixteen years after its publication, despite the fact that Eliade's Iron Guardist past is no longer under doubt. Repeatedly and in different contexts, the claim is made that while possible dark spots of Romania's interwar intellectuals are put into exaggerated evidence, the

contribution of Jewish intellectuals to politics under Stalinism is neglected. “Political correctness”, it is suggested, has become just as strangling as Stalinism and Zhdanovism had been.

Another illustrative instance of reactive anti-Semitism came after former President Emil Constantinescu for the first time admitted Romanian responsibility (not to be understood as culpability) for the Holocaust, which he reiterated during a visit paid at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. As a result, Floricel Marinescu, a historian with connections to the previous regime, in March 1998 published a furious article in the *România liberă* weekly supplement *Aldine*. Not a single cliché employed in the “double genocide” argument was missing from this tract. As he put it, “from the strict quantitative perspective, the number of crimes perpetrated in the name of communist ideology is much larger than that of those perpetrated in the name of Nazi or similar ideologically minded regimes.” Yet unlike Constantinescu, “no prominent Jewish personality [from Romania] has apologized for the role that some Jews have played in undermining Romanian statehood, in the country's Bolshevization, in the crimes and the atrocities committed [by them]. Proportionally speaking, the Romanians and Romania suffered more at the hands of the communist regime, whose oncoming the Jews had made an important contribution to, than the Jews themselves had suffered from the Romanian state during the Antonescu regime.... The Red Holocaust was incomparably more grave than Nazism.”⁶⁷ Not long after the publication of the tract, Marinescu was appointed a presidential counselor.

In the course of the last years, Paris-based exiled writer Paul Goma provided the most striking instance of reactive anti-Semitism. Once the setting up of the “Wiesel commission” was announced, Goma started producing a series of articles, eventually transformed into a book, seeking to demonstrate that the atrocities committed by the Romanian troops in Bessarabia in 1941, after that province's liberation from its Soviet occupation of the previous year, had been a response to atrocities Jews had been first to commit against Romanians as agents for the occupying power. Titled *Red Week June 26-July 1940 or Bessarabia and the Jews*, the volume stirred large echoes in both Romania and the neighboring Republic of Moldova. Goma, who is Bessarabia-born and who lost relatives during the occupation, is not denying the crimes committed by Antonescu's army or police in Bessarabia and Transnistria, though he is attempting to minimize their extent. Nonetheless, and despite of his having repeatedly argued that he is no “negationist” (including by suing this author alongside many other Romanian or Romania-born Jews, Elie Wiesel not excepting), bluntly asserts that “The ‘Romanian Holocaust’ is a lie, a forgery, a swindle, an unashamed threat (‘Your purse or your life!’).”⁶⁸ He pledges “everlasting gratefulness” to the Romanian Army and Antonescu, whom he calls “the

liberating Marshal”, a “hero” and a “martyr.”⁶⁹ Having become accustomed to the status of a victim for 2,000 years, he writes, the Jews cannot accept the existence of any genocide but the Shoah. “The truth is that they were the unpunished henchmen of the communities that fell under Bolshevik domination, and continue to be so today, in Palestine.” They “monopolized” and “confiscated suffering.”⁷⁰

6. Vengeance Antisemitism: Orientation Eternal.

Too scrupulous a taxonomy, too much attention paid to the causes that might trigger one or another type of motivation, entails the risk of overlooking the simplest and at the same time most ancient form of anti-Semitism: simple hatred of Jews for whatever they do or refrain from doing. I call this category “vengeance anti-Semitism” not because those who belong to it really have something to be vengeful about, but because anti-Semites for times immemorial have “explained” that theirs is but a natural response to a provocation that Jews pose to the non-Jewish world.

Ion Coja, a Romanian Philology faculty staff with the University of Bucharest, would in all likelihood fit all the above-mentioned categories but that of utilitarian anti-Semitism. Rather than indicating the weak points of the taxonomy, this fact demonstrates that in varying circumstances Coja might use different arguments for justifying the unjustifiable. The conclusion, however, would always be the same.

For Coja, the Iron Guard never committed any of the atrocities attributed to it. Indeed, it was not even anti-Semitic.⁷¹ The January 1941 pogrom by the Iron Guard in Bucharest, Coja claimed in 1997, had never existed. Its 120 victims, some of whom were hanged on hooks at the slaughter house with the inscription “Kosher meat” on them were all an invention—the best proof being that when the communists took over power nobody had been put on trial, although so many Jews were in the Communist Party leadership. Jews may have died during the January uprising against Antonescu, but nobody has ever proved that the Iron Guard had committed the crimes.⁷² The assassination of historian Nicolae Iorga in those days has not been committed by the Iron Guard either. It was rather ordered by the KGB, which had infiltrated the movement. And it is a well-kept secret that the KGB was in the hands of the “occult.” The same “occult” would eventually order the assassination of Nicolae Ceaușescu, as indeed it would commission the liquidation of Romanian-born scholar Ioan Petre Culianu in the U.S. in May 1991—being aware that the scholar had discovered the secrets of its world domination.⁷³ After a short while, Coja would be ready to acknowledge Jews *had* been killed in the Bucharest pogrom, but would now attribute the atrocity to their coreligionists, dressed in the green shirts of the Iron Guard. Those Jews, he

now claimed, were communists serving Soviet interests: to compromise the Guard and end its partnership with Antonescu.⁷⁴ But barely a few months later, Coja turned the tables once again, now claiming to be in the possession of a notarized testimony of a nonagenarian witness to the events, according to which the bodies hanged at the slaughterhouse were of Iron Guardists massacred by Jews.⁷⁵ The pogrom's victims had thus turned into perpetrators, the perpetrators into victims.

In mid-2001, Buzatu and Coja chaired in Bucharest a symposium whose title—"Has There Been a Holocaust in Romania?"—was telling in itself. The symposium was divided into two panels, the first examining the "questionable" occurrence of the Shoah in Romania, the second the reasons for the existence of a "powerfully-institutionalized anti-Romaniansim." As an outcome of the second panel, a Romanian League for the Struggle Against Anti-Romanianism, headed by Coja, was set up. In typical selective negationist manner, the forum's resolution⁷⁶ said that Jews "have suffered almost everywhere in Europe in those years, but not in Romania," and it added that "testimony of trustworthy Jews" demonstrates that "the Romanian people displayed in those years behavior honoring human dignity." In support of their affirmations, the participants brought several "arguments." They started with presenting excerpts from what they claimed was the 1955 testimony of the former leader of the Romanian Jewish Community in Romania, Wilhelm Filderman, before a Swiss court. That "document" is a forgery, and it was neither the first, nor the last time that Coja indulged in fabricating "evidence."⁷⁷ The resolution also embraced Coja's position on the Iron Guard's non-participation in the Bucharest 1941 pogrom; and, as Coja had already done in the past⁷⁸ it falsely claimed that the Nürnberg war crimes tribunal had investigated all wartime crimes against humanity and that the Legionary movement had also been investigated. Prosecutors, however, were said to have concluded that the movement could not be charged with "any wrong doing, any genocidal crime." As is well known, the Nürnberg International Tribunal never dealt with crimes other than those committed by Nazi Germany.⁷⁹

Right after the Romanian government in March 2002 issued Emergency Ordinance No. 31 (see *supra*), Coja published a brochure titled *Holocaust in Romania*. Its real title, however, appeared on the inside cover: *Holocaust in Romania?*⁸⁰ It was an obvious attempt to undermine the approval of the ordinance, being addressed to parliamentarians and the authorities involved in the process of transforming that ordinance into a regular law. The brochure went on sale as well, although the stipulations of Ordinance 31/2000, with immediate effect upon issuance, should have landed Coja in jail. Nothing of the sort happened, however. These were the first indications that change was little more than "simulated change" (see *supra*). A lot more would eventually follow.

The issuance of the Wiesel Commission's report in late 2004 brought about a furor on the side of Coja and his friends. First, Coja addressed an "Open Letter" to U.S. President George W. Bush, the U.S. Congress and the State Department, in which he expressed his alleged worry in face of a possible resurrection of anti-Semitism in his country. The reasons for that danger, according to the Romanian professor were manifold. First, American pressure exercised on Romania to treat Antonescu as a war criminal, ignoring the fact that "most Romanians have a good or very good opinion on Ion Antonescu's regime." Second, disregard of the fact that "The majority of communist leaders, including those of institutions in charge of political repression, particularly in the 1944-1964 period, had been Jews." Third, ignoring the baleful role played by some Jews in the December 1989 events, in what has been termed as 'the stolen Revolution'. At that time, "Jews with a 'glorious' communist past in the Romanian Communist Party had shamelessly attempted to profit from the fall of communism as well". Fourth, Jews soon became involved in the privatization of Romanian economy, whose "real essence rests in transferring Romanian national ownership from the hands of the Romanian state into those of an international Mafia-like oligarchy." Among the "illicit and lawless beneficiaries there are many, far too many Jews" and this situation is bound to "sooner or later stir up anti-Semitic reaction and even public statements among Romanians, who would rightly and correctly react in self-defense." Finally, such feelings would grow in intensity once Romanians learn the "undoubtedly painful, unbearable fact that parallel with the alienation of Romanian economy, a genuine demographic attack is ongoing." Some 450,000 Jews, Coja claimed, had lately received Romanian citizenship. One was faced with an ongoing "secret" but "veritable invasion," precisely at a time when Romania was facing an "unprecedented demographic decline." "Only the number of Jews...has grown from some 5,000-6,000 in 1990, to 460,000", that is to say 75,000-fold. Consequently, Coja warned,

We draw attention in a most serious manner that this Jewish exodus to Romania amounts to an aggression act against the most vital interests of the Romanian nation, which would not fail to trigger a natural defensive reaction among Romanians. The entire responsibility of what would follow squarely rests with those involved in this perfidious and criminal migration, above all on the Jewish immigrants.⁸¹

Coja was thus using an all-too obvious hoax to both reject the findings of the Wiesel Commission and to simply incite to pogroms, while providing

a justification for them. This became clearer a few months later. On 28 October, the ultranationalist *Vatra românească* “cultural society that Coja presides in Romania’s capital organized in Bucharest a public debate to discuss alleged “anti-Romanian strategies” and “Romania’s de-Romanianization.” The participants launched an “Appeal by Romanians” that drew attention to what was called “an outrage of maximum gravity for the future of our planet, a veritable crime against humanity” for which the blame was to be laid at the door of “those organizations and institutions of the Jewish community that conceived and are implementing the project of granting citizenship and moving one million Jews to Romania, without the knowledge and the accord of the Romanian People.” In but a few months, it seemed, the 450,000 Jews mentioned in Coja’s appeal to the U.S. authorities had grown to 500,000, for according to this latter document this was now the number of Jews who had been granted citizenship, “including rights to property,” without the knowledge of Romanians. One dealt, according to the appeal signed again by Coja, with an “atypical aggression, without precedent in the planet’s history” that was likely to provoke in Romania “a demographic catastrophe, an *anti-Romanian genocide* as efficient as its discretion.”⁸² According to the revised hoax (interwar Romanian anti-Semites put the number of “Jewish invaders at some two million), post-1990 Romanian governments and the mass media had concurred in imposing censorship on all news concerning this plot. The plan allegedly stipulated that, in the first phase of its implementation, Jews were to purchase all available real estate, commercial space and means of production, without physically moving to Romania themselves. To mask the conspiracy, at the beginning only elderly Jews would move to Romania, posing as pensioners who would spend their pension in the country, which would make some “naïve” Romanians welcome the “‘return’ of the Jews”. Once the one million target achieved, however, once Jewish control “firmly established, all Jews would return ‘home’ without any legal basis existing to prevent it” for the “alleged ‘state based on the rule of law’ would view Jewish invasion perfectly legal.”

To “demonstrate” his contentions, Coja did not hesitate to indulge again into manipulation of facts and figures. Just like anti-Semites before the war, he claimed that in 1939 the number of Jews in Romania had been about two million (it never was larger than 800,000), a minority, he wrote, that “dominated and controlled commerce, finances and industry.” This “privileged status” had transformed the Jews into “the most dangerous and difficult to bear, the most repugnant minority” in the eyes of other Romanian citizens. Apart from thus justifying the anti-Jewish wartime atrocities (which he continues to deny), Coja was resurrecting another hoax of earlier anti-Semites, namely an alleged plan to transform Romania into a new Palestine under Jewish domination. The hoax (also widespread among Poles at that time) now claimed that the intention was to apply in

Romania the “experience accumulated in Palestine” under a “more subtle and ingenious strategy”, but with similar aims: to usurp the rights that Romanians have in their country over it.” It is not insignificant to note that Paul Goma also goes at great length to “expose” an alleged Jewish plot of similar intentions, though one restricted to Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transnistria and said to be carried out with Stalin’s blessing.⁸³ Coja seems indeed to be a not insignificant source of “documentation” for Goma, who openly admitted in 2005 that about one-third of the “documentation” for *Săptămâna roșie* is based on a book that had been banned in 1994 due to pressure emanating from the Jewish community.⁸⁴ The book⁸⁵ largely based on forgery and Antonescu propaganda, was re-edited by *Vatra românească* in 2003. By 2008, the inspiring quarter had grown into “one-half.”⁸⁶

To prove his point, Coja also proceeded to apply the well-known technique of “Judaization” of political adversaries, fabricating a Jewish grandfather and a Jewish wife to former President Ion Iliescu, as well as “concealed Jewish origins” to Presidents Emil Constantinescu and Traian Băsescu, who, alongside the leadership of the Jewish community, were warned they would be charged with “treason.” He then went on to write that accusations of Romanian participation in the Holocaust were aimed at “inducing in the Romanians’ mind, in the communitarian mentality, a sentiment of national guilt, aimed at determining Romanians to agree to the immigration into Romania of hundreds of thousands of Jews.” That acquiescence, he claimed, would be thus viewed as a “chance to ransom the past’s mistake, the crimes [allegedly] committed by our parents.” But those crimes were “imagined by Zionist strategy, never committed by Romanians.” Coja then proceeded to issue a “warning” to the “international community” that Project Israel in Romania (as he called it) “places the Romanian People in a situation of legitimate self-defense and justifies any defensive and punishing reaction vis-à-vis the invaders and their accomplices”. In other words, Coja was threatening the Jewish community. Nothing is known to have happened after FJCR President Aurel Vainer complained to the Romanian Interior Ministry, pointing out that the “Romanians’ Appeal” amounts to incitement against Jews and to “an apology of nationalist, xenophobic ideas of sad memory that generated anti-Jewish persecutions between 1940-1944.”⁸⁷ Though Vainer also pointed out that Coja was infringing on the provisions of Ordinance 31/2002, no steps were taken by the Prosecutor General’s office, which was also notified. And there it rested—one more illustration of “simulated change”.

Consequently, Coja apparently felt encouraged by the authorities to “steer course”. On 24 November 2006 he addressed an “Open Letter” to President Traian Băsescu, which --just as the “Appeal to Romanians”--

was published in the PRM weekly *România mare*. Titled “No Holocaust Has Taken Place in Romania” the letter followed a speech by Bănescu at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, in which he—like his predecessor Ion Iliescu—assumed Romania’s responsibility for the Holocaust and deplored the crimes. Charging Bănescu with ignorance, Coja wrote: “We are being accused that our parents killed or indifferently permitted the death of hundreds of thousands of Jews, in a genocide that we, Romanians, as normal human beings, were incapable of even thinking about or imagine.” The photos that provoked Bănescu’s tears, Coja wrote, were all fakes. The Romanian authorities in general, and the Prosecutor General’s office in particular, should launch an investigation into the motives that prompt such “liars and cowards” to accuse “my father and yours” of committing “such terrible crimes”. Intertwined with by-now routine “selective Holocaust denial” stance, however came an unprecedented threat:

There has been no Holocaust in Romania. Rejoice in the news that we break onto you! Not even a passing-by of a Holocaust. Neither holocaust, nor genocide, nor pogrom! Neither in Antonescu’s, nor at other time! *We lost all opportunity. Who knows, maybe we shall make it, that holocaust, at other times, and we shall then make it as one should, with proper certification! With witnesses, with documents, with guaranteed victims, and what-have-you. With the entire mise-en-place! But surely with other partners, not with today’s Romanian Jews, who are but a bunch of denouncers and hopeless liars! They are scared that if the world learns how we [really] treated them, someone would make them fully pay for the benefits that they enjoyed.*⁸⁸

The Prosecutor General’s office was now notified again, this time also by the National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania and by the Center for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism in Romania (MCO). The Federation of Jewish Communities addressed another official complaint, as did separately its chairman, Aurel Vainer. In turn, Coja also launched a complaint against the FJCR, claiming to have received death-threats from an Israeli-based organization after the FJCR had allegedly falsified his open letter to Bănescu. Claiming that his life was now in danger, he also asked for the protection of the Romanian Intelligence Service. One more technique of anti-Semites all over the world was thus being applied: self-victimization by offenders.

On 10 August 2008, Coja jubilantly announced that the Prosecutor General’s office has concluded there was no justification for launching

procedures against him, for either having infringed on the “shameful and absurd” Ordinance 31/2002 or on the Penal Law stipulations prohibiting incitement to racial hatred. He added that he intended to pursue the case against the FJCR and its chairman and that, should his complaint be rejected, he intended to appeal to all higher courts, including the European Court for Human Rights. “We live in a world where it is not sufficient to be fed up or nauseated by those with a stinking odor or behavior,” he said in what seemed to be taken directly from Nazi and Legionary idiom. “It is not enough to put a handkerchief on one’s nose. One must grab the tramp by the hair and forcefully remove the source of the pestilential fragrance and the misers around us, no matter how many bureaucratic hindrances one might stumble on.” This was not *coded* language. It was as straight as it could possibly get. And it is not in the least exaggerated to conclude that it was a direct outcome of the repeated policy of “simulated change” displayed by the authorities, in which the judiciary time and time again seems to play an ominous part. Indeed, Coja expressed the hope that his counter-complaint against the FJCR and Vainer would have to be pursued in higher courts of justice, because, as he put it, Romanian justice was “on the right track.”⁸⁹ How right that track is one may entertain some doubt, but it is certainly Right. One is reminded of the prosecutor in Corneliu Zelea Codreanu’s 1925 acquittal of the assassination of Jassy Police Prefect Ion Manciuc on 25 October 1924. On that occasion, the prosecutor thanked the accused for his “patriotic action”.⁹⁰

Conclusions

Post-communist Romanian attitudes toward Jews are to a large extent a reflection of memory rather than one of history. The subjectivity of memory is by no means a singularly Romanian reality. It is consequently not surprising that Jewish memory tends to “select into” anti-Semitism aspects that non-Jewish memory would be either oblivious to, or “select out”. The author of this article does not claim to be an exception to this rule. Non-Jewish Romanian memory, on the other hand, tends to reflect an Andersonian “imagined community” seeking to mould a positive image of the past, one into which neither anti-Semitism, nor Romanian contributions to the Holocaust can easily fit in. What drives Romanian ways to handle the Holocaust and by-standing during those years is not necessarily anti-Judaism, though anti-Semitism might play a role among Holocaust deniers. Just as there is heterogeneity among anti-Semitic motivations, so one finds heterogeneous outlets of Holocaust denying. What is more, there is no homogeneity in the temporal orientations pursued by each category of post-communist “anti-Semites” either. Mingled with the “rotten apples” of nostalgic, self-propelling and vengeful anti-Semitism are the “bitter pears” of reactive anti-Semitism and the cynical hybrids of neo-populist mercantile and utilitarian anti-Semitism.

Mutation from one category into the other is common and even predictable. To ignore distinctions, however, is to encourage such mutations.

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Notes

¹ Alain Finkielkraut, *Le Juif imaginaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1980). Andrei Oișteanu, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română. Studiu despre imagologie în context Est-Central European* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2001).

² Michael Shafir, "Negation at the Top: Deconstructing the Holocaust Denial Salad in the Romanian Cucumber Season," *Xenopoliana*, 3-4 (2003): 90-122 and "Varieties of Antisemitism in Post-Communist East Central Europe," in *Jewish Studies at the Central European University III 2002-2003* ed. by András Kovács, Eszter Andor (Budapest: Central European University, 2003), 175-210.

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