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VARIETIES OF ANTISEMITISM IN POST-COMMUNIST EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

Motivations and Political Discourse

'Transitologists' have by and large accepted by now Claus Offe's pertinent analysis of the "triple transition" faced by post-communist polities.¹ What Offe calls the "dilemma of simultaneity"² generated by having to cope at one and the same time with unconsolidated borders, democratisation and property redistribution, takes place, as the same author shows, hand in hand with the occasional outburst of "national and ethnic politics and ethnic strife."³ What only few 'transitologists' have paid attention to, however, is the fact that such outbursts are, in turn, facing a "dilemma of simultaneity," though this is "merely" a double dilemma, not a triple one: is it possible to overcome the communist past without leaning on what preceded it, and is it possible to overcome the authoritarian past that antedated communism without idealising that past beyond recognition? In other words, the double *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* necessity is calling for a *positive* 'referential,' in the absence of which no nation-building process is conceivable at all. No polity can function without – to use Benedict Anderson's terminology – a positive "imagined community" to which reference can be made.⁴ For, as Romanian historian Lucian Boia (a remarkable champion of the endeavour to demystify history in his own country) put it, "The past means legitimation and justification. Without having a past, we can be certain of nothing."⁵

Attitudes towards antisemitism are part and parcel of the same equation. They will not directly determine the region's outlook. Thanks to Hitler, the physical presence of 'the Jew' has ceased to be a problem, and immigration to Israel has solved almost all remaining aspects that could be posed by the presence of what Andrei Oișteanu in Romania called the "real Jew."⁶ But these attitudes remain part of the *quo vadis* transitional equation, the more so as other national minorities are not likely to disappear from the region.

1 C. Offe, *Der Tunnel am Ende des Lichts: Erkundungen der politischen Transformation im Neuen Osten* (Frankfurt/New York, 1994).

2 Offe, *Der Tunnel am Ende des Lichts*, pp. 64–6.

3 Offe, *Der Tunnel am Ende des Lichts*, p. 135.

4 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1994).

5 L. Boia, *Jocul cu trecutul: Istoria între adevăr și ficțiune* [The Game with the Past. History Between Truth and Fiction] (Bucharest, 1998), p. 7.

6 A. Oișteanu, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română: Studiu despre imagologie în context Est-Central European* [The Image of the Jew in Romanian Culture. A Study on Imagology in East-Central European Context] (Bucharest, 2001).

If under the communist regime “antisemitism without Jews” was part and parcel of the non-optional pseudo-offer of monopolistic regimes,⁷ post-communist East Central Europe remains “without Jews” but is no longer “without offer.” Ideologies and politicians compete on a relatively free political market; there is no longer *one* history but *several*, and here, too, the offer is competitive. Last but not least, literati are also relatively free to “offer” their vision of past, present and future.

It is the identity of these competitors that explains, I believe, the resurgence of antisemitism in post-communist East Central Europe. Who are its ‘producers’ and what is the motivation that drives them? Are they all driven by the same simplistic blind ancestral hatred, and, if not, how is one to explain that political and cultural foes find themselves in the same boat?

In what follows I shall distinguish between several categories of ‘producers’ of antisemitism. The taxonomy, I should immediately emphasise, is of the ideal-type. While hopefully heuristic, it does not claim exhaustibility, neither does it claim that its categories may not overlap, depending on both immediate circumstances and ‘feedback.’ I distinguish between ‘self-exculpatory nostalgic antisemitism,’ ‘self-propelling antisemitism,’ ‘utilitarian antisemitism’ and ‘reactive antisemitism.’ Basically, each of these categories acts out of a different motivation and a different temporal orientation. Consequently, each has also its specific type of discourse. The taxonomy is thus attempting to provide an answer to both the “whys” (motivation) and the “hows” (discourse). What they all share, however, is precisely the attempt to respond to the need to produce an “imagined community” in, albeit significantly different, positive terms.

Before proceeding to present the taxonomy, an elucidation is in order. The claim is not advanced here that antisemitism has the same intensity among all categories and, what is more important, neither does my analysis proceed from the assumption that every single individual and all social categories in the region are by definition antisemitic. ‘Who is an antisemite?’ may be a question that is almost as difficult to answer as ‘Who is a Jew?’. As with the latter question, the answer may well depend on ‘who is the Rabbi?’ to whom the question has been addressed. An Orthodox rabbi, socialised into the values of stringent respect of Halacha precepts, would not hesitate to reply that a Jew is a person born of a Jewish mother and/or who converted to Judaism according to the Halachic requirements. A Conservative rabbi might be less severe on conversion, and a Reformed rabbi might ask what the Halacha is. But to an equal extent, a non-Jewish addressee of the question ‘Who is an antisemite?’ might provide a different answer, depending on his or her socialisation experience. Would a democrat linked with numerous ties of ‘affinity group kinship’ to previously untainted intellectuals choose to ‘call a spade a spade’ when a member of his own group has displayed antisemitic postures, or would he or she rather dismiss criticism

7 P. Lendvai, *Antisemitism without Jews: Communist Eastern Europe* (Garden City, 1971).

of that person as unwarranted and exaggerated ‘anti-antisemitism’⁸ And does not the latter option somehow remind one of Karl Lueger, Vienna’s antisemitic mayor, who used to boast: “I decide who is a Jew and who is not!”?

1. SELF-EXCULPATORY NOSTALGIC ANTISEMITISM: ORIENTATION PAST

Self-exculpatory nostalgic antisemitism is a category largely occupied by political parties and personalities that belong to what elsewhere I called movements of “radical return.”⁹ 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 addressing the own-nation participation in, and responsibility for, the atrocities committed against Jews in that period.

One must therefore note that the category owes as much to communist indoctrination as it owes to the attempts to ‘cleansing history’ by those who managed to avoid retribution. Indeed, the following description by István Deák of the post-war Hungarian situation in the treatment of the Holocaust, applies, in fact, across the East Central European board at that time:

Keen to show the uniqueness of communists as anti-fascist fighters and simultaneously to present class-struggle as the main if not the only factor determining historical progress, orthodox Stalinist communists acted as if the Holocaust had never happened. Clearly, an ideology that regards ethnic and religious problems as mere cover-ups for class conflict cannot deal adequately with a historical process that had as its goal the extermination of all members of a particular group, whether progressive or reactionary, whether exploiters or part of the exploited. Hence also the 1953 official Hungarian history textbook for high school students, which did not contain the word ‘Jew’ in its section on World War II. Hence also the general Stalinist practice to treat such Jewish victims of the

⁸ For an example of such a surprising posture defending antisemitism among his own peers by a democratic intellectual in Romania see S. Antohi, ‘Saul Bellow “Ravelstein”. Ficțiune, memorie și istorie. Note pentru publicul românesc (II)’, [Saul Bellow ‘Ravelstein’. Fiction, Memory and History. Notes for the Romanian Reader (II)] in 22, No. 35 (2000), pp. 10–13.

⁹ M. Shafir, ‘Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues: Radical Politics in Post-Communist East Central Europe’, *Studia politica*, 2 (2001), pp. 397–446.

Holocaust who happened to be communists or social democrats as “martyrs of the international working class movement” while relegating all other Jewish dead to the general category of “victims of fascism.”¹⁰

Hence also, one may add, the fact that, according to a Czechoslovak history textbook of the 1960s, the perpetrators at the camps had been “particularly cruel to communists, whom they set up as their key enemies,” although it is acknowledged that “they also treated Jews very brutally.”¹¹ For Romanian communist historiography under Nicolae Ceaușescu, even “pogroms”, such as the one perpetrated in Iași in late June 1940, had been organised “against anti-fascist forces.”¹² This is what Shari J. Cohen called “organized forgetting.”¹³ Its roots, however, are to be sought in the communist ideological impossibility of providing a “theory of fascism” that would cope with the phenomenon without challenging doctrinary precepts.

Up to the late 1960s and early 1970s, the universally-accepted and universally-imposed definition of “fascism” in communist East Central Europe was that provided by Georgi Dimitrov in his 1935 Comintern report. According to this definition “fascist” regimes were little else than “the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital.”¹⁴ That was “explaining fascism away,” by carefully avoiding the over-arching support that Italian fascism, Nazism and other radical authoritarian forms of government had enjoyed among all social classes.¹⁵ But its advantage, from the ‘Marxist’ perspective, rested in enabling the ruling parties to present themselves as having been the “vanguard” of popular democratic attitudes in a population allegedly opposed overwhelmingly to those regimes. The revolutionary character of generic fascism could thus be fully buried in ideological jargon, for after Lenin the “revolution” was no less monopolised than was the actual communist hold on power. “Fascism” could not be anything else than “counter-revolutionary.”

And that definition left its mark not only on communist historians. Milan S. Ďurica, a Slovak scholar teaching history at a theological faculty, for example, in 1992 defended the record of the Nazi-allied Jozef Tiso regime, emphasising that labelling it “fascist” would be wrong. There never was sufficient autochthonous Slovak capital in the ‘Parish Republic,’ it being largely

10 I. Deák, ‘Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary’, in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. R. L. Braham (New York, 1994), p. 118.

11 Sh. J. Cohen, *Politics without a Past: The Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism* (Durham and London, 1999), p. 105.

12 V. Eskenasy, ‘The Holocaust and Romanian Historiography: Communist and Neo-Communist Revisionism’, in *Antisemitism and the Treatment...*, ed. Braham, p. 184.

13 Cohen, *Politics without a Past*, pp. 85–118.

14 G. Dimitroff, *The United Front Against War and Fascism. Report to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International 1935* (New York, 1974), p. 7.

15 See A. J. Gregor, *Interpretations of Fascism* (New Brunswick, 1997), pp. 128–78.

concentrated in Hungarian–Jewish–German hands, he wrote; and “fascism,” according to Āurica is “the reign of terror by financial capital, the most reactionary imperialistic movement of chauvinist high bourgeoisie allied with nationalism.”¹⁶

In the late 1960s and after, historiographical treatment of the interwar and the wartime period in East Central Europe began to diverge. On the one hand, “national communism,” whose aberration was communist Romania, not only continued to ignore the plight of Jews (except in neighbouring Hungary, which it lost no occasion to emphasise) but exonerated interwar Romania of any guilt, launching also a creeping rehabilitation of its wartime leader, Marshal Ion Antonescu.¹⁷ “National communism” had also impacted other countries, albeit for shorter periods and in less stringent forms, and its imprint on the treatment of the Holocaust was unmistakable. It is sufficient to mention Poland and its so called “Endo-Communism,” associated with the name of General Mieczysław Moczar. Endo-Communism combined, as Michael C. Steinlauf put it, “the assimilation of ideas with direct linkage to the prewar *Endecja*” with “proletarian rhetoric,” thus producing “a peculiar marriage of authoritarian Communism and chauvinist nationalist tendencies,” among which antisemitism figured prominently.¹⁸ But Steinlauf is somewhat mistaken – the marriage was hardly “peculiar.” Under Ceaușescu, Romania would by far overtake Poland, with the world outlook of the interwar Fascist Iron Guard encoded in all but official acknowledgement in party documents, and reflected in party-supervised historiography. With the exception of Czechoslovakia (or rather its Czech part), no country in East Central Europe remained unaffected by ‘the plague,’ of “national communism.” As Aurel Braun would eventually put it, “national communism, though it may seem to be a political oxymoron, became increasingly the norm by the 1970s and certainly by the 1980s as the Marxist-Leninist regimes sought to hold on to power in face of collapsing political legitimacy.”¹⁹

To the extent that perceptions of what “fascism” was all about nonetheless underwent a change in the area, this was due to mutations in civil society. The same applies to changes registered in perceptions of the fate of the Jews. Sometimes, as during the Czechoslovak “Prague Spring,” these per-

16 Cited in P. Meštan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics (1989–1999)* (Bratislava, 2000), pp. 93–94.

17 See Eskenasy, ‘The Holocaust and Romanian Historiography’, in *Antisemitism and the Treatment...*, ed. Braham, pp. 192–3 and V. Eskenasy, ‘Historiographers Against the Antonescu Myth’, in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews During the Antonescu Era*, ed. R. L. Braham (New York, 1997), pp. 275–82; M. Shafir, ‘Marshal Ion Antonescu’s Post-Communist Rehabilitation: Cui Bono?’, in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews...*, ed. Braham, pp. 382–3.

18 M. C. Steinlauf, ‘Poland’, in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. D. S. Wyman, Project Director Ch. H. Rosenzweig (Baltimore and London, 1996), p. 115.

19 A. Braun, ‘Hungary From “Gulash Communism” to Pluralistic Democracy’, in *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk*, ed. A. Braun and S. Scheinberg (Boulder, 1997), p. 141.

ceptions were crushed by Soviet tanks and the ensuing “normalisation,” only to re-emerge on the eve of regime change.²⁰ When force against civil society proved insufficient, the impact of the shift in perceptions was wider, and would eventually be reflected in the respective polity’s enlarged readiness to face the burden of its own past. This is obviously the Polish case and the impact on Polish–Jewish relations of the Komitet Obrony Robotników (KOR) and later of Solidarność.²¹ Indeed, nowhere in the area was there after 1989 a greater readiness on the part of scholars and intellectuals to face delicate issues linked to the Holocaust greater than in Poland. Which does not, however, imply, that the country would not have its own share of self-exculpatory nostalgic antisemites, of utilitarian antisemites and of reactive antisemites. Finally, the shift was occasionally a ‘fall-out’ of what can be labelled as ‘the transition to Transition.’ According to Deák, “in Hungary, much earlier than in any other communist country, efforts were made to face up to the dilemma of antisemitism and Hungarian participation in the Final Solution.” But Hungary, I wish to add, also pioneered economic and political reform, which explains at least in part why during this period of the ‘transition to the Transition,’ the “Hungarian textbooks, although full of omissions, went into great details on Europe’s collective guilt about the Holocaust.”²² Still, popular awareness of the Holocaust remained low, the appearance of a relatively large number of documentary and historical publications on it notwithstanding.²³ It is, however, not irrelevant that the Communist Party extended even during this period its protection to the nationalist-inclined members of the Hungarian intelligentsia (the so-called “populists”), rather than to the “urbanists,” most of whom continued to publish their works in *samizdat* and most of whom happened to be also Jewish. This would eventually have a significant impact on post-communist attitudes towards antisemitism. Anyhow, without diminishing their importance, these shifts in perception remained confined to a small, mainly intellectual elitist group, and their impact on society at large was marginal at best in Czechoslovakia, Poland or Hungary.

This explains why self-exculpatory nostalgic antisemitism could emerge everywhere in the region. What I am basically claiming is that self-exculpatory nostalgic antisemitism is based on *two* legacies: that of survivors of the interwar far right attempting to defend their own record, but also that of communism itself. The latter aspect has been by and large ignored when

20 For example, the 1965 movie *Shop on the Main Street*, was banned after 1968, and a book on the fate of Slovak Jewry by Ivan Kameneč, although finished in 1971, was published only in 1989. The book did, however, circulate in *samizdat*. See Cohen, *Politics without a Past*, pp. 106, 109.

21 See Steinlauf, ‘Poland’, in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. Wyman, pp. 126–45

22 Deák, ‘Antisemitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust’, in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment...*, ed. Braham, p. 118.

23 See R. L. Braham, ‘Assault on Historical Memory: Hungarian Nationalists and the Holocaust’ (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Symposium Proceedings 2001).

dealing with the phenomenon of far-right resurrection. It has, if at all, been linked only with the category of self-propelling antisemitism, which shall be discussed below. But it is clearly wrong to perceive post-communist East Central Europe in terms of a “return to history,” as Shlomo Avineri does,²⁴ for history has never departed from the region during the communist period. Since communist historiography has carefully avoided tackling the issue of own-nation involvement in antisemitism 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.”²⁵ 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.

Exemplification 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 antisemitism 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 anti-communists around, but herein may lay precisely the reason for these formations’ failure to mobilise 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, one can mention in Hungary the 1994-established Hungarianist Movement, which claims descent from

24 Sh. Avineri, ‘The Return to History and its Consequences for the Jewish Communities in Eastern Europe’, in *The Dangers of Anti-Semitism in the Wake of 1989-1990* (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 95-103.

25 M. Waller, ‘Adaptation of the Former Communist Parties of East Central Europe: A Case of Social Democratization?’, *Party Politics*, 4 (1995), pp. 473-90.

Szálasi's Hungarian National Socialist Party-Hungarianist Movement, as the official name of the Arrow Cross had been. The movement was established through the merger of three like-minded fringe organisations: Albert Szabó's Hungarian People's Welfare Alliance (MNSZ), István Györkös's Hungarian National Front and Kemal Ekrem's Alliance of the Victims of Communism. Szabó returned to Hungary from Australia in 1993, setting up a party called World National People's Party, which was eventually banned by the authorities, whereupon he established the MNSZ.²⁶ To the same trend in Hungary belonged the far-right publications *Szent Korona* (a weekly) and in the monthly *Hunnia Füzetek*. The former ceased publication in 1992, and its editor in chief, László Romhányi, was convicted in 1993 for various crimes, as were several members of the weekly's staff.²⁷

In Romania, the most clear exponents of exculpatory nostalgic anti-semitism are the (now defunct) Movement for Romania (MPR) led by Marian Munteanu, which was set up in 1992 (publishing the monthly *Mișcare*), 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 – have all had their successors, the most recent of which is an organisation calling itself the New Right Group.²⁸ Publications such as the Bucharest-based Iron Guardist *Permanențe* or the Sibiu-based *Puncte cardinale*, as well as some publications on the Internet (one of them carrying the title of the viciously antisemitic interwar *Sfarmă piatră*), continue to appear, but their distribution is probably quite minuscule. In Slovakia, associations such as the Friends of President Tiso in Slovakia and Abroad indulge in precisely the same endeavour.²⁹

Finally, even in the case of Poland or the Czech Republic (which, unlike the Hitler-allies were themselves victims of aggression and decimation), anti-semitism has not been unknown on the political fringe. In these countries, the communist failure to deal with the Holocaust poses a somewhat different problem, namely that of 'competitive martyrdom' – that of one's own nation vs. that of the Jews. In the Polish case, moreover, politicians,

26 See R. E. Gruber, 'East-Central Europe', *American Jewish Yearbook: A Record of Events and Trends in American and World Jewish Life* (New York, 1999), p. 20; Th. S. Szayna, 'The Extreme Right Political Movement in Post-Communist Central Europe', in *The Revival of Right Wing Extremism in the Nineties*, ed. P. H. Merkl and L. Weinberg (London, 1997), p. 139.

27 See A. Kovács, 'Antisemitic Discourse in Post-Communist Hungary', in *Jews and Antisemitism in the Public Discourse of the Post-Communist European Countries*, ed. L. Volovici (Lincoln, NE and Jerusalem, 2002 [forthcoming]). Cited with author's permission.

28 See M. Shafir, 'The Inheritors: The Romanian Radical Right Since 1989', in *East European Jewish Affairs*, 1 (1994), p. 71–90; Shafir, 'Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues', *Studia politica*; M. Shafir, 'The Romanian Radical Return and "Mainstream Politics"' (A), in *RFE/RL East European Perspectives*, 6 (2001), <http://www.rferl.org/eereport/>. See also W. Totok, *Der revisionistische Diskurs* (Konstanz, 2000), pp. 91–138; A. Voinea, 'Sanduhr aus Stein. Jüdische Zwangsarbeiter in Rumänien 1940–1944', in W. Totok: *Der revisionistische Diskurs*.

29 For details see Mešťan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics*.

intellectuals, and, indeed, the Catholic Church must cope with a legacy of non-institutionalised, large-scale popular antisemitism, as well as with that of the partly-institutionalised antisemitism of formations such as the *Endecja*.

To the category of self-exculpatory antisemitism in Poland belong formations such as the 1990-established Polish National Commonwealth-Polish National Party (PWN-PSN) or the National Revival of Poland (NOP). The NOP, led by Adam Gmurczyk, claims to be the reincarnation of the pre-war violently antisemitic youth organisation National Radical Camp, which was outlawed in 1934. The same trend in the Czech Republic is represented (among several other formations) by Vladimír Skoupý, leader of the radical right National Alliance, a majority of whose members are skinheads.

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.

Examples abound and are here brought at random. Take, for instance, the tract published in 1991 in *Hunnia Füzetek* and authored by Australian-exiled Arrow Cross sympathiser Viktor Padányi, written in the best 'scientific' tradition of Holocaust denial. The article – including the main theses of a book Padányi had published in Australia – stated that out of the one and a half million Jews acknowledged to have lost their lives in World War II, 1.2 million had been killed by the Soviets and “just” 300,000 by the Nazis. The latter had anyhow acted only in self-defence, because the Jews had “been working” for the “enemy” both inside Germany and outside its borders. For Padányi, the guilt for the Holocaust rests on the Jews, who had forced not only Hitler, but also all his allies, into self-defensive postures. The showdown in World War II had been one between opposing moralities, philosophies, frames of national mind. On one hand, there were the ultra-individualist Jews – a small minority of rich people with a disproportionate share of wealth – which Padányi estimates in the case of Germany and Hungary to have ranged at between 40 and 80 percent of national income. On the other hand, there stood a collectivist philosophy and morality, a frame of mind putting community and collectiveness at the head of values. Antisemitism in general, according to Padányi, is thus a sort of “racial egoism,” the defence of “country folk” against the international rootless individualism of Jews. When, after 1939, Jews were asked to make collective sacrifices proportionate to their wealth, rather than to their ratio in the population, they refused to do so and had to be forced into it by collectivism-ruled polities, be they Nazi (like Germany was) or merely “civilian” (like Hungary). The Jews labelled this “racial persecution” and incited the whole world to war against it. It was normal that the Jews, who had nothing to gain and everything to lose from a German victory, would work for the enemy:

The plain truth is that there was a real war between some states and their Jewish populations, who were intervening on the side of the enemy. And if the Jews were entitled to spy, pass on news, commit acts of sabotage, destroy supplies, endanger the currency, spread defeatist propaganda, plan armed assaults, and pray for the victory of the enemy (i.e. the destruction of the country), then the state surely had a right to take measures seeing that this does not happen.³⁰

Atrocities committed against the Jews are at other times simply denied in the name of their being allegedly “out of line” with “national character.” Thus, Szabó denies that the notorious *Nyilas*, as the Arrow Cross bands were also called, had carried out the well-known murdering of Jews on the banks of the River Danube in Budapest in 1944, ‘explaining’ that “a [genuine] Hungarian would not have left the shoes there.”³¹

Similarly, according to Romanian MPR leader Munteanu, Marshal Ion Antonescu’s regime had been one of “military authoritarianism, and by no means a fascist regime.” Yes, Romania had been compelled to go through a period of an “assassin dictatorship,” but that had been King Carol II’s royal dictatorship that had physically liquidated Iron Guard leader Codreanu, not Antonescu’s rule. And the “only victims” of that dictatorship “were the Romanians, and by no means members of the Jewish community.”³² Like Padányi in Hungary, in Romania Ion Coja, who after migrating from one political formation to another ended by joining the neo-Iron Guardists, was ‘revealing’ to an unidentified interviewer, in a book published in 1999, that Hitler and communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu had equally “sinned” before what he called “the Grand Manipulator”. The former had cut the Reichsmark from its bondage to gold, the latter had paid off Romania’s foreign debt. In reaction, world Jewry had declared its boycott of German goods and had Ceaușescu executed. Just as “the money-changers had sentenced Jesus to death!,” responded Coja’s anonymous dialogue partner, adding a spice of deicide to the recipe.³³

Conspiracy theories³⁴ having Jews or ‘Judaised’ political adversaries at centre are, of course, ‘telescoped’ to the present. When necessary, not even the Pope is spared in Poland. Thus PWN-PSN leader Tejkowski went as far as asserting that Jewish children were hidden in monasteries during World War II by the international Jewish conspiracy, in order for them to be baptised and take over the Church from within. This, he said, was how Karol Wojtyła became a Catholic priest. Even among the ‘lunatic fringe’ Tejkowski was fringe, although precisely the same argument was produced in

30 Cited in Kovács, ‘Antisemitic Discourse’, in *Jews and Antisemitism*, ed. Volovici.

31 Cited in Kovács, ‘Antisemitic Discourse’, in *Jews and Antisemitism*, ed. Volovici.

32 *Mișcarea*, 10 (1994).

33 I. Coja, *Marele manipulator și asasinarea lui Culianu, Ceaușescu, Iorga* [The Great Manipulator and the Assassination of Culianu, Ceaușescu, Iorga] (Bucharest, 1999), p. 289.

34 On the centrality of conspiracy theories in contemporary Romania see G. Voicu, *Zeii cei răi. Cultura conspirației în România postcomunistă* [The Evil Gods. Conspiracy Culture in Post-Communist Romania] (Iași, 2000).

Romania by Radu Theodoru (see below), who ‘revealed’ that Wojtyła’s name was, in fact, “Katz.”³⁵ Close to them is also László Grespik, an unsuccessful candidate of the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP) in the 2002 elections, who calls members of the Catholic Church, including the Pope himself, “Jewish Christians.” Papacy, according to Grespik, is based on the “Jewish manner of interpreting religion” and Judaism is the religion of cruelty and vengeance based on the Talmudic precept of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” It consequently follows, according to the same author, that Jesus could not possibly have been Jewish; rather, according to the Hungarian MIÉP politician, he was a Magyar-Scythian-Parthian-Hunnish prince.³⁶ Having been several times forced to undergo psychiatric examinations (from which he emerged sane!), in 1995 Tejkowski was given a two-year suspended sentence for insulting “the Polish authorities, the Jewish people, the Pope and the Episcopate.”³⁷ For Tejkowski, every single Polish premier, cabinet minister, scientist and artist were Jewish and serving Jewish interests.

Nearly all these groups in East Central Europe entertain links with Western like-minded trends and formations. Thus, the Polish NOP is a member of the neo-Nazi International Third Position (ITP) and its publication, *Szczerbiec*, lists such notorious Holocaust deniers as Derek Holland and Roberto Fiore among the members of its editorial board. *Szczerbiec* printed several ‘classics’ among outright deniers in the West. The NOP, following the so-called Western ‘revisionist’ tactics, also established a National-Radical Institute, which in 1997 published a volume under the title *The Myth of the Holocaust*, consisting of translations from the most infamous Western Holocaust deniers. One of the regular contributors to *Szczerbiec*, Maciej Przebindowski, in 1997 went as far as to emulate his Western inspirers by claiming that “a group of researchers from the National-Radical Institute” had conducted field work at Auschwitz-Birkenau, concluding that the extermination in gas chambers was an impossibility.³⁸ Similarly, the

35 See Voicu, *Zeii cei răi. Cultura conspirației în România postcomunistă*, pp. 82, 157.

36 Cited in *Anti-Semitic Discourse in Hungary in 2000*, ed. A. Gerő, L. Varga, M. Vince (Budapest, 2001), p. 149.

37 Outlandish as this may sound, it was not, however, unique. In Hungary, *Hunnia Füzetek* and *Szent Korona*, “unmasked” Cardinal Páskai as being allegedly Jewish, see I. T. Berend, ‘Jobbra át [Right Face]. Right-Wing Trends in Post-Communist Hungary’, in *Democracy and Right Wing Politics in Eastern Europe in the 1990s*, ed. J. Held (Boulder, 1993), p. 131. On Tejkowski see Szayna, ‘The Extreme Right’, in *The Revival of Right Wing Extremism*, ed. Merkl and Weinberg, p. 121, as well as A. J. Prazmowska, ‘The New Right in Poland: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism and Parliamentarism’ in *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, ed. L. Cheles, R. Ferguson and M. Vaughan (London, 1995), pp. 209–10; W. Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (London, 1997), p. 141; D. Ost, ‘The Radical Right in Poland: Rationality of the Irrational’, in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, ed. S. P. Ramet (University Park, PA, 1999), p. 96.

38 See R. Pankowski, ‘From the Lunatic Fringe to Academia: Holocaust Denial in Poland’, in *Holocaust Denial: The David Irving Trial and International Revisionism*, ed. K. Taylor (London, 2000), pp. 76, 79–80.

Timișoara-based group of neo-Iron Guardists headed by Ovidiu Guleș, the editor in chief of the now defunct monthly *Gazeta de vest*, was also linked to the ITP. In March 1999, *Gazeta de vest* printed the ITP's *Declaration of Principles*. The ITP's main publication, *Final Conflict*, had a Romanian-language edition printed by the same publishing house that used to print *Gazeta de vest*. In turn, the ITP's British branch (presumably the National Front), according to a dispatch printed in December 1997, has decided to emulate the organisational structure (based on the "nests") of the Iron Guard. The Guard and the figure of "Captain" Codreanu have been adopted as 'models' by the neo-fascist Portuguese National Revolutionary Front as well; and Guleș's group was also linked to British League of St. George, the umbrella-organisation of the British ultraright. The Timișoara-group commemorated the Iron Guardist "martyrs" Vasile Moța and Ion Marin (killed in Spain during the civil war while fighting on Franco's side) at Majadahonda, where a monument has been erected by Iron Guardists in their memory, jointly with British radical right representatives, and, in turn, in early 1999, sent a delegation to the congress of the Nationaldemokratische Partei, to which it conveyed "a *Kameraden* salute."³⁹

In the Czech Republic, proceedings were launched by police in 2000 against Skoupý. At a public meeting in October 1999, Skoupý had denied the existence of the Holocaust. As everywhere else in East Central Europe, in the Czech Republic there is no specific (Fabius-Gayssot type) legislation prohibiting Holocaust denial. But again, as everywhere else in the area,⁴⁰ there are articles in the Penal Code that can be used for the purpose of prosecution, provided the authorities are willing to do so (which is not always the case), and provided the courts are willing to interpret those legal provisions as applying to Holocaust denial (which is even rarer). Offenders can be prosecuted on grounds of "incitement to hatred against a community," "defamation of a people or a race" or "propagating a movement aimed at suppressing the rights and freedoms of other citizens." In the Czech Republic, both advocacy of fascism and of communism are grounds for indictment. But in 1999, a Prague district prosecutor ruled against Skoupý's prosecution.⁴¹ Skoupý was, however, arrested in February 2001, after ignoring the prohibition of a demonstration held in Prague, at which his supporters carried Nazi symbols, and soon thereafter the Interior Ministry rejected the application of the National Alliance to be registered as a political party under the name

39 See *Gazeta de vest*, 36 (1997), p. 54 and R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 166. I owe the information on the "exchange of delegates" to William Totok.

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

41 ČTK, 2 November 1999, 5 January 2000 and *RFE/RL Newsline*, 6 January 2000.

National Socialist Alliance.⁴² In June Skoupý, who was kept in detention for several months, was indicted for incitement to racial hatred, propagation of a movement aimed at suppressing citizens' rights and the defamation of a people. Among the prosecution's evidence figured an article he had authored in the skinhead weekly *Vlajka* under the title 'Such a Happy Journey,' where he offered the Jews free transportation to extermination camps on livestock wagons with straw. The court convicted him on 7 June to one year in prison and a four-year probation sentence, but he was released on 22 June, his earlier detention being considered as sentence-serving. Skoupý made it clear that he did not intend to refrain from participating in demonstrations, though he would not speak there.⁴³

Criminal proceedings were also initiated in Hungary against Szabó and Györkös. Szabó claims that the Holocaust is a hoax and that Europe's Jews have all emigrated to America. In turn, Györkös has had contacts with U.S. Nazi and Austrian neo-Nazi leaders and, in his publications, denied the Holocaust had ever been perpetrated.⁴⁴ Together with Györkös, in March 1996 Szabó was acquitted by a tribunal of violating a law banning incitement to racial hatred and use of prohibited Nazi symbols, on grounds of the freedom of speech constitutional provision.⁴⁵ But following a speech delivered at an October 1996 rally in which he called for the removal of Jews to Israel, in February 1998 he was given a one-year suspended sentence, with three years probation. According to reports in the Hungarian media, this is what determined Szabó to move again abroad in November 1999. But his deputy, Csaba Kunstár, denied the reports, telling a Hungarian state radio interviewer that Szabó had just temporarily moved abroad for several months, to enlist financial support for the party and establish closer links with like-minded Western formations, such as the U.S. New Order. The intention, according to Kunstár, is quite the opposite from renouncing political activity in Hungary: taking advantage of the country's lenient legislation, Szabó is to work for transforming Budapest into an international centre of radical right activism.⁴⁶

The self-defensive argument of nostalgic antisemites who 'explain' anti-Jewish atrocities as a reaction to the Jews' having allegedly attempted to import communism into their countries is yet another facet of "conspiracy theories." Like any conspiracy theory, the argument builds on some undeniable facts, but, again as any conspiracy theory would do, those facts are blown out of any proportion, even a simple numerical one. Simply stated, it is a *fact* that a minority of Jews had been attracted to Marxism, and that at the outset of the communist regimes there were many Jews among their

42 ČTK, 26 February and 19 April 2000.

43 ČTK, 21 and 22 June 2001.

44 See Kovács, 'Antisemitic Discourse', in *Jews and Antisemitism*, ed. Volovici.

45 *OMRI Daily Digest*, 5 and 11 March 1996.

46 See *RFE/RL Newswire*, 5 February 1998; MTI, *Népszabadság* and Hungarian Radio, 24 November 1999 in *BBC World Summary of Broadcasts - Eastern Europe*.

leaderships. It is *legend* that the *Žydokomuna* or whatever other local denomination has been or is being used to label “Judeo-Communism,” had created the ideology, installed it in power and, above all that were it not for the Jews, this dark episode of history would have been spared from these countries. It is *fact* that many Jews had welcomed the Soviet army, which they regarded as a liberator. It is *legend* that, were it not for Jewish collaboration with Moscow, those regimes would have collapsed in no time. Yet take (for a rather benign version of the nostalgic discourse) the argument used by exiled pro-Tiso émigré František Vnuk, according to whom the deportations of Slovak Jews in 1942 are to be put on par with “what the Jews did in Slovakia with the Slovaks before 1939 and after 1945.” “Both Slovaks and Jews have transgressed against one another,” though Vnuk makes it clear that the Slovaks had only reacted to what was done to them earlier. Vnuk, who is often present in nostalgic antisemitic publications in his country, deplors that “so far not one Jew has been found who is ready to ask Slovaks for forgiveness for all the humiliation, suffering and misery caused the Slovaks by the Jews.” After what Jewish communist leader Rudolf Slánský (executed by the communists in 1952 as a Zionist and imperialist agent) has done to Slovaks, according to the memoirs published in Slovakia of yet another exiled Tiso partisan, Professor Václav Černý, “the Jews here ran a lasting debt [...] it is not they who are our moral creditors, but we theirs: let them not forget that.”⁴⁷ Similar exemplifications could be brought from every single country in the area, all attesting to self-defensive postures, all aimed at forging a spotless past of the respective “imagined community.” What is more, this discourse is not confined to the self-exculpatory nostalgic category, and the reasons for its considerable popularity is yet to be discussed below. Suffice it at this point to cite Leon Volovici, an Israeli historian of Romanian origins, who emphasised that

the real target of the Jew = Bolshevik propaganda was not the number of Jews in the communist elites, but the alleged Jewish collective culpability for the misdoing and disasters of the communist regimes. Marxism was and is presented as a ‘Jewish’ ideology, emanating from Judaism, as a tool to rule the world and enslave other nations. This propaganda points to an absolute and imaginary ‘Jewish guilt’ in order to balance it with the real culpability and real responsibility for crimes committed against the Jewish population.⁴⁸

2. SELF-PROPELLING ANTISEMITISM: ORIENTATION FUTURE

Self-propelling antisemitism shares with self-exculpatory nostalgic antisemitism 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 sit-

⁴⁷ Both cited in Mešťan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics*, pp. 100, 126.

⁴⁸ L. Volovici, ‘Antisemitism in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: A Marginal or Central Issue?’, *ACTA*, 5 (1994), pp. 16–17.

uation one deals with a legacy by commission. Parties that make up this category are the parties of “radical continuity.”⁴⁹ There are either personal or ideological links (or both) between these parties and the communist past. These formations exacerbate the implicit antisemitism inherited from the former regime and transform it into an explicit one. The transformation is not accidental but intentional. Antisemitism, for the members of this category, is instrumental, serving mobilisational purposes. The purpose no longer is (as in the case of the nostalgics) only to merely cleanse the past, but to prepare the future. As Grespik aptly put it “the past is necessary for the future, because a glorious past can be a creative mobilizing force if society is properly instructed in it.”⁵⁰ The instrumentality of antisemitism 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 antisemites, self-propelling antisemites indulge in the ‘Judaisation’ 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 antisemites, but its importance derives from its instrumentality. In other words, self-propelling antisemitism needs the ‘generic Jew’ and, unlike self-exculpatory antisemitism, cares, in fact, little about the ‘really existing Jew.’ As a Jewish activist in the Krasnodar *krai* (whose politics are dominated by the notorious antisemite governor Nikolai Kondartenko) put it, “being Jewish is [no longer] a question of your nationality, but of your social function.”⁵¹ For self-propelling antisemites the ‘genetic Jew’ must become a ‘generic Jew,’ for in a situation where the physical Jewish presence is either extremely reduced or concentrated (as in Hungary’s Budapest) in only one large city, the mobilisational force of antisemitism would otherwise suffer. It is in this sense that Zygmunt Bauman observes that in post-communist Poland the term ‘Jew’ has started being applied to anything disagreeable and has lost its real-reference to the Jews as a separate ethno-religious group.⁵² Yet it must be added that the generic sense has not, however, eliminated the genetic one, which continues to be instrumentalised regardless of its numerical and above all sociological insignificance. In 2001 Hungary, MIÉP Deputy Chairman Lóránt Hegedüs can still argue that the Christian Hungarian state would have been capable of deflecting the devastation of

49 Shafir, ‘Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues’, *Studia politica*.

50 Cited in *Anti-Semitic Discourse in Hungary in 2000*, ed. Gerő, Varga and Vince, pp. 149–50.

51 Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, ‘Antisemitism, Xenophobia and Religious Persecution in Russia’s Regions 1998–1999’ (Washington, DC, 1999), p. 2.

52 Cited in I. Prizel, ‘Jedwabne: Will the Right Questions Be Asked?’, *East European Politics and Societies*, 1, 2002 (Winter), p. 289.

the country by the Tatars and the Turks, as well as by the Habsburg rule, if “a hoard of vagabonds from Galicia had not entered the country as a result of the 1867 compromise,” and can still call on fellow Hungarians to “exclude them, lest they do so with you.”⁵³

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 in Romania, Monsignor Jozef Tiso in Slovakia and László Bárdossy in Hungary are, for the Greater Romania Party (PRM), the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the MIÉP, no less instrumental than the generic Jew is instrumental for the same purpose – power. It naturally follows that such figures are being contrasted, on one hand, with current ‘Judaised’ leaderships and, on the other hand, that their record during the Holocaust is denied and presented as an invention of the “occult” aimed at enslaving the locals through the cultivation of unwarranted guilt feelings and taking over local assets by way of no less unjustified compensation demands.

The antisemitic Romanian journal *Europa* (whose editor-in-chief, Ilie Neacșu, eventually became a PRM deputy chairman before leaving the party in 2002), in 1991 turned Elena Ceaușescu into a Jewess, just as similarly-minded self-propelling antisemites in Russia would turn Mikhail Gorbachev into Moisei Solomonovich and Boris Yeltsyn would be ‘unmasked’ to have carried the name Baruch Elkin at birth and to be an agent of the Mossad and world Zionism, or just as Moscow mayor Yurii Luzhkov’s “real name” is supposed to be Katz.⁵⁴ That in all these cases, the ‘producers’ were themselves people with strong ties to the undistanced communist past is more than relevant, against the background of the anti-semitic legacy of “national communism.” But that in at least one of these cases one dealt with a ‘producer’ associated with the half-Jewish Vladimir Zhirinovskiy is a matter worth the investigation of the psychiatrist rather than of the social scientist. Nicolae Ceaușescu himself had been nefariously influenced by Elena, whose father’s real name was alleged to have been Kohn, according to the PRM weekly *România mare* in March 1992. And this – the weekly concluded, was proof that it was “the Jews who brought Ceaușescu to power and the Jews who liquidated him.”⁵⁵ Even in the Czech Republic, where antisemitism plays a relatively minor role in the positions

⁵³ See *RFE/RL Newswire*, 7 September 2001.

⁵⁴ M. Shafir, ‘Anti-Semitism without Jews in Romania’, *Report on Eastern Europe*, 26, 1991, pp. 20–32; V. Solovyov and E. Klepikova, *Zhirinovskiy: Russian Fascism and the Making of a Dictator* (Reading, MA, 1995), p. 25; Institute for Jewish Policy Research and American Jewish Committee, *Antisemitism World Report* (London, 1997), p. 233; Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, ‘Antisemitism, Xenophobia and Religious Persecution’, p. 106.

⁵⁵ See M. Shafir, ‘The Post-Communist Era’, in *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*, ed. R. L. Braham (New York, 1994), p. 348.

of the Assembly for the Republic-Czechoslovak Republican Party (SRP-RSČ) headed by Miroslav Sládek, in December 1999 an exhibition organised by that formation in Dečín displayed the photos of some 100 prominent Czech politicians, many of whom (among them Václav Havel and Václav Klaus), were described as Jews.⁵⁶ Earlier, the same endeavour had been frequently pursued by the (now defunct) weekly *Týdeník Politika*, against which in 1992 charges were brought for having printed a list of 168 alleged prominent Jews in contemporary Czech culture, whom it called “Slavs from the Jordan river” who had made Prague into “their secondary world center.”⁵⁷

The Jews are, occasionally, replaced by other minorities. When, in 1995, PRM leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor decided to run against Iliescu for president, he turned his former political ally into a Rom. But it was a Rom with strong Jewish connections. It was on behalf of the Jews that Iliescu had acted when he ordered Ceaușescu’s shooting in December 1989. Only an atheist like Iliescu could have ordered the execution to be carried out “on the holy Day of Christmas, when Romanians do not even slaughter their pig.” And, of course, Iliescu was a communist, so Tudor (who, in fact, had been a Ceaușescu court poet!) addressed him with “Comrade Iliescu!”. Tudor told the “comrade”: “The Jews brought you to power, you stay with the Jews, you have not the slightest idea about the passions of Jesus Christ” and ended predicting “Vadim will be unto you what you were unto Ceaușescu.”⁵⁸

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 ultraright and ultraleft vision. But it cannot be merely accidental that leaders of formations which 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.⁵⁹ The pattern, however, is evident elsewhere too. István Csurka, leader of the Hungarian MIÉP, admits that he has been coerced into signing a statement agreeing to act as an informer of the secret services, but claims his reports have never harmed anyone.⁶⁰ A shadowy past including ties with the communist secret police and to the Grünwald Association of nationalist party members had

⁵⁶ RFE/RL Newline, 30 December 1999.

⁵⁷ F. Hahn, ‘Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Czechoslovakia (The Czech Republic)’, in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment...*, ed. Braham, p. 73.

⁵⁸ See M. Shafir, ‘Anatomy of a Pre-Election Political Divorce’, *Transition*, 2, 1996, p. 47.

⁵⁹ Shafir, ‘Marshal Ion Antonescu’s Post-Communist Rehabilitation’, in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews*, ed. Braham, pp. 372–82.

⁶⁰ E. Oltay, ‘Hungary’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 16 (1994), p. 59; L. Karsai, ‘The Radical Right in Hungary’, in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Ramet, p. 145; R. L. Braham, ‘Angriff auf das Geschichtsbewusstsein: Die ungarischen Nationalisten und der Holocaust’, *Europäische Rundschau*, 3 (1999), p. 29n.

also Stanisław Tyminski, the surprising emigré returned to Poland who, in 1990, managed to place second after Lech Wałęsa, and then went on to form Party X, which eventually died off as an oddity. In his inflammatory speeches, Tyminski vilified, among other things, the reform and privatisation programme of the government, presenting them as (what else?) a Jewish conspiracy to rob Poland of its riches and partition the country again.⁶¹ In Slovenia, radical return Slovenian National Party leader Zmago Jelinčić's revealed past collaboration with the secret services in 1993 caused a split in the party. Six deputies left it and set up the Slovene National Right led by Saso Lap. The new party, in any case, has sharpened, rather than toned down ultranationalist and xenophobic postures.⁶² In Bulgaria, the Committee for the Defence of Nationalist Interest, whose ultranationalist postures, however, were anti-Turkish rather than antisemitic, was headed by Mincho Minchev, a former State Security Officer.⁶³ The post-1990 leader of the nationalist (chiefly anti-Hungarian, but on occasions also antisemitic) *Matica Slovenská*, Jozef Markus, was revealed by the screening process to have collaborated with the secret communist police. Finally, Sládek, is a former low-level functionary in the censorship office of the former regime, and unlikely, as such to have had no links with the Czechoslovak StB (State Security).⁶⁴

3. UTILITARIAN ANTISEMITISM: ORIENTATION PRESENT

'Utilitarian antisemitism' refers to the occasional exploitation of antisemitic prejudice for the needs of the hour by politicians who, by and large, are probably not antisemitic. The category has often been dubbed "political antisemitism," but I believe this to be misleading. In the modern (i.e. post-Emancipation) world all antisemitic views (even latent antisemitism) carry either an explicit or an implicit political potential.

Utilitarian antisemitism is by no means a distinguishing feature of the post-communist world. It is no less widespread in Western democratic countries. It is not as much what utilitarian antisemites *say* that counts, as what they *refrain* from saying. In other words, the political discourse of utilitarian antisemites is *implicit* rather than *explicit*. It is also quite often a *coded* discourse, never going all the way of the self-exculpatory nostalgia or the self-propelling antisemites, but 'signalling' to those able to *encode*

61 Prazmowska, 'The New Right in Poland', in *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, ed. Cheles, Ferguson and Vaughan, p. 205; Szayna, 'The Extreme Right', in *The Revival of Right Wing Extremism*, ed. Merkl and Weinberg, pp. 118–22.

62 R. M. Rizman, 'Radical Right Politics in Slovenia', in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Ramet, pp. 152–3.

63 J. D. Bell, 'The Radical Right in Bulgaria', in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Ramet, p. 245.

64 Cohen, *Politics without a Past*, pp. 134–6; Szayna, 'The Extreme Right', in *The Revival of Right Wing Extremism*, ed. Merkl and Weinberg, p. 125.

the discourse its unmistakable intention. Failure to distance oneself from antisemitic views in the hope of enlisting the support of those who are obviously prejudiced or even forging political alliances with them, can be just as telling as embracing their view openly. That such political alliances are short-sighted and, more often than not, turn against the utilitarian antisemites themselves, is altogether another matter. But it is one that brings to the fore the singularly *present* orientation of utilitarian antisemites, who seem to believe that what counts is only what serves the need of the hour, and that the future can always be dealt with starting from scratch. It is therefore not surprising to find the political discourse of utilitarian antisemites to be self-contradictory in a longer time perspective.

Utilitarian antisemitism is to be found at both the left and the right ends of the 'mainstream' post-communist political spectrum. This is not a surprise either, since neither the left nor the right ends of that spectrum are oblivious to the dangers of being painted by more extremist political adversaries as unrooted in the country's past. The "imagined community" and the need to defend it are therefore just as central for utilitarian antisemites as they are for self-exculpatory or self-propelling antisemites. But in the course of 'defending' them they are clearly eyeing immediate political advantages as well.

Thus, in Croatia, late President Franjo Tudjman's policy towards radical return formations combined repression, on one hand, with attempts to appease and co-opt them into his own Croat Democratic Union (HDZ), on the other hand. In spring 1992, the HDZ incorporated into its ranks the radical return Croat National Committee, which had revived a formation by the same name set up by Branimir Jelić, a close associate of Croat fascist Ustasha leader Ante Pavelić. Members of that formation were now given places on the HDZ's executive board, and other Ustasha leaders became members of the government. Tudjman was not adverse to the use of Ustasha symbols and only vigorous protest from the country's Jewish community and its international echo foiled the attempt to name one of Zagreb's streets after Mile Budak, a high-ranking member of the Ustasha regime.⁶⁵ But Tudjman's is a rather singular case, insofar as the Croat President was himself a Holocaust negationist, who went as far as to actually blame Jews for having perpetrated the Holocaust on themselves.

Indeed, in his *Wastelands of Historical Truth*, published in 1988, Tudjman, who claimed to be a historian among his other calls, set up to exonerate the Croats from responsibility for participation in the Holocaust. The infamous Jasenovac concentration camp, where several hundred thousand Serbs, Jews and Roma perished during the Pavelić regime, was for Tudjman a "myth" blown out of all proportion, whose main purpose was to back the theory of "the genocidal nature of every and any Croat national-

65 J. A. Irvine, 'Nationalism and the Extreme Right in the Former Yugoslavia', in *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, ed. Cheles, Ferguson and Vaughan, pp. 163, 172.

ism,” to “create a black legend of the historical guilt of the entire Croat people, for which they must still make retribution.” While by no means original (the same ‘demystification’ and ‘unmasking’ of the alleged attempt at the ‘culpabilisation’ of the nation as a whole arguments are heard in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania in connection with the Horthy, Tiso and Antonescu regimes), Tudjman nonetheless stands out. This is less so due to his questioning of the figure of the six million, which he deemed to be “based too much on emotionally biased testimonies, as well as on one-sided and exaggerated data resulting from postwar settling of accounts,” as is to his cynical allegations that Jews had actually been the main perpetrators in Jasenovac. They were said to have “managed to grab all the more important jobs in the prisoner hierarchy,” and to have taken advantage of the fact that the Ustasha trusted them more than they trusted Serbs. Whence Tudjman concluded that “The Jew remains a Jew, even in the Jasenovac camp. [...] Selfishness, craftiness, unreliability, stinginess, deceit, are their main characteristics.” To ‘demonstrate’ that Jews rather than the Ustasha Croats were the main perpetrators, Tudjman, however, had to make figures more plausible for prisoners to be able to accomplish the deed. He thus dismissed not only the 700,000 figure advanced by the Serbs, but also the 60,000 victims claimed by Croat historians. No more than 30–40,000 are said to have perished in the camp, some at the hands of the Ustasha, but most at those of Jews, who controlled the liquidation apparatus.⁶⁶

Tudjman’s may be a borderline case between self-propelling antisemitism and utilitarian antisemitism, but in Romania President Ion Iliescu’s case clearly belongs to the latter category. 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 Labour Party (PSM), all of which displayed antisemitism, though the PUNR combined that feature with a pronounced anti-Hungarianism and the PSM added to both a more open endorsement of leftist postures.⁶⁷ That coalition was not void of tension (see above), Iliescu being among other things reproached with having allegedly acquiesced in Romania’s “culpabilisation” for the Holocaust when he visited the Choral Temple in Bucharest in 1993, and later on the occasion of a visit paid at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in

66 Cited in R. Milentijević, ‘Antisemitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Yugoslavia’, in *Antisemitism and the Treatment...*, ed. Braham, pp. 234–6.

67 For a discussion see Shafir, ‘The Post-Communist Era’, in *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*, ed. Braham, pp. 333–86; M. Shafir, ‘Ruling Party Formalizes Relations with Extremists’, *Transition*, 4, 1996, pp. 42–6, 64; Shafir, ‘Anatomy’, *Transition*, pp. 45–9; Shafir, ‘Marshal Antonescu’s Post-Communist Rehabilitation’, in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews*, ed. Braham, pp. 349–410; M. Shafir, ‘The Mind of Romania’s Radical Right’, in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, ed. Ramet, pp. 213–32; M. Shafir, ‘Marginalization or Mainstream? The Extreme Right in Post-Communist Romania’, in *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, ed. P. Hainsworth (London, 2000), pp. 247–67.

Washington.⁶⁸ Running again for the office which he temporarily lost to President Emil Constantinescu in 1996, in October 2000, in an interview with the daily *Adevărul*, Iliescu was keen to point out to the electorate that he had valiantly defended Romania's historical record. His detractors, he said, had blown out of any proportion the fact that he had covered his head in a gesture of politeness towards his hosts, but no one has remarked the difference between himself and Polish President Lech Wałęsa. Unlike Wałęsa, when visiting the Israeli Knesseth he had refrained from apologising 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.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ Yet Constantinescu also stopped short of simply assuming national responsibility without 'ifs' and 'buts.' As writer Nicolae Balotă would eventually reveal in 2000, when he urged Constantinescu to do so, he was told by chief presidential counsellor Zoe Petre that the risk would be too great. The president, she said, could lose the backing of the ruling majority and, due to the "diffuse anti-semitism" prevailing in society at large, also suffer a loss of popularity in general.⁷¹

As for Iliescu, on the eve of his renewed mandate he told an audience at a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty briefing in Washington that Marshal Ion Antonescu "had some merits" too. It was Antonescu, he said, who had quashed the Iron Guard rebellion in early 1941, and, after all, "Antonescu had proved more tolerance" towards the Jews than did Admiral Miklós Horthy's Hungary, not to mention the fact that he "had the merit of liberating the territory occupied by the Soviets." And why, he asked, are double standards applied: why is Romania being singled out for attempts by some people to rehabilitate Antonescu, while the fact that Marshal Philippe Pétain in France is being venerated by some followers is being overlooked, as, indeed, is the fact that Marshal Carl Gustaf Mannerheim is considered a national hero in Finland is not being objected to? Unfortunately, no one in the audience had either the knowledge or the audacity to point out that, while a Hitler ally because of the Soviet's invasion of Finland, Mannerheim was not guilty of any war crimes and that a total of seven Finnish Jews had perished in the Holocaust. Estimates for Jews exterminated during the war in the territories under Romanian rule range between 102,000 and 410,000.⁷²

68 For details see M. Shafir, 'Extreme Nationalist Brinkmanship in Romania', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 21, 1993, pp. 31-6.

69 *Adevărul*, 12 October 2000.

70 See *Realitatea evreiască*, 16 April-15 May 1997.

71 The text of the letter and a resume of Zoe Petre's response in *Apostrof*, 11-12, 2000, pp. 3-4.

72 M. Shafir, 'Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization": Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe', *ACTA*, 19, 2000, pp. 35-6.

In a speech at the Choral Temple in Bucharest marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Iron Guard pogrom in Bucharest on 21 January 2001, Iliescu, now re-elected president, said the Iron Guardist “aberration” had been a “delirium of intolerance and antisemitism.” Yet, he added, that brief “delirium” excepted, there has been no Romanian contribution to “the long European history” of persecution of the Jews, and it was “significant” that there was “no Romanian word for Holocaust.” Furthermore, he hastened to add, it was “unjustified to attribute to Romania an artificially inflated number of Jewish victims for the sake of media impact.” Romania’s distorted image, according to Iliescu, was likely to be corrected when “Romanian (i.e. rather than Jewish) historians will tackle the subject.”⁷³

Hardly six months had passed, however, when Iliescu’s “unique aberration” of 1941 grew slightly larger. With Romania banging on NATO’s doors and against the protests in the U.S. and Israel triggered by the Antonescu cult in Romania, Iliescu attended a ceremony marking the Iași pogrom where he felt compelled to declare that “*no matter what we may think, international public opinion considers Antonescu to have been a war criminal.*”⁷⁴ Earlier that month, General Mircea Chelaru, a former chief of staff of the Romanian army, had been forced to resign from the military after participating in a ceremony in Bucharest where a bust of Marshal Antonescu had been unveiled.⁷⁵ Iliescu’s statement in Iași triggered protests not only from the PRM, but also from among members of his own party, such as Senator Adrian Păunescu, a former First Deputy PSM Chairman – as well as a former Ceaușescu court poet.⁷⁶

By early 2002, Romania had been bluntly told by U.S. officials that the conditions for making it 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 thriving 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.⁷⁷ 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 Iași even the “Heroes’ Cemetery” carried the

⁷³ See *RFE/RL Newswire*, 22 January 2001.

⁷⁴ *RFE/RL Newswire*, 26 June 2001. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁵ W. Totok, ‘Sacrificarea lui Antonescu pe altarul diplomației’ [Antonescu’s Sacrificial on the Altar of Diplomacy], 1–4, in *Observator cultural*, nos. 74, 24–30 July, 75, 31 July–6 August, 76, 7–13 August, and 77, 14–20 August 2001.

⁷⁶ *RFE/RL Newswire*, 1, 4 and 5 June 2001.

⁷⁷ *România liberă*, 27 February 2002.

dictator's name.⁷⁸ The Defence Ministry on 18 March launched a syllabus on the Holocaust at the National Defence 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 Iași 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 organisations 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 organisation 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.⁷⁹

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. Thus, on 23 March Năstase said he was opposed to "attempts to generalise guilt for the [Romanian] Holocaust to the Romanian people as a whole." The responsibility for atrocities committed on the eve and during the war, he emphasised, was solely falling on Romania's leaders and governments of that era. History, he added, has registered "situations whose gravity was far more extensive" than what had taken place in Romanian-ruled territories and yet "nobody is thinking of accusing the German, Russian, American, or any other people" for those deeds. The premier was quite clearly engaging into an own version of "com-

⁷⁸ According to Romanian Jewish Community sources cited by *Mediafax* on 18 March, six statues in the marshal's memory had been erected in Bucharest, Iași, Jilava (in the vicinity of Antonescu's execution place), Slobozia, Piatra Neamț and Târgoviște. Later it transpired from a protest by the U.S. Helsinki Commission that two more statues had been erected in Sărmaș and Călărăsi, see *Mediafax*, 28 June 2002. However, The Călărăsi mayor denied an Antonescu statue existed in his town in the "public space," saying a bust of the marshal had been on display within the "private space" of the Ion Antonescu Foundation in the town, see *Jurnalul național*, 2 July 2002. For the number of streets named after Antonescu see also *Jurnalul național*, 2 July 2002.

⁷⁹ *RFE/RL Newslines*, 19 March 2002; *Cotidianul*, 19 March 2002.

parative Holocaust trivialization.”⁸⁰ In turn, President Iliescu, addressing a seminar organised in Bucharest under the auspices of U.S. Jewish organisations, said that Antonescu is considered “*by the states who fought in World War II for democracy and against Hitler*” to be a war-criminal and that consequently “any manifestation of an Antonescu cult” in Romania is also viewed there to be “in defiance of the international community [which is committed to] democratic ideas and values.”⁸¹ The encoded messages of the country’s two highest officials thus read: You can rest assured that we shall not force you into facing collective responsibility and you must understand that we do not necessarily identify with what is being imposed on us.

An additional signal for internal consumption came when the government, in an obvious contradiction to its own ordinance, 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.⁸² 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.⁸³ As for the governmental portrait gallery, Theodorescu explained that the exhibit was outside “public space,” and thus within the restrictions of the ordinance.⁸⁴ One could just as well have argued that the official seat of the government was the very centre 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.⁸⁵ But there was also clearly local resistance. Oradea Mayor Petru Filip announced that the municipal council (located on Ion Antonescu street, one of the town’s largest avenues) has rejected the government’s ordinance because “it is unclear whether the marshal was a war criminal or not.” Botoşani municipal council followed in its footsteps, with several councillors representing the ruling party joining those of the PRM in opposing the ordinance, but had to change the decision after receiving a stern dissolution threat from Bucharest. Finally, procedures were launched in early August against PRM Cluj Mayor Gheorghe Funar, who had displayed several blueprints for a planned statue in the town’s city hall and had refused to dismantle them.⁸⁶

80 For a discussion of these concepts see Shafir, ‘Between Denial and “Comparative Trivialization”’, *ACTA*, p. 60.

81 For Năstase see *RFE/RL Newslines*, 25 March 2002 ; for Iliescu *RFE/RL Newslines*, 26 March 2002 and *Adevărul*, 26 March 2002. Emphasis mine.

82 *Adevărul*, 29–30 June 2002.

83 *Cotidianul*, 28 May 2002.

84 *Mediafax*, 29 June 2002.

85 *Mediafax*, 31 July 2002.

86 *Jurnalul național*, 2 July 2002 and 1 August 2002.

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 Defence 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 human rights in general and on the right of freedom of expression in particular.⁸⁷ Although the PNL leadership distanced itself from its representatives on the commission,⁸⁸ their position was partly embraced by the same chamber's Judicial Commission. After twice postponing approval, the commission agreed on 5 June to an amended text, based on the proposal made by Senator Gheorghe Buzatu, a PRM deputy chairman and a historian specialising in Holocaust denial. Buzatu had proposed that the Holocaust be defined as "*the systematic massive extermination of the Jewish population in Europe, organised 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 "organised 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.⁸⁹ The Judicial Commission also reduced the maximum penalty for setting up organisations of a "fascist, racist or xenophobe" character from 15 to 5 years in prison.

The definition is 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.⁹⁰ Should the plenum of the Senate approve the amendments proposed by the two commissions – and should the Chamber of Deputies, whose commissions have not yet debated the ordinance – also heed them, the government's emergency ordinance would be emptied of relevance.

The efforts by Theodorescu to pre-empt this situation, while apparently prompted by an attempt to overcome resistance, rendered a sense of the tragicomic. Theodorescu proposed – as he did at a special session of the Academy called to debate the issue of the Holocaust and Romania's role in it – that it be specified that while no Holocaust had taken place in Romania,

87 For the debates in the Human Rights Commission see *Mediafax*, 9 April 2002; for the debates in the Defense Commission, *Cotidianul*, 15 April 2002.

88 *Mediafax*, 17 April 2002.

89 *Mediafax*, 6 July 2002; *Curentul*, 29 May 2002. Emphasis mine.

90 For a discussion see Shafir, 'Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization"', ACTA, p. 52.

“Holocaust-like” policies were implemented by the Antonescu regime on territories under Romanian occupation.⁹¹ The Nazis could almost make the same claim, in fact. Besides, to consider Bessarabia and northern Bukovina “occupied territories” called into question the legitimacy of Antonescu’s joining the war launched by Hitler against the Soviet Union. But the amendments proposed to the ordinance suffer from another major deficiency. As several Romanian NGOs pointed out in a declaration issued on 3 June, the amendments would leave out the non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust, such as Roma and other ethnic minorities, homosexuals, the political opponents of the regime and the handicapped – all of whom should have been included, even if the definition of the Holocaust were to remain limited to the atrocities committed by the Nazis.⁹²

Romanian utilitarian antisemitism thus renders the impression that precious little has changed in elite political culture in that country in the 12 years that have passed since the overthrow of the former regime. What I had termed as “simulated change” remains just as prominent a feature of that political culture as it was under the previous regime.⁹³ Nothing perhaps demonstrates better this simulative aspect than an event registered almost parallel with the saga of Ordinance 31/2002. In an attempt to demonstrate to Western eyes that extremism is on the wane in Romania, in early 2002 the ruling Social Democratic Party accepted among its members two defectors from the ranks of the PRM parliamentarians. One of them was a former member of the communist secret police; the other, Ilie Neacșu, was the former editor-in-chief of Romania’s post-communist most antisemitic weekly (typically called no less than *Europa!*) and a deputy chairman of the Marshal Antonescu League.⁹⁴

Iliescu’s 2000 boasting that unlike Wałęsa he did not apologise in front of the Israeli Knesseth was only partly justified. Though Wałęsa belongs to the other end of the post-communist left-right spectrum, he may be said to be no less of a utilitarian antisemite than Iliescu ever was. The apology had been uttered in an apparent spontaneous addition to the speech Wałęsa prepared ahead of addressing the Israeli parliament in 1991, when he added “please forgive us” to the prepared text. This triggered the applause of the Israeli parliamentary deputies, but also the wrath of many of his countrymen. By 1995, when Poland marked the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Wałęsa had learned his lesson. Presiding over

91 For Theodorescu’s argument see Romanian TV’s First Channel and *Mediafax*, 8 May 2002; *Mediafax*, 27 May 2002; *Rompres*, 28 June 2002.

92 The author has received the text of the reaction, which is signed by the following NGOs: ACCEPT, Pro Democracy Association, Aven Amentza, Civic Education Project, European Roma Rights Center, Open Society Foundation – Romania, Pro Europa League, Romani Criss and the Romanian Society for Political Science.

93 M. Shafir, *Romania. Politics, Economics and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (London, 1985).

94 See Andrei Corbea, ‘Gustul social-democrației originale’ [The Taste of Original Social-Democracy], in *Observator cultural*, 106, 5 March–11 March 2002.

morning ceremonies in Kraków's Jagellonian University on 26 January and in the afternoon over a gathering of Nobel peace prize laureates, Wałęsa never made any specific reference to Jews as having been the main victims at Auschwitz. His electorate considered the Holocaust to have mainly been a trauma of the *Polish* nation. As Ilya Prizel recently put it, "Generations of Poles were brought up to believe that historic Poland, until its partition in the late eighteenth century, was a model of tolerant multiculturalism." The "overwhelming consensus" among Polish historians, Prizel writes, is that "Poland was the first country to resist Hitler and the only country to simultaneously confront the bloody tyrannies of Hitler and Stalin." This consensus is reflected in the way the Holocaust has been generally perceived as having been "primarily a Polish tragedy that resulted in the extermination and martyrdom of Poland's clergy and intellectuals."⁹⁵ Polish popular belief, reinforced by the communist *non-treatment* of the Holocaust as a tragedy affecting mainly Jews, thus does not take kindly to those Polish, but particularly foreign intellectuals and historians who, while not denying the Polish national trauma under the Nazis, are suggesting that victims can sometimes be bystanders and even collaborators. In fact, a public opinion poll released in that year showed that 47 percent of Wałęsa's countrymen believed that Auschwitz was first and foremost a place of Polish martyrdom, with only 8 percent being of the opinion that most of the victims there had been Jews. It was only in late afternoon, when ceremonies took place at Auschwitz itself, and only after protracted negotiations with world Jewish leaders attending the event, that Wałęsa amended a prepared speech, adding "especially the Jewish nation" after the originally-prepared speech that was deploring "the suffering of many nations."⁹⁶

Not genuine antisemitism drove Wałęsa on the occasion, just as in 1990 and again in 1996, not antisemitism had been the motivation for his condoning of the 'Judaisation' of his political rivals, to which he reacted in encoded language by wondering why some people wished to hide their ethnic origin and describing himself as being "happy to be a genuine Pole." Rather, this was, once more utilitarian antisemitism. In 1990, amid allegations that then Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki – one of his rivals in the presidential contest – was Jewish (which he is not), and while attending rallies where calls were repeatedly made for Poland to "finally get rid of Jewish rule," Wałęsa went as far as to declare that Polish antisemitism was triggered by "Jews who are concealing their nationality."⁹⁷ In 1996, when he was trailing Alexander Kwaśniewski in the presidential race, Wałęsa

95 I. Prizel, 'Jedwabne: Will the Right Questions be Asked?', *East European Politics and Societies*, p. 279.

96 M. C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead. Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY, 1997), pp. 131–32, 139, 141.

97 A. Brumberg, 'Intelligentsia und Antisemitismus in Polen', *Europäische Rundschau*, 1, 1991, pp. 39–40; A. Brumberg, 'Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Poland', in *Antisemitism and the Treatment...*, ed. Braham, p. 153.

once more acquiesced in face of allegations that Kwaśniewski's ethnic origins were Jewish – which, once more, they are not. He never saw fit to intervene at a rally at which vicious antisemitic slogans were being shouted by demonstrators, denouncing not only Kwaśniewski but also then Foreign Minister Władysław Bartoszewski, who, as an Auschwitz survivor, was being sent back to the gas chambers by the rally's participants. And these were not Wałęsa's only displays of utilitarian antisemitism. In June 1995 he sat silent in the congregation as his personal confessor, the Gdańsk priest Henryk Jankowski told the audience that “the Star of David is implicated in the swastika, as well as in the hammer and sickle.” Jankowski called on his countrymen to “bestir themselves,” adding: “We can no longer tolerate governments made up of people who have not declared whether they come from Moscow or from Israel.” The Catholic Church eventually issued a mild rebuke to Jankowski – Wałęsa did not bother.⁹⁸

Furthermore, in the midst of the Jedwabne controversy stirred in Poland after the publication of historian Jan T. Gross' account of the July 1941 massacre of Jedwabne's 1,600-strong Jewish community by their Polish neighbours, Wałęsa opposed Kwaśniewski's public apology telling a radio-interviewer:

The Jedwabne crime was a revenge for the cooperation of the Jewish community with the Soviet occupant. The Poles have already apologized many times to the Jews; we are waiting for the apology from the other side because many Jews were scoundrels.⁹⁹

4. REACTIVE ANTISEMITISM: ORIENTATION PAST – PRESENT – FUTURE

The category of 'reactive antisemitism' 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 three other postures discussed above. It warrants, however, separate discussion, because the category's members are neither chiefly motivated by nostalgia from a past from which they have no reason to exculpate themselves, nor by an attempt to forge 'semites' in order to instrumentalise their democracy-undermining political agenda, nor are they blind to the dangers stemming from short-term political alliances with antisemites. And yet, reactive antisemites can easily be misperceived as belonging to one of the other three categories by anyone not familiar enough with their initial motivations. In short, reactive antisemites are *antisemites despite themselves*. To paraphrase Hegel, they are antisemites *in themselves* but not *for themselves*.

98 V. Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, 1999), pp. 104–5; Ost, 'The Radical right in Poland', in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, ed. Ramet, p. 93.

99 *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 July 2001, as cited in A. H. Rosenfeld, 'Facing Jedwabne' (New York, 2002), p. 5.

The political discourse of reactive antisemites 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 become *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 antisemites, and, at the same time, nowhere are the limitations of that memory 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 Halbwach’s 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 always carried by the socialising experiences of family life.¹⁰⁰ 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 Tismaneanu fittingly termed it, between the Holocaust and the Gulag.¹⁰¹

Having elsewhere dealt with this aspect,¹⁰² I only wish to stress here one of its most salient faces: reactive antisemites are precisely those (now in their forties, fifties and sixties) whose family socialisation – and therefore most influential factor in collective memory – recalls the years of early Stalinism and of the Gulag through which their grandparents and parents had to submit. The largely-shared perception of “Jews having brought communism” – the *żydokomuna* in Poland, the *iudeo-comunism* 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 generalisation is verging on the absurd – as Prizel showed for the Polish case¹⁰³ 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 unto 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” approach¹⁰⁴ and has three temporal aspects. First, it is past-oriented in the sense that it ‘explains’ antisemitism by alleged large-scale Jewish collaboration with the

100 See M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Edited, translated and with an introduction by L. A. Coser) (Chicago and London, 1992).

101 V. Tismaneanu, ‘Communism and the Human Condition: Reflections on the Black Book of Communism’, *Human Rights Review*, 2, 2001, pp. 125–34.

102 Shafir, ‘Between Denial and “Comparative Trivialization”’, *ACTA*, pp. 65–75.

103 Prizel, ‘Jedwabne: Will the Right Questions Be Asked?’, *East European Politics and Societies*, pp. 284–5.

104 See V. Vareikis, “‘Double Genocide’ and the ‘Holocaust-Gulag’ Rhetoric in Lithuania”, in *Jews and Antisemitism in the Public Discourse of the Post-Communist European Countries*, ed. Volovici.

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 spectres of the past, regardless of the ethnicity of those ghosts. In an inverse Leninist equation, therefore, the “double symmetry” approach poses the question of *Kto kogo* and either comes up with the reply that both sides have equally sinned towards one another (the beginning version of “competitive martyrdom”) or concludes that the balance weighs heavily against those “responsible” for the Gulag.

Viewed from this perspective, one can read Wałęsa’s above-cited reaction to the Jedwabne controversy as being no less of a reactive antisemitic posture as it is one of utilitarian antisemitism. Indeed, the same reaction (the benign version of the *who whom* question) is to be found in the Polish Roman Catholic Church’s official reaction, as illustrated by Cardinal Glemp’s suggestion during the Jedwabne affair that the sides engage in a “swap of apologies,” as Prizel terms it, with Jews apologising for their betrayal of Poland to communism, and Poles atoning for their violence against the Jews in Jedwabne and other places during the war.¹⁰⁵ Glemp stayed away from the ceremony in Jedwabne, at which on 10 July 2001 President Kwaśniewski asked forgiveness “in my own name and in the name of Poles whose conscience is moved by that crime.”¹⁰⁶ Instead, in prayers said on 27 May 2001 at the Church of All Saints in Warsaw, he expressed “sorrow and penitence” but not for the fact that the crime, as showed by Gross, had been perpetrated by Poles and Poles alone, but for the fact that Poles had been “among” the perpetrators – thus obviously siding with those Polish historians who were deflecting the guilt for the massacre on the Nazis despite all evidence.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, on the eve of the ceremony Glemp told journalists: “We want to apologise for all the evil that was perpetrated by Polish citizens on citizens of the Judaic faith” in Jedwabne. However, he added, “we want to include in our prayers the other evil, that was perpetrated on Polish citizens of the Catholic faith, and in which Poles of Judaic faith had a part.”¹⁰⁸

Using a pair of similar spectacles, Romanian philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu would compare in 1997 his own persecution under communism

105 Prizel, ‘Jedwabne: Will the Right Questions Be Asked?’, *East European Politics and Societies*, p. 280.

106 Cited in A. W. Tymowski, ‘Apologies for Jedwabne and Modernity’, *East European Politics and Societies*, 1, 2002, p. 298.

107 Cited in Tymowski, ‘Apologies for Jedwabne and Modernity’, *East European Politics and Societies*, p. 297. Emphasis mine. On the “deflective guilt onto the Nazis alone” aspect of the Jedwabne controversy see Shafir, ‘Between Denial and “Comparative Trivialization”’, *ACTA*, pp. 24–37.

108 *RFE/RL Newswire*, 4 May 2001. Emphasis mine.

with the suffering through which Jewish playwright Mihail Sebastian had to face in the Antonescu years. Sebastian was “his brother,” for, as Liiceanu told an audience at the Bucharest Jewish community meeting marking the Holocaust, there was no doubt in his mind that, had the writer not perished in an accident in 1945, he would have written in his diary:

How is it possible for one who, at a certain moment in history had to wear the victim's uniform, to don today the garment of the executioner? Indeed, he who marched furthest on the long road to sufferance, should he not have turned into a guarantee making sufferance no longer possible from now on? With some of the former victims being now, strangely enough, in the position to make another disaster in history possible (or at least to profit from it), had they not forfeited the chance to have ended sufferance once and for ever by precisely their extreme sufferance? How was it possible that his own kin, who knew everything about pain, would participate in a scenario of provoking pain?¹⁰⁹

In an “editor's note” to a book by literary historian Leon Volovici, which Liiceanu published at the Humanitas publishing house whose director he is, he had written that a book such as Volovici's has been “not accidentally written by a Jewish author,” and hastened to add that “it is hardly conceivable that history's figures can be reconstructed by the discourse of those who are ever-ready to speak up as victims, but forget to testify as executioners.”¹¹⁰ Similarly, literary critic Nicolae Manolescu – who was also a prominent member of the PNL leadership at the time – would write that

It is entirely dishonest to hold responsible only those intellectuals whose ideas were on the side of the extreme right and who collaborated with Nazism or fascism, or [...] with the occupation, while forgetting (or pretending to have forgotten) about the others, a lot more numerous, who were communist-sympathisers in Stalin's times, as well as later, and collaborated with the red power set in place by Soviet tanks.¹¹¹

Not long thereafter, Manolescu would defend French revisionist Roger Garaudy, writing that “an absurd competition” had come into being between those who had “for decades denounced the horrors of the Holocaust” while keeping silent on those of the Gulag, and those who wished the two be placed on equal footing. Is the competing due to the fact that “someone is afraid of losing the monopoly over unveiling the crimes against mankind?” he asked.¹¹²

109 G. Liiceanu, ‘Sebastian, mon frère’, text published in the weekly 22, 29 April–5 May 1997. My translation.

110 G. Liiceanu, ‘Nota editorului’, in Leon Volovici, *Ideologia naționalistă și “problema evreiască” în România anilor ‘30* [Nationalist Ideology and “The Jewish Problem” in the 1930s in Romania] (Bucharest, 1995), p. 7.

111 N. Manolescu, ‘Vinătoarea de Vrăjitoare’ [The Witch-hunt], *România literară*, 11–17 June 1997.

112 N. Manolescu, ‘Holocaustul și gulagul’ [The Holocaust and the Gulag], *România literară*, 11–17 March 1998.

Can the likes of Liiceanu and Manolescu, with their record of opposing (though mostly passively) Ceaușescu's national-communism and their actively-displayed repulsion of self-propelling antisemites of the Corneliu Vadim Tudor postures be labelled 'antisemites'? In the eyes of respectable scholars such as Sorin Antohi,¹¹³ to do so amounts to near blasphemy, or to what is derogatorily called an exercise in "anti-antisemitism" postures of "political correctness." However noble Antohi's defence of those to whom he is linked by "affinity group kinship," it rather reflects the cognitive dissonance encountered by what I called above 'Reformist "rabbinical" postures' stemming from what Halbwachs would read as different individuals' "collective memories." At the end of the day, reactive antisemitism may well remain a matter of 'who does the reading.'

But reactive antisemitism may also come into being as an outcome of post-communist political realities. Without necessarily contradicting the Halbwachsian motivation, these realities may be mundane but profoundly effective in promoting transformations inducing antisemitic postures. Hungarian sociologist András Kovács, analysing the evolution of the conservative democratic right in Hungary, spoke in this connection about the effort geared at "creating an identity on a symbolic level."¹¹⁴ His insights, I believe, can be generalised beyond that country's borders. Michael Waller's distinction between "organisational" and "historic" continuity, mentioned above, goes a long way to explain why the latter political formations, when faced with the dilemma of opting for or against their country's modern historic legacy, do, in fact, neither. They cannot forsake the anti-communist legacy, for this would in practice mean forsaking the only other legitimating source – historic continuity. The non-communist successor parties, then, can either opt for placing themselves somewhere around a Western-imported political spectrum perceived by many as having little in common with the country's realities, or to "express a relationship with certain emblematic periods, events or individuals in the country's own history," as Kovács puts it. But they also cannot fully embrace the anti-communist legacy either, since this would locate them at the extremist end of the spectrum, with which they must part ways on both tactical (foreign image) and ideological grounds. The 1993 "divorce" between conservative Premier József Antall's Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and Csurka's MIÉP is, when viewed from this angle, a telling occurrence. Thus, formations whose option has been basically introvert become entangled, again according to Kovács, in a "struggle for the appropriation of history" in which they attempt to "demonstrate historical tradition and continuity."¹¹⁵

From this point onwards, however, it becomes difficult to distinguish between utilitarian antisemitic postures and internalised values in strategies

113 See note 8 above.

114 Kovács, 'Antisemitic Discourse', *Jews and Antisemitism*, ed. Volovici.

115 Kovács, 'Antisemitic Discourse', *Jews and Antisemitism*, ed. Volovici.

geared at mobilising the electorate. Antall can hardly be suspected of having been an antisemite, the more so as his own father had been a “Righteous Among Nations.”¹¹⁶ Yet when it came to facing his country’s World War II legacy, he was persuaded that if it should at all be addressed, historical accounts should concentrate on the rescue of Hungarian Jews rather than on Jewish suffering and decimation.¹¹⁷ Antall was, however, aware of the fact that Hungarian “collective memory” tends to perceive Jews as perpetrators of the nation’s martyrdom at the hands of the communists, rather than as victims of Hungarian antisemitism and collaboration with the Nazis. Ministers in his cabinet attended in 1993 the ceremony of reinterment of Horthy’s remains and Antall later visited the grave himself, having earlier referred to Horthy as “a patriot” who “should be placed in the community of the nation and the awareness of the people.”¹¹⁸ He was thus engaging in creating for his party an “identity at symbolic level.”

Former Hungarian Premier Viktor Orbán and his entourage present an even more interesting case, for Orbán has started off as the leader of a formation at the left of the country’s post-communist spectrum and evolved towards right-wing conservatism. The League of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Party (FIDESZ-MPP) and its leader can be suspected of opportunist postures, but at the same time their evolution can be explained in terms of awareness of the opportunity to fill in the niche left open by the practical political demise of the MDF after Antall’s death in December 1993 and the disastrous MDF electoral performance in 1994. Playing with historic memory and with ‘turning the tables’ became a favourite past-time during Orbán’s 1998–2002 term as premier.

Soon upon taking over as premier in 1998 Orbán visited the Hungarian pavilion at the Auschwitz exhibit and immediately decided to reconstruct the exhibit, originally built by the communist regime. The plans for redesigning the exhibit, as Randolph L. Braham described them, were little else than “a pro-Horthy apologia designed to sanitise the Nazi era in general and the Hungarian involvement in the Final Solution in particular.” They envisaged to portray a “virtual symbiosis of Hungarian–Jewish life since the emancipation of Jews in 1867, downplaying the many anti-Jewish manifestations as mere aberrations in the otherwise chivalrous history of Hungary.” Attention was obviously focused on “the positive aspects of Jewish life in the country, emphasising the flourishing of the Jewish community between 1867 and 1944, the rescue activities of those identified as Righteous, and Horthy’s saving of the Jews of Budapest,” and, more importantly, the same plans “blamed almost exclusively the Germans for the

116 Deák, ‘Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary’, in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment...*, ed. Braham p. 119.

117 Karsai, ‘The Radical Right in Hungary’, in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Ramet, p. 139.

118 Cited in R. L. Braham, ‘The Reinterment and Political Rehabilitation of Miklós Horthy’, *Slavic Almanach*, 2, 1993, p. 140.

destruction of the Jews.”¹¹⁹ The exhibition was cancelled after protests from the country’s Federation of Jewish Communities; reacting to the decision, a spokesman of the federation said the country’s Jewish communities did not wish to see the project halted, but “to see it is done right.”¹²⁰

A plaque commemorating Horthy’s notorious gendarmes (who impressed even the SS advisers by the enthusiasm they displayed in the ghettoisation and concentration of Hungarian Jews before deportation, and who occasionally also participated in the extermination) was unveiled in 1999 at Budapest’s War History Museum, triggering strong protests from the Jewish community.¹²¹ And it was a high official of the same coalition, Orbán advisor Mária Schmidt, who shortly thereafter again triggered the community’s protests, after stating in Jean-Marie Le Pen-like manner that the Holocaust had been but a “marginal issue” of the history of World War II. Just as telling was the manner in which Schmidt justified her statement. The term Holocaust, she said, cannot be applied to describe only the Jewish victims of World War II, since a genocide had also been perpetrated by the communists. She then went on to note that “the Holocaust, the extermination or saving of the Jews, was a minor, we might say marginal consideration, not included among the war aims of either side.” But the West, which had been Stalin’s ally, was unwilling to face the crimes committed in the name of communism, because to do so would be to jeopardise “the legitimacy of the Western democracies.”¹²² Yet Orbán issued a statement largely exonerating Schmidt and expressing his “full confidence” in her.¹²³ Schmidt had some sort of “vested interest” when she made the statement. She had been a leading member of the commission that attempted to ‘cleanse’ out of the Auschwitz exhibit Horthy atrocities against the Hungarian Jews.¹²⁴

It was Schmidt, again, that in 2002 became director of the “House of Terror” museum, located in Budapest, in the house that served as the headquarters of Ferenc Szálasi’s Arrow Cross in 1944–1945 and later became the headquarters of the communist secret police (ÁVO, later ÁVH). It was not by chance that the museum was inaugurated on the eve of the elections, with Orbán addressing the opening ceremony. The attempt was obviously being made to link the rival Socialist Party with the age of terror on which the museum concentrated. Although allegedly dedicated to both Nazi and communist-time terror, only two out of the some two-dozen rooms of the

119 Braham, ‘Assault on Historical Memory’ (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies ...).

120 *RFE/RL Newswire*, 9 and 10 September 1999.

121 *RFE/RL Newswire*, 29 October 1999.

122 *Magyar Hírlap*, 12 November 1999, and *Napi Magyarország*, 13 November 1999, both cited in *Anti-Semitic Discourse in Hungary in 2000*, ed. Gerő, Varga and Vince, pp. 212 and 153, respectively.

123 *RFE/RL Newswire*, 16 November 1999.

124 Braham, ‘Assault on Historical Memory’ (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies ...).

museum are dedicated to the former.¹²⁵ The museum was thus suggesting that on balance, communist terror had been by far worse than the Jewish Holocaust. More important, perhaps, was what was implied – though never clearly stated – in the exhibit: against a background in which both FIDESZ and MIÉP commentators routinely linked the Jewish origins of some of Hungary’s most notorious communists (Gábor Péter, the first ÁVO chief had been Jewish himself), the implicit message received by the museum’s visitors was that the Jews were responsible for the country’s postwar ordeal.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the museum was obviously reflecting a visible attempt, defined by Braham long before its inauguration¹²⁷ as a Hungarian drive to “turn Germany’s last ally into its last victim,” for nowhere could the visitor learn anything about the Hungarian state’s own responsibility for either the Nazi or the communist terror.

On the contrary, the guide distributed to visitors speaks of Horthy Hungary as having been involved in “desperate attempts” to maintain “its fragile democracy.” Until the Nazi occupation of 1944, the guide explains, Hungary “had a legitimately elected government and parliament, where opposition parties functioned normally.” No word of the anti-Jewish legislation, no word of the 64,000 Jews who perished under Horthy rule before the Nazis occupied the country. The ‘Auschwitz exhibition cleansing attempt’ now accomplished, the visitor is eventually shown a room where photographs of prisoners incarcerated in the communist secret police dungeons are displayed. That they look desperate is no wonder. But among those figuring as victims of the communist atrocities – though never identified – one can recognise Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi and his deputy, Mihály Kolosváry-Borcsa, as well as two other officials (László Endre and László Baky) convicted and executed in 1946 for the deportations and death of Jews at Auschwitz, that is, *before* the communist takeover. The museum’s message as to who is to be considered a ‘victim’ of totalitarianism and who was a perpetrator is thus conveyed without a need for further captions and comments.¹²⁸

Yet there is also a difference between Antall and Orbán’s motivations, and this difference came to be well reflected in political tactics. The most important members of Orbán’s cabinet had been born between 1960 and 1965. Educated in the spirit of “organised forgetfulness,” the younger conservatives may have been less sensitive to antisemitic demagoguery than the Antall generation had been, and therefore less aware of the need to distance themselves from the extremists of the MIÉP camp. Be that as it may,

¹²⁵ *dpa*, 25 February 2002.

¹²⁶ M. J. Jordan, ‘Terror Museum in Budapest Frightens some Hungarian Jews’, *JTA*, 21 July 2002.

¹²⁷ Braham, ‘Assault on Historical Memory’ (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies ...).

¹²⁸ I owe this information to Dr. Radu Ioanid of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, who also sent me the museum’s guide.

during its tenure the FIDESZ-led cabinet not only forged a practical alliance with MIÉP in the parliament very much reminiscent of the alliance between Romania's ruling party and the PRM in the early 1990s – and thus of utilitarian antisemitism – but embraced some of the MIÉP political discourse, albeit always careful to do so in coded manner. In a rare outburst of sincerity, in June 1999 László Kövér, at that time minister in charge of the country's intelligence services and later FIDESZ chairman, said that the government had “become tired of the constant demand to distance ourselves from MIÉP;” after all, he added, there was not only one extremist party in Hungary: the Free Democrats (largely perceived to be a Jewish party) were no less extremists, according to Kövér, who pointed out to that party's rejection of “[Hungarian] values and traditions.”¹²⁹ MIÉP, he said, was but an “appropriate response” to that attitude, “even if not too successful” a response. The time has come, he would explain two months later, to admit that there is, indeed, a “Jewish question” in Hungary, and that question stems from the fact that an influential elite circle is dictating the terms of the political discourse.¹³⁰ In other words, what MIÉP is to be reproached for is not the content of its political discourse, but its form.

During the months preceding the 2002 electoral campaign, Orbán consistently avoided ruling out a post-electoral alliance with MIÉP. Furthermore he had earlier declared on the most antisemitic programme aired on Hungarian radio every Sunday morning, *Vasárnapi Újság*, that the programme was his favourite.¹³¹

FIDESZ is by no means the only ‘mainstream’ party in post-communist East Central Europe to display such postures. The League of Polish Families, a party represented in the parliament since the 2001 elections and which is backed by the powerful pro-Catholic Radio Maryja, is spreading similar views, and on occasion members of mainstream Romanian parties have embraced them as well. Reactive antisemitism is likely to disappear from the region only when the myths of Judeo-bolshevism will also disappear. Those who read ‘never’ are not misreading my line.

¹²⁹ *Magyar Hírlap*, 14 June 1999, as cited in *Anti-Semitic Discourse in Hungary in 2000*, ed. Geró, Varga and Vince, pp. 210–11.

¹³⁰ *Magyar Hírlap*, 16 August 1999, as cited in *Anti-Semitic Discourse in Hungary in 2000*, ed. Geró, Varga and Vince, p. 154.

¹³¹ Gy. Tatár, ‘The Palestinian Costume’, in *Anti-Semitic Discourse in Hungary in 2000*, ed. Geró, Varga and Vince, p. 188.