12 Truth, memory, and reconciliation in post-communist societies

The Romanian experience and the Securitate archives

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Introduction

Coming to terms with the past, confronting its legacies and burden, was the inevitable starting point for the new democracies of Eastern Europe. Thirty years after the fall of communism, both public intellectuals and scholars face a fundamental question: how can truth and justice be reinstated in a post-totalitarian community without the emergence of what Nietzsche called the “reek of cruelty”? In 2006, for the first time in Romania’s contemporary history, the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania (PCACDR) rejected outright the practices of institutionalized forgetfulness and generated a national debate about long-denied and concealed moments of the communist past (including instances of collaboration, complicity, etc.). One of these authors (VT) had the honor of being appointed Chair of this state-body. He was one of the co-coordinators of its Final Report.¹ Generally speaking, decommunization is, in its essence, a moral, political, and intellectual process.² The PCACDR Report answered a fundamental necessity, characteristic of the post-authoritarian world, that of moral clarity. Only memory and history can furnish responsibility, justice, retribution, and repentance. Reconciliation and the healing of a nation plagued by the traumatic quagmire of Evil depend on the recognition and non-negotiability of human dignity as a primordial moral truth of the new society.

Context

In January 2007, Romania acceded to the European Union, a few years after having entered the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This was a watershed in Romania’s history, a significant moment in the history of Eastern Europe, and a test for the European Union’s commitment to accepting problematic candidates as long as they have complied with the major accession requirements. In 2001, in a controversial article published in *The New York Review of Books*, historian Tony Judt argued

that the real test for the European Union was Romania's accession, considering its pending structural problems (Judt, 2001). The piece generated anger among Romanian intellectuals and produced reactions, both pros and cons. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the nature of the difficulties with which Romania is faced still, among them that of an unmastered past. It is in this context that Romania's late decision to work through its communist past came about in a convoluted fashion. Once the process started in late 2005 and early 2006, it gathered a tremendous momentum and resulted in the first categorical state condemnation of the communist dictatorship as illegitimate and criminal.

It would be pertinent to look at and explain the *coincidentia oppositorum* of the efforts to "condemn the condemnation," the common front in attacking, slandering, and rejecting the Final Report created by latter-day radical left-wingers, fanatical nationalists, National-Stalinist nostalgics, and Christian Orthodox fundamentalists.³ It has always been crucial to identify the political and cultural forces that have infiltrated themselves into the subversion of the moral justice process in Romania. Going beyond various subjective stands, resentment, or personal vanities (from people such as the former president Ion Iliescu, who for most of his life was a Leninist apparatchik)⁴, one needs to emphasize that this offensive against working through the past has structural motivations that are deeply rooted in the mentalities of communist times that have survived in the transitional Romanian political culture. The belated nature of Romania's decision to confront its communist totalitarian past was predominantly the consequence of obstinate opposition to such an undertaking from parties and personalities directly or indirectly linked to the *ancien régime*.

Very briefly, the elections of November and December 2004 resulted in the victory of an anticommunist coalition and the election of Traian Băsescu as the country's president. In spite of political rivalries and the disintegration of the initial government coalition, both the National Liberal and the Democratic Parties understood the importance of coming to terms with the past. Especially after January 2006, both the liberal prime minister, at the time, Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu (then head of the Liberal Party) and President Traian Băsescu (then linked to the Democratic Party) have championed decommunization. At the other end of the political spectrum, in an effort to boycott these initiatives, former president Ion Iliescu and other leaders of the Social Democratic Party (in many respects still dominated by former nomenklatura figures) allied themselves with the ultra-populist, jingoistic, and anti-Semitic Greater Romania Party, which was then headed by the notorious Corneliu Vadim Tudor, a former Ceaușescu sycophant.⁵ Around the same time, the condemnation of the communist dictatorship had become one of the most hotly debated political, ideological, and moral issues in contemporary Romania. Unlike Germany, where a parliamentary consensus (minus the radical left) allowed for the relatively peaceful activity of the Enquete Commission headed by former dissident pastor Reiner

Eppelmann (analyzed in McAdams, 2001), the PCACDR was continuously under attack.

The inconsistent institutional backing for the PCACDR led some to argue that this Commission was only a presidential initiative, implicitly allowing them to paint it as a form of political partisanship. Such a characterization is mistaken: the Commission was mandated by the Romanian head of state, and it was the result of the successful pressure from below exercised by the most important organizations and representatives of Romania's democratic civil society. The PCACDR and its Final Report are the products of a collective civic effort officially endorsed by the Romanian state.

The Romanian reckoning with the past in comparative perspective

The PCACDR was the first such state body created in the countries of the former Soviet bloc. The only precedent could be found in unified Germany, where the Bundestag created, between 1992 and 1998, two successive Enquete Commissions that investigated the history of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) Dictatorship and its effects on German unity. At the end of the mandate of the second Enquete Commission, on the basis of its activity and practice, a foundation was established: the Stiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur (June 5, 1998).⁶ The creation of the German commissions represents, however, a different situation under circumstances of unification, institutional absorption, and value transference on the West–East axis. There are nevertheless a series of similarities between the Enquete Commissions and the PCACDR, particularly in what concerned the mandates.

Both the Romanian and the German mandates understood the analysis of their communist pasts along the lines of the study of the structures of power and mechanisms of decision-making during the history of the regime; the functions and meaning of ideology, patterns of inclusion, and disciplinary practices within the state and society; the study of the legal and policing system; the role of the various churches during the various phases of state socialism; and finally, the role of dissidence, of civil disobedience, and, in Romania's case, of the 1989 revolution. Both in Romania and in Germany, the commissions were meant to provide evaluations related to problems of responsibility, guilt, and the continuity of political, cultural, social, and economic structures from the communist through post-communist periods. The overall purpose of both bodies was to establish the basis for what Avishai Margalit (2002) called an ethics of memory. The PCACDR activity was generally guided by Hannah Arendt's vision of responsibility and culpability: "What is unprecedented about totalitarianism is not only its ideological content, but the event itself of totalitarian domination" (Arendt, 1994, p. 405).

The difference between the German and Romanian commissions is that the Enquete Commissions of the SED Dictatorship and the subsequent

foundation were created in a unified Germany with the massive support of the Bundestag, under circumstances of thorough delegitimization of the communist party and state, and in the context of a national consensus regarding the criminal nature of the Stasi. In contrast, in Romania, there was a flagrant absence of expiation, penance, or regret. Without such premises, any act of reconciliation draws dangerously close to whitewashing the past. Reconciliation is not and must not be bound to the premise of moral absolution. The transition from an illegitimate and criminal regime to democracy and a culture of human rights is, to paraphrase Charles Villavicencio, a process *in situ*, it implies a series of compromises and negotiations.⁷ However, the act of healing a community must not be confused with moral consensus about the traumatic past. The historical justice and the shared memory provided by an *Enquetekommission* opens the path to post-transitional political realignment.

Romania before the presidential commission

The condemnation of the communist regime in Romania can be integrated, from a historical standpoint, into the space circumscribed by two factors that marked the post-1989 period. On one hand, Ion Iliescu, who, during his three mandates (1990–1992, 1992–1996, and 2000–2004) practiced what Peter Schneider coined for East Germany as a “double zombification” (Schneider, 1991): the two totalitarian experiences that plagued Romania’s second half of the 20th century officially were “another country” after 1989. This was also a regrettable characteristic for the Democratic Convention during President Emil Constantinescu’s administration from 1997 to 2000. Only after his own scandalous comments on the Holocaust in Romania that provoked a strong reaction in both diplomatic and international academic circles did Ion Iliescu create, in 2004, the International Commission on the Holocaust (ICHR)⁸ in Romania, chaired by celebrated writer and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel. The objective of this “mis-memory” of the totalitarian experience in the country was indeed the fuel of the legitimization discourses of the post-communist political establishment, of the “original democracy” designed by Iliescu and his acolytes in the first post-communist years.

On the other hand, there were the constant attempts from the civil society to speed up the process of decommunization. The latter is defined by several original movements: the Timișoara proclamation in March 1990 that advocated lustration and the June 1990 student protest movements spearheaded by the Civic Alliance. Also encompassed within this framework are various attempts to rehabilitate certain periods of Romanian communism, along with campaigns aimed at recycling aspects of the country’s authoritarian past (for example, the numerous initiatives to “restore the name” of pro-Nazi Marshal Ion Antonescu or to sanitize the murderous history of the fascist Iron Guard)⁹. In contrast, there

were attempts at a “memory regime,” that is, an effort to recuperate “a shattered past” (Jarausch and Geyer, 2003), in addition to movements that demanded other sorts of clarifications – particularly legal ones on the basis of the gradual opening of the Securitate archives and of other institutions that had a crucial role in the functioning and reproduction of the regime – and obtaining moral and material compensations for suffering inflicted by the 20th-century totalitarian experience in Romania. The essential obstacle to any democratic endeavor to work through the communist past lies in the fact that even though knowledge of the truth is gradually developed, it does not translate into an officially sanctioned acknowledgment of its history (Rigby, 2001, p. 82). In other words, institutionalized amnesia could be fully overcome only by an institutionalized memory of the communist dictatorship.

The birth of a truth commission

In April 2006, convinced by now of the urgent necessity of such an initiative, President Băsescu decided to create the PCACDR. His position at the time, and during the entire period of decommunization, proves the importance of political will and determination in the attempt to initiate and sustain a potentially centrifugal endeavor. President Băsescu entrusted Vladimir Tismaneanu with selecting the members of the commission. In so doing, the latter took into account the scholarly competence and moral credibility of the people invited to join this body. Among the commission members figured well-known historians, social scientists, civil society personalities, former political prisoners, former dissidents, and major figures of the democratic exile. President Băsescu charged the commission with the task of producing a rigorous and coherent document that would examine the main institutions, methods, and personalities that made possible the crimes and abuses of the communist regime. In addition to its academic tasks, the work of the commission was meant to pass moral judgment on the defunct dictatorship and invite a reckoning with the past through a painful, albeit inevitable, acknowledgement of its crimes against humanity and other forms of repression. This was a revolutionary step in Romanian postcommunist politics: neither ex-communist president Ion Iliescu nor anticommunist president Emil Constantinescu had engaged in such a potentially explosive undertaking. The Romanian case seems to validate Michael Ignatieff’s assertion that

leaders can have an enormous impact on the mysterious process by which individuals come to terms with the painfulness of their societies’ past. Leaders give their societies permission to say the unsayable, to think the unthinkable, to rise to gestures of reconciliation that people, individually, cannot imagine.

(Ignatieff, 1998, p. 188. See also Digeser, 2001)

By creating the PCACDR, the Romanian President did institutionalize a fundamental tool of transitional justice despite its non-judicial truth-seeking nature.

Reactions to the condemnation and political rearrangements after 2007

The project and activities of the PCACDR benefited from the previous experience of the International Commission on the Holocaust (ICHR) in Romania. The main difference between the two endeavors was that the proceedings of the ICHR could not be perceived, as in the PCACDR's case, as a direct threat or involving a personal stake in contemporary society and politics, because the three historical groups involved in the Holocaust (the victims, the perpetrators, and the bystanders) had mostly disappeared. As far as the communist past is concerned, many of the perpetrators, victims, and witnesses of or by-standers to the regime's crimes were and still are alive, and sometimes involved in societal dynamics (some of them even held seats in the Romanian parliament). The moment on December 18, 2006, when exponents of the neo-Communist left and ultra-nationalist right booed President Bănescu's delivery of the findings of the PCACDR, demonstrated that a genuine democracy cannot function properly in the absence of historical consciousness. An authentic democratic community cannot be built on the denial of past crimes, abuses, and atrocities. The past is not another country. It cannot be wished away – the more that is attempted, the more we witness the return of repressed memories (for example, consider the recurring efforts to prosecute former Mexican president Luis Echeverría for his involvement in the bloody repression of student demonstrations in 1968, "The Tlatelolco Massacre," and in 1971, "The Corpus Christi Massacre"). For the first time in post-1989 Romania, the PCACDR rejected outright the practices of institutionalized amnesia and generated a national conversation about long-denied and concealed moments of the past (including instances of collaboration and complicity) (Tanasoiu, 2007).

The PCACDR aimed at a synthesis between understanding the traumatic history through a methodology that presupposes distance from the surveyed subject and empathizing with the people who suffered from the crimes and abuses of the dictatorship. The commission pursued a reconstruction of the past along the dichotomy of distance-empathy, focusing upon both general and individual aspects of the past. The Final Report's intentionality lies in the facts,¹⁰ in the more or less familiar places of Romania's communist history. The PCACDR first identified victims, regardless of their political colors, for one cannot argue that one is against torture for the left while ignoring such practices when it comes to the right. The militants of the far right should have been punished on a legal basis, but this was not the case for the trials put forth by the Romanian Communist Party (RCP). The communists simply shattered any notion of the rule of law. The Final Report

identifies the nature of abuses and its victims, though it does not leave aside the ideological context of the times. For the PCACDR, the communist regime represented the opposite of rule of law, an *Unrechtsstaat*.

The PCACDR was “a state, public history lesson” during which the “truth” about the communist totalitarian experience was “officially proclaimed and publicly exposed,” that is, acknowledged. It was an exercise of “sovereignty over memory,”¹¹ an attempt to break with the self-serving historical narratives of the Ceaușescu era and expose the role of the Romanian state in the exercise of direct and indirect terror against the population for more than four decades.

The commission and the democratization of the archives

Created in 1999 in Bucharest¹² and directly controlled by the Romanian Parliament, the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS) did not effectively start functioning until 2007,¹³ mostly because of the lack of political will. Simply put, “acting at the national level, [the CNSAS] was the result of a long lobby for the declassification of the Securitate’s files” (Mitroiu, 2016, p. 3). In this respect, the condemnation of the communist regime as illegitimate and criminal by the President Traian Băscescu in December 2006 opened up a new era for the Romanian archives (the CNSAS included). Until that moment, the employees of this institution had been very low profile in the public domain as they were supposed to investigate and reveal the past of former Securitate personnel without actually seeing their files. It was only via President Traian Băscescu’s strong political commitment toward decommunization that the Romanian Intelligence Service started to deliver more and more files to the lawful keeper, CNSAS. In other words, between 1999 and 2006, the CNSAS had been able to access less than 1% of the former Securitate archives (less than 10,000 files). Then, through a Supreme Council of National Defense political decision, a massive process of declassification started and the heir to the former Securitate, SRI,¹⁴ had transferred up to 20 kilometers of files, meaning 2.3 million volumes. The transfer process continued for a few years afterward. Mention should be made also of the tens of thousands of files which had already been destroyed during the 1989 revolution and the 1990 “Berevoiești affair.”

In theory, the 1999 law for the establishment of the CNSAS gave unrestricted access to the Securitate files, apart from those relating to national security issues. In practice, however, the files remained under SRI control. After 2008, and to the shock of many, including foreign citizens in communist Romania, the access to personal files by the former Securitate “almost felt as if you obtained your FBI file and found documents about yourself signed by J. Edgar Hoover” (Verdery, 2012, p. 16; see also Verdery, 2018). It proved yet again that these files contain essential data linking top-ranking officials in the communist pyramid of power to political police activities. Furthermore, high-profile files can offer a glimpse into the nature of top

party struggles between 1945 and 1989. The presidential commission had tried to shed light on issues pertaining to the specific responsibilities of various communist magnates. Their personal records generally contain autobiographies, notes given by former collaborators, useful information on party sanctions (and, in some cases, their annulment). It would be almost impossible to retrace conclusively the history of the struggle between different nuclei of power in the communist party during WWII without open access to such files.

The members and experts of the PCACDR had been able to study the documents in the Archive of the Department of Military Courts, but the archives of the military courts in other cities (Cluj and Timișoara) had been impossible to access. Some of the members and experts of the commission had worked in the Military Archives (MApN), others in the archives of the various divisions of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, the archives of the Union of Communist Youth (UTC), and the Central Committee's chancellery office. In many cases, contrary to what the press had been informed, the members of the commission were not the first to see the documents (there are records to confirm early "visitors" in the archives at a time when they seemed mostly closed to common citizens – in the 1990s and the early 2000s).

Perhaps the most daunting obstacle to the Commission's work was obtaining access to archives from Communist times (of the Central Committee, of ministries, of various institutions directly involved in the functioning of the regime, and so on). While the then president was very optimistic at the start of the project, he soon discovered its challenges. The PCACDR worked under very difficult circumstances – the archives were locked, large sectors of society were apathetic, and the intellectuals remained divided. But the Commission eventually succeeded, which would not have happened without president Băseșcu.

These details are relevant for how the reading of the archives of the former Securitate,¹⁵ of the communist party, and various ministries affected the preliminary structure of the Final Report of the PCACDR. For instance, the activity of the Commission had been met with a lot of polite resistance at the archives of the Health Ministry, a highly important source for documenting gross violations of human rights, medical abuses, and other convoluted phenomena tied to Ceaușescu's demographic policies (particularly his Decree 770/ 1966, which outlawed abortion). Moreover, outside Bucharest, local technical details seemed to be, at times, insurmountable. There simply was not enough transparency and access to the archives before the activity of the PCACDR. In this respect, the pioneering work of the Commission with regard to the democratization of the Romanian archives should be emphasized.

One of the Final Report's significant conclusions was that continuity existed between the first and second stages of Romanian Communism: this shattered the previous historiographical consensus that the latter Ceaușescu

dictatorship was fully nationalist while the earlier Dej regime was not.¹⁶ This assertion enraged the “old historians,” meaning the ex-Communist historians. They countered the report’s conclusion by claiming that Ceaușescu condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, that he was anti-Soviet, and that he had supposedly represented the country’s national interest in the most prominent circles and arenas of the Cold War order.¹⁷ Basically, they peddled nothing but a recycled form of Ceaușescu’s claims about the legitimacy of his own rule. To understand the reasons for these historians’ reaction, one has to look into the impact of the Presidential Commission on their status. Cristian Vasile, the scientific secretary of the PCACDR, pointed out that the democratization of the local archives was “a powerful blow against the barons of Romanian historiography” (Vasile, 2011). These barons were mainly members of the historiographical establishment (high-profile members of the Romanian Academy and/or of its Institutes of History), who had made their names during the Communist period. After 1989, they hardly altered their nation-centric approach and often white-washed their involvement in the self-presentation of the regime.¹⁸ As another historian pointed out, “Historiography itself becomes multileveled: from institutional history to biographies, from history of particular policies to the study of the production of knowledge/identity, from social history to history of everyday life, from high politics to regional, local, and microhistories” (Iacob, 2014, p. 52). From this point of view, the procurement of complete and unhindered access to the archives of the Communist regime in Romania had been of paramount importance.¹⁹

Instead of conclusions

The year 2006 was pivotal not only because of the condemnation of the Communist regime but also because more than 1,300,000 files of the Securitate were transferred into the archive of the CNSAS. The inevitable question is, why 2006? We suggest that these events occurred that year because of political will and the mobilization of civil society on this issue. Decommunization in Romania had been delayed because the former Securitate and nomenklatura members had been prospering for the first 15 years following the 1989 revolution. But, by 2006, there emerged a critical mass of support for the creation of a truth commission, which exerted considerable pressure on the president. This public engagement, most obvious in a series of public interventions from notable intellectuals, resulted in the establishment at the beginning of 2006 of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania (IICCR) led by historians Marius Oprea and Stejărel Olaru, and in the increasingly strong civic reactions to the decisions of the CNSAS to make its files public (Horne, 2009, pp. 344–376; Stan, 2009a, 2009b, pp. 1–13).

The effort of condemning the Communist dictatorship was (at least) tri-dimensional, existing in the realms of epistemology, legality (with regard

to both juridical and legislative initiatives), and memorialization. From an epistemic point of view, numerous volumes, memoirs, documents, diaries, and historical, sociological, economic, philosophical, literary, and political science surveys have been published in the years since the condemnation. Most of these editorial projects were the collective works of government institutions such as the CNSAS, the National Archives, the Romanian Diplomatic Institute, or the ICCMER (the present-day heir to IICCR). From a legal perspective, some property restitution cases (in connection to the confiscations perpetrated by the Communist regime) have been resolved. Likewise, there have been juridical verdicts annulling prison, concentration camps, and death sentences from the 1950s. It is obvious that it takes much more effort and initiatives to complete such a total righting of the past, endeavors made all the more difficult because the heirs of the former nomenklatura have no interest in such an enterprise.

We have outlined the labyrinthine story going from the initial refusal to allow public access to any archives from the communist era to the opening of these archives to researchers, journalists, former victims, etc. Post-communist democracies need to root themselves in an unsparingly honest knowledge of the past, both with its heroic and its inglorious moments. The Securitate archives show that many people collaborated with the regime, yet many refused to do so. They document the human rights abuses and provide strong arguments against the attempts to exonerate the perpetrators of the crimes against humanity. In this respect, although somewhat of a laggard in addressing these disturbing issues, Romania has succeeded in providing a possible model of what a truth commission can do in deconstructing stubborn mythologies and overcoming persistent negationist endeavors.

Notes

- 1 For details regarding the activity of the Presidential Commission, its meanings in local and European context, and the aftermath of the condemnation, see Tismaneanu, Vladimir and Stan, Marius, *Romania Confronts Its Communist Past: Democracy, Memory, and Moral Justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. The volume also reflects the head of the Commission's recollections (VT's) regarding the establishment of this body, the sometimes fastidious selection of its members and experts, the achievements as well as shortcomings.
- 2 Decommunization, like post-1945 de-Nazification in Germany, is both a destructive and a constructive endeavor. On the one hand, it abolishes authoritarian institutions; on the other hand, it means the establishment and the consolidation of a political order respectful of civic rights. Despite all their differences, and there were many, communism and fascism shared the same hostility to liberalism, middle-class values, individual autonomy, and the state of law. Decommunization, like de-Nazification, is a mental (cultural, psychological) process as much as a political, economic, and legal one.
- 3 For an examination of the reactions from 2009 to 2013, see Iacob, Bogdan C. 2014, "The Romanian Communist Past and the Entrapment of Polemics," in: Tismaneanu, Vladimir and Iacob, Bogdan C. (eds.), *Remembrance, History, and*

Justice: Dealing with the Past in Democratic Societies. Budapest: Central European University Press, pp. 417–474.

- 4 Ion Iliescu (b. 1930), who had been the Communist Youth Union first secretary and youth minister during 1967–1971, supervised campaigns to neutralize rebellious attitudes among the young writers, while students who raised their voices for freedom, especially in 1968, were promptly reprimanded with his blessing. The same young Iliescu had accompanied Ceaușescu in his decisive 1971 Asia trip, to China and North Korea (see Kotkin, Stephen. 2009, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment*. New York: Modern Library, p. 74, note 13. In his 2001 NYRB article (see endnote 3), Tony Judt wrote that “both [Corneliu Vadim] Tudor and [Ion] Iliescu have [had, in CVT’s case] deep roots in pre-1989 Romanian politics. Tudor was Nicolae Ceaușescu’s best-known literary sycophant, writing odes to his leader’s glory before making the easy switch from national communism to ultranationalism and founding his Greater Romania Party in 1991 with émigré cash. Ion Iliescu is one of a number of senior Communists who turned against Ceaușescu and manipulated a suspiciously stage-managed revolution to their own advantage.”
- 5 After 1989, “former supporters of Ceaușescu, including a number of notorious sycophants, have adopted his nationalist postures and given them a more extreme form. [S]ycophants of Ceaușescu, notably those associated with the former weekly *Săptămâna*, have become the most ardent advocates of extreme nationalism in an attempt to deflect attention from their part in bolstering the former dictator”: Deletant, Dennis. 1995, “Epilogue,” in: *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965–1989*. London: Routledge, pp. 386–404; for a brief portrait of Corneliu Vadim Tudor, see footnote 16 of the same *Epilogue*.
- 6 See the full-text of the establishing Act passed by the German Bundestag in June 1998. Available at www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/headline-1081.html.
- 7 In this perspective, transition is the “result of exposure, talks and what are more often than not messy negotiations. The outcome is almost inevitably a hybrid of mechanisms of justice, politics and coexistence that emerge from interim and experimental initiatives designed to promote nation-building.” See Villa-Vicencio, Charles, and Doxtader, Erik, eds. 2003, *The Provocations of Amnesty: Memory, Justice, and Impunity*. Trenton: Africa World Press, p. 31.
- 8 See the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania. Available at www.yadvashem.org/docs/international-commission-on-romania-holocaust.html.
- 9 See Vladimir Tismaneanu’s Romanian language volume *Spectrele Europei Centrale*. București: Polirom, 2001, where the author discusses the interesting process of recycling (neo/proto/crypto) fascism by means of integrating it into the identitarian discourse legitimizing the communist regime. In the “Lessons of the 20th Century” chapter, VT argues that “the Ceaușescu regime was, at its most basic level, a very interesting mix that brought together both the legacy of militarist authoritarianism from the 1941–1944 period, which was celebrated in myriad ways, and the degraded mystic inspired by the extreme-right, which was grafted upon the institutional body of Romanian Stalinism” (pp. 246–247).
- 10 Moses, A. D. 1998, “Structure and Agency in the Holocaust: Daniel J. Goldhagen and His Critics,” *History and Theory*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 194–219, 218, May. Dominick LaCapra similarly points to the distance-empathy synthesis, as a valid method of approaching recent history, in his argument for reconstruction and electivity on the basis of fact within a democratic value system: “A reckoning with the past in keeping with democratic values requires the ability – or at least

- the attempt – to read scars and to affirm only what deserves affirmation as one turn the lamp of critical reflection on oneself and one's own." LaCapra, Dominick. 1992, "Representing the Holocaust: Reflections on the Historians' Debate," in: Friedländer, Saul (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 108–127. See also LaCapra, Dominick. 1998, "Revisiting the Historians' Debate – Mourning and Genocide," *History and Memory*, vol. 9, no. 1–2, pp. 80–112.
- 11 We are employing here the concepts developed by Timothy Garton Ash and Timothy Snyder in Garton Ash, Timothy, "Trials, Purges and History Lessons: Treating a Difficult Past in Post-Communist Europe" and Snyder, Timothy. 2002, "Memory of Sovereignty and Sovereignty over Memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939–1999," in: Müller, Jan-Werner (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - 12 Law No. 187, 7 December 1999. Available at www.cnsas.ro/cadrul_legal.html, accessed 1 March 2019.
 - 13 "CNSAS was to be led by a council of eleven representatives of the leading political parties. At best, this arrangement signified democratic pluralism; at its worst, it meant that the council's activity was often nearly paralyzed by the wide differences among its leaders, some of whom represented parties which fought to close CNSAS and all access to the archives." Vădulescu, Cristina. 2010, "Arresting Biographies: The Personal File in the Soviet Union and Romania," in: *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 28.
 - 14 "Following the disbandment of the Securitate the internal security services were restructured and split up, resulting in the creation of nine new security and intelligence services." SRI was one of them. "These services were each formed around the nucleus of a former Securitate directorate or unit. Thus the SRI initially drew its personnel from the directorate of internal security" (Deletant, Dennis. 2001, "Ghosts from the Past: Successors to the Securitate in Post-Communist Romania," in: Light, Duncan, and Phinnemore, David (eds.), *Post-Communist Romania: Coming to Terms with Transition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 41–42).
 - 15 For details regarding the historiography of the problem and the functioning of the former Securitate, see *Caietele CNSAS*, Year 1, No. 1/2008.
 - 16 "In the popular imagination, and in the orthodox narratives of several prominent historians and social commentators, the Dej period [1948–1965] was characterized by a slavish obedience to the Soviet Union and mass repression, while Ceaușescu [1965–1989], for all his later faults, sought to break with the 'Communist' past and place Romania squarely on its own course. The commission argues for a fundamental connection between these two periods: The use of terror and incarceration continued, albeit in more variegated forms, across the Dej – Ceaușescu transition. The rhetoric of socialist internationalism was mixed with a reinvigorated form of national exclusivism after the mid-1960s, but overall there was no clear break between a 'Stalinist' brand of Romanian communism and its 'national' variety later on." See King, Charles. 2007, "Remembering Romanian Communism," *Slavic Review*, vol. 66, no. 4, p. 719, Winter.
 - 17 On Romanian historiography's clashes with political power, see Zavatti, Francesco. 2013, "'Historiography Has Been a Minefield' – A Conversation with Vladimir Tismaneanu," *Baltic Worlds*, p. 13, April: "The majority of the older historians had collaborated with the Communist regime. (David Prodan, Lucian Boia, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, Alexandru Zub, and Șerban Papacostea were rather the exception.) Some did so enthusiastically, others reluctantly. Some became Securitate informers. Altogether, [they had] a pretty depressing record.

Initially, immediately after the regime's collapse, there was an effort to exorcize the demons of the past and to repent for the abdication imposed by the regime. However, with support from Ion Iliescu, the nationalist school resurrected quite swiftly and took over the main institutions, including the archives. One influential person was Professor Ioan Scurtu [b. 1940], Iliescu's history advisor and one of the most adamant supporters of the national Stalinist paradigm. These people perceived the Final Report as a personal offence and responded accordingly: with slander, innuendo, and threats." (VT).

- 18 For example, the CNSAS published the details of historian Dinu C. Giurescu's involvement and dealings with the Romanian secret police. See "Dinu Giurescu și Securitatea," vol. 22, 28 January 2014.
- 19 As Monica Ciobanu put it, "access to archives, documents and files provides researchers from these agencies [The National Archives, IICCMER, CNSAS] new opportunities for exploring pre-1989 history in a systematic manner and on the basis of official sources. This represents a departure from an approach to the past through memoirs, diaries and biographies of victims or of those who were influential participants in the socialist system." See Ciobanu, Monica. 2011, "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues," *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 39, no. 2, p. 206, March.

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