

POLSCI REVIEWS

*Romanian Institute of Recent History - **About Holocaust and Communism*** - Polirom 2002; 344 pages; price 198.000 lei

by Emanuel Răuță

The recent release of the Romanian Institute for Recent History (Institutul Roman pentru Istorie Recenta - IRIR) *About Holocaust and Communism* is an introspective yearbook concerning two oppressive regimes that Romania dealt with in the last century. The yearbook deals with Romanian contemporary history; most of all, the book is a step towards the moral reconciliation Romania aims at since 1989. The Romanian Institute for Recent History's initiative is important from several points of view: transparentizing of the Romanian historiography; an objective analysis of an opaque period from Romanian history; an attempt to overview institution that inherited the Romanian Intelligence Service (*Securitate*) legacy - human and logistic. The IRIR team of scholars, coordinated by professor Andrei Pippidi, succeeded to bring on the Romanian scene of history analysis a new approach: they imported the Western methodological model, a model based on objectivity rather than on speculative items, critiques and factual data. But, most importantly, the authors succeeded to keep themselves neutral, a necessity in this sensitive field.

The present issue, one of an intended long series, is rather polemic regarding the successors of totalitarian oriented movements (especially the extreme-right wing). The article of Andrei Pippidi mirrors the last twelve years of the Romanian extreme-right wing's discourse and political actions. The author defines this movement and its main actor, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, as an attempt to give specificity and consistency to an ideology lacking consistency and offering no economical doctrine and solutions for the problems Romania faces. The continuation of anti-Semite discourse of this interwar wing and Ceausescu's national communism is present in

journals such as *Romania Mare*, successor of *Vatra* and *Europa*. However, this journal's message is rather emotional in an attempt to attract the unsatisfied fragment of Romanian electorate. As professor Pippidi correctly points out, the success of Vadim Tudor's party is not a consequence of its anti-Semite discourse but rather of the suppressed feelings of an alienated and poor population. The anti-Semite movement developed since 1990, but the author argues that it turned into anti-American and anti-Israelite.

The ruins of Direction of State Security (DSS), with a new face but mostly the same human and logistic resources, are the subject of Marius Oprea's article. The author seeks to offer solutions for the unsolved legacy of the Securitate, the institution held responsible in the article for all antidemocratic actions in the last ten years (Piata Universitatii, blue-collars repeated actions that created anarchy in Bucharest). Oprea believes that the new institution created - Romanian Intelligence Service - SRI - only continued the work of Securitate. The instruments somewhat changed but the authority remained to be shared by a limited elite. The principle of *indian line succession* (when one falls, another one replaces him) - remained the guiding principle in SRI - so the structures conserved the undemocratic practices they were often accused of before.

A major debate in the last decade in Romania has a controversial actor, the Marshall Antonescu. Whether he is a criminal or a victim in the alliance with Hitler is a mystery professor Dennis Deletant tries to solve. The contribution of professor Deletant to this yearbook is of major importance because the issue of Romania's involvement in the Holocaust needed an external voice to be credited enough. The Romanian historians tried to find solutions but they were accused of lack of objectivity and partisanship so, a foreign specialist, well accommodated with the Romanian history, should bring some clarity. Deletant argues that the Holocaust in Romania followed the same path but in some ways it differed. That is because Antonescu did not regard Jews the same manner Hitler did. Antonescu was mainly concerned of the danger of bolshevism they might have brought along to Romania. This perspective does not diminish his guilt, only emphasizes that his policy regarding Jews had a different trajectory. He did not spear Jews from Basarabia and Bucovina, but he managed to protect the ones from Transilvania, Muntenia, and Moldova. The registered number of deaths

among Jews in Romania is approximately 300,000, but Deletant points out that other 375,000 Jews managed to survive. There are two essential aspects that must be underlined here: first, in 1942 Antonescu refused to be part of the monstrosity called "The Final Solution"; second, he rejected Hitler's request for deportation of the Jews from Banat, Southern Transilvania, Muntenia, and Moldova in Poland.

A significant material from the yearbook belongs to Stejere Olaru. The article comprises an important number of interviews with workers, witnesses to 1987's protests in Brasov against Ceausescu's economic and social policies. Survivors from Brasov are talking with Olaru about the terror instituted by the Ceausescu's regime after the workers unexpected strike ended. In Brasov, the system succeeded to ruin the entire Marxist theory regarding exploitation: here, the communist regime became the oppressing class. This document of oral memory is important for the workers in Brasov and for all dissidents that suffered the terror of Securitate. The riot is considered the first step towards the falling of the communist regime.

Armand Gosu, the historian that made the yearbook possible, is recreating Ghita Ionescu's story about Nicolae Titulescu, the finest Romanian diplomat - president of the League of the Nations before World War Two, - whose remains were brought back to Romania after many years of exile. Disciple of Titulescu, Ghita Ionescu remembers the political and diplomatic trajectory of Nicolae Titulescu, personality that played an important role in the diplomacy proceeding World War Two.

The yearbook is completed by a section of reviews from various domains, ranging from history to political science and autobiographical literature. Although the IRIR Yearbook has not the aesthetic aspect that it would deserve for its contents, the quality of the latter makes all the money worth.