CONTENTS.
SUMMARY.
CONTRIBUTORS.

Totalitarianism Archives

Review of the National Institute of the Study of Totalitarianism

Volum XXXIV, Number 130-131, 1-2/2026

EDITORIAL

FLORIN ABRAHAM, ***Transitional Justice Policies in Romania: Evaluations and Perspectives 5***

This study analyses the evolution and effectiveness of transitional justice policies in post-communist Romania, investigating how the state and society have addressed the legacy of the totalitarian regime. The research substantiates the hypothesis of a structural paradox, conceptualized herein as „anti-communist conformism": the coexistence of a trans-ideological public discourse centred on the ritualistic condemnation of communism with a profoundly deficient institutional and legal track record. This conformism has operated as an instrument for political legitimation and the accumulation of symbolic capital, effectively instrumentalizing and frequently neutralizing the implementation of reparative and punitive measures. Through a multidimensional approach, the paper critically evaluates the primary instruments of transitional justice: the systemic failure of criminal accountability mechanisms regarding regime crimes and the 1989 Revolution, the deficiencies of property restitution policies (restitutio in integrum), the fragmented access to the former Securitate archives, and the constitutional blockages that invalidated lustration attempts. The findings reveal a major structural asymmetry. On one hand, the political and legal dimensions experienced systemic regression, generating unforeseen socio-economic consequences and numerous condemnations by the European Court of Human Rights. On the other hand, academic historiography and independent cultural production have successfully delivered a rigorous deconstruction of the repressive apparatus. The study concludes that, given the legal and demographic exhaustion of retributive justice, the focus of decommunization irreversibly shifts toward educational policies and the consolidation of a democratic collective memory.

Keywords: transitional justice, anti-communist conformism, post-communism, decommunization, property restitution, lustration, Securitate archives, collective memory, historiography

STUDIES

Acad. GHEORGHE E. COJOCARU, ***From the Memoirs of a "Red Diplomat": The Soviets and the Bessarabian Question in the Late 1920s 27***

This study demonstrates that the memoirs of the former Soviet diplomat Grigory Z. Besedovsky, who defected from the Soviet Embassy in Paris and was granted political asylum in France in 1929, remain largely unknown in Romanian historiography. Yet these memoirs offer valuable insights into the inner

workings of Soviet diplomacy and the Kremlin's policy toward Bessarabia. In particular, they shed light on the Soviet leadership's efforts to prevent the ratification of the Paris Treaty of Bessarabia (28 October 1920). At the same time, Besedovsky suggests that, behind closed doors in the Kremlin, the possibility of recognizing Romania's sovereignty over the territory between the Prut and the Dniester was not entirely ruled out, provided that certain political circumstances emerged and specific conditions were met.

Keywords: USSR, Romania, Bessarabia, Stalin, Chicherin, Litvinov, Rakowsky, Political Bureau, Narkomindel, Japan, France, Italy, Treaty of Bessarabia.

VASILE BUGA, *Soviet and Russian Historiography on Political Repressions in the USSR*.....*36*

Based on history textbooks, works, and studies published in the USSR and, more recently, in the Russian Federation, the paper presents the means of repression used by the Soviet regime against all layers of the population. Special attention is given to the Great Terror from 1937-1938 and the post-WWII period, up until the death of Joseph V. Stalin in March, 1953. It also highlights the measures taken to rehabilitate the victims of repression after the 20th Congress of the CPSU (February 1956), as well as during the policy of openness promoted by the last Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

Keywords: Terror, Political Repression, Gulag, trial, rehabilitation, Stalin.

ALEXANDRU-CRISTIAN VOICU, *War, Peace, and Propaganda in Romanian Philately, 1930-1960. An Analysis of Postage Stamps as Historical Sources, II*.....*49*

Visual history remained neglected by scholars until the late 20th century. As technological developments enabled a much faster circulation of visual sources, specialists began to abandon the primacy of written sources. Philatelic sources are still, even today, a largely unexplored field, with postage stamps viewed primarily through their functional role: the payment of postal fees. The postage stamp was, by definition, a symbol and product of the state, alongside currency, the flag, and the national anthem, so political interference in their iconography was bound to manifest itself fully. Romanian postage stamps offer a distinctive lens through which to examine the concepts of war, peace, and propaganda, particularly in light of the country's turbulent historical trajectory between 1930 and 1960, the period selected for this study. The choice of this three-decade interval is deliberate. The year 1930 marks the accession of King Carol II, a moment when Romanian philately began to foreground visual motifs intended to legitimize the Carlist regime that consolidated toward the end of the 1930s. The 1940s constituted a phase of profound political and social upheaval in Romania, encompassing both the Antonescu dictatorship and, after 1945, the establishment and consolidation of communist totalitarianism. The terminal point of the analysis, 1960, was selected because it encompasses the first twelve years of the communist regime, during which the themes central to this study gradually diminish in philatelic representation.

Keywords: Philately, Postage Stamps, Postal History of Romania, Communism, King Carol II, Propaganda, War, Peace.

ALINA ILINCA, LIVIU MARIUS BEJENARU *"20 Years in Siberia": the Drama of the Bukovina Romanians deported in June 1941 by the Soviets*

……..62

Anița Cudla's book, first published in 1991 by Humanitas Publishing House under the title *20 Years in Siberia: Bukovinian Destiny*, recounts the drama of the Bukovinian peasants deported on the night of June 12-13, 1941 to Siberia. 600 inhabitants of Mahala, a village near Cernăuți/Chernivtsi (now in Ukraine), were deported on the basis of the *Regulation of Deportation of Certain Categories of Criminals*, approved by Stalin in May 1941. On the same night, 22,000 "active counter-revolutionaries" from Bessarabia were also deported. The 360-page notebook in which Anița Cudla recounts her life was entrusted in 1982 to her nephew Gheorghe Nandriș. As the book's editor points out, "it is a notebook filled with an unexpectedly beautiful, almost calligraphic handwriting, reminiscent of a child's handwriting." The story of her life falls into what we commonly call wounded or even diseased memory, because mourning, as Freud states, is always a reaction to the loss of a loved one or of an abstraction that has been elevated to the status of a substitute for that person, such as: homeland, freedom, ideal, etc. In the case of Anița Cudla, in addition to the loss of two loved ones, her husband and mother, she also had to cope with another trauma, that of being separated from her homeland for twenty years as a result of deportation. But, as

happens in life, grief is followed by resilience, which is defined as the ability to continue to look to the future, despite destabilizing circumstances, difficult life situations or major traumas.

Keywords: Deportation, Stalinism, Trauma, Emotional Resilience.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS PETIT, ***Lutter contre les fondamentalismes politiques. Virgil Gheorghiu au coeur de la tourmente totalitaire d'après ses Mémoire……..85***

Among the opponents of totalitarianism in Romania, history has remembered the name of Virgil Gheorghiu (1916-1992). Opposed to communism, he sought refuge in France in 1948, and he built a vast novelistic fresco, now considered a 'classic' of anti-totalitarian literature. But his memoirs also make it possible to grasp the essence of the totalitarian phenomenon, from a perspective different but complementary to his novels, in particular *The 25th Hour*.

Keywords: Virgil Gheorghiu, violence, political fundamentalism, Nazism, communism, resistance to totalitarianism, orthodoxy, Romania.

LÁSZLÓ MÁRTON, ***Anti-Collectivization Movements in the Former Three Seats County in the Autumn of 1950, I.....89***

The study examines the process of collectivization in Three Seats (Háromszék) County during 1949–1950, with particular emphasis on the anti-collectivization movements that emerged in 1950.

Beginning on 12 June 1950, the authorities launched a large-scale collectivization campaign based on coercion and violence. As a result, anti-collectivization movements broke out in 22 villages. The security forces suppressed these protests through a coordinated operation carried out during the night of 22–23 September 1950 in 13 villages. Peasant householders identified as the alleged instigators of the unrest were forcibly evacuated together with their families. During the operation, clashes occurred in several villages between the security forces and local inhabitants attempting to protect the villagers, resulting in the deaths of four local residents.

Keywords: Romania, Three Seats (Háromszék) county, collectivization, riots.

ALEXANDRU-MURAD MIRONOV, ***Soviet Model and Domestic Innovation in the Political Trial of the "Gang of Saboteurs and Wreckers from the Danube – Black Sea Canal" in 1952 .....101***

In this study we outline the differences and similarities between Soviet-style political trials from the 1930s and the Trial of the "Gang of Saboteurs and Wreckers from the Danube – Black Sea Canal", that took place in Constanța, Romania, during the Fall of 1952. There is no doubt that the engineers convicted in this show-trial were victims of political repression dictated by a specific scenario – one in which the technical intelligentsia, though not particularly close to the regime yet in its service, was held accountable for a fault that was not its own. Nevertheless, through their inaction and indifference toward the sufferings of the political prisoniers at the Canal, that worked under their guidance, they were passive spectators, even accomplices, to the immense injustice being committed there.

Keywords: State Socialism, Stalinism, Forced Labour, Political Justice, Danube – Black Sea Canal.

COSMIN BUDEANCĂ, "*A Nobody's Dog, Thrown Forever into the Dustbin of History." Vasile Luca's Detention in the "Prison of Silence" at Râmnicu Sărat (1955-1963) 111*

Vasile Luca was one of the officials responsible for establishing communism in Romania. Following the power struggle within the Romanian Workers' Party, he was removed from his positions in 1952, sentenced to death in 1954 (later commuted to life at hard labor), and died in Aiud Prison in 1963. More than seven and a half years of his sentence (1955-1963) were spent in the Râmnicu Sărat penitentiary – nicknamed the "Prison of Silence" – considered by survivors the harshest facility in the system, where he nevertheless benefited from a preferential regime. The article focuses on this period, with brief references to earlier years and to the impact of his conviction on his family.

Keywords: communism, repression, political prisoners, Vasile Luca, Râmnicu Sărat Prison.

BRÂNDUȘA COSTACHE, ***The Role of the Gold Reserve of the National Bank of Romania in Supporting the Economic Directions Outlined by the Declaration of the Romanian Workers' Party in April 1964 .....141***

This study aims to highlight the role played by the gold reserve held at the National Bank of Romania in the preparation of the Declaration of the Romanian Workers' Party from April 1964, and subsequently in supporting the economic directions outlined in its text. It covers the general evolution of the gold reserve during the decade 1960-1970, as well as the changes in the attitude of Romania's communist leaders under the influence of fluctuations in relations with the Soviet Union. Romania's position within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance is particularly relevant in this context. The study also presents the orientation of Romanian authorities towards actions aimed at increasing the gold stock and diversifying the ways of leveraging it to obtain foreign currency resources, which would allow greater freedom of movement on the world market, the realization of industrialization plans, and consolidating both domestic and international prestige.

Keywords: gold reserve, National Bank of Romania, Declaration of the Romanian Workers' Party from April 1964.

ELENA NEGRU, GHEORGHE NEGRU, ***The Communist Party of Moldova in 1965. From Ideological Crisis to Anti-Romanian War 154***

1965 marked a seismic moment in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, culminating in the Third Congress of Writers. Here, the cultural elite launched a frontal attack on the Russification policy and publicly demanded the return to the Latin alphabet, a gesture equivalent to an affirmation of Romanian national identity, supported by the symbolic capital of Romania's autonomous foreign policy. The leader of the Communist Party of Moldova, Ivan Bodiul, stamped this movement as political subversion. The Party's reaction was an immediate and violent retaliation, materialized in the December 1965 decision to launch an extensive anti-Romanian propaganda campaign. The main consequences were the drastic restriction of publications from Romania and the forced rewriting of MSSR history to consolidate Soviet Moldovenism. Thus, the internal crisis transformed into an ideological war aimed at annihilating national tendencies by labeling them as "Westward orientation" and a total subordination of the local culture to the neo-Stalinist line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Keywords: Russification, National movement, Moldavian S.S.S.R., Anti-Romanian propaganda campaign, Soviet Moldovenism.

DAN CĂTĂNUȘ, ***Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Politics of Rehabilitation: Preliminaries to the Third "De-Stalinization," 1965–1968, I 169***

In April 1968, Nicolae Ceaușescu publicly launched a large-scale campaign to rehabilitate individuals—including former leaders of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), such as Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and Ștefan Foriș—who, under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's rule, had been unjustly subjected to various forms of political repression, ranging from arrest, torture, and show trials to execution and assassination.

This campaign had been carefully prepared in advance, beginning immediately after Ceaușescu came to power in March 1965.

This article examines the measures adopted between April 1965 and April 1968, the motivations and guiding principles behind the launch of Romania's third "de-Stalinization" and the first rehabilitation cases of this period. It also analyzes the behind-the-scenes political maneuvers that accompanied the rehabilitation policy, the establishment of the party commission tasked with investigating the Pătrășcanu and Foriș cases, and the strict secrecy under which it operated.

Keywords: Nicolae Ceaușescu, political rehabilitation, de-Stalinization, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Ștefan Foriș.

ION CONSTANTIN, ***The Bessarabia Question in the Romanian Intelligence Services' Concerns during the Communist Regime 199***

This article examines the circumstances in which, against the backdrop of the relative political liberalization in Romania at the end of the 1960s, the Department of Foreign Intelligence (Military Unit 0920) of the Department of State Security (DSS) launched Operation "Brândușa"**.** Its primary objective was

to gather intelligence through specific operational methods in order to obtain information and document the realities of the Romanian territories occupied by the USSR after the Second World War.
Within the framework of Operation "Brânduşa", a series of intelligence activities were carried out to document the ways in which Soviet authorities and historiography presented the history of the Romanian people, particularly that of Bessarabia. The operation also monitored how this issue was reflected in Western scholarly studies, publications, and mass media, including publications produced by the Romanian exile.
Keywords: Bessarabia, Bukovina, communism, Romania, USSR, intelligence, counterintelligence, historiography.

ANDREI-DUMITRU OLTEANU, ***A Complementary Lever: Romania, UNESCO, and the Politics of Cultural Self-Representation, 1963-1972***
.....212

This article reconstructs Romanian activity within UNESCO between the autonomy signals of the late Gheorghiu-Dej years and the ideological closure of July 1971, and argues that the distance between Romania's external self-presentation and its internal reality is the organizing principle of the record rather than an accident within it. Drawing principally on the declassified files of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Fond Problema 241) and reading them against the institutional record of UNESCO and the relevant historiography, it advances a single proposition along three interpretive lines, legitimation, duplicity and the gap of perception, and four analytical axes, the typology of the exported, the relation of strategy to resources, planning and reception, and finality. In the field circumscribed by the organization, Romania acted as a beneficiary of resources, prestige and access rather than as an emitter of culture, and its apparatus produced documentation about itself, which it named "propaganda" in its own correspondence, in place of influence. Its autonomy was real and capped, carrying resolutions and winning a permanent centre while deferring to inter-bloc discipline and declining contests it could not be assured of winning. The seat agreement for the European Centre for Higher Education, inaugurated in Bucharest in 1972, furnishes the sharpest case, a state of censorship and control granting by treaty an enclave of uncensored communication and visa-free entry while freeing foreign officials from obligations it retained over its own citizens. That the brightest moments of the external performance fall after the internal turn of July 1971 gives the record its duplicitous signature.
Keywords: UNESCO, Romania, Cold War, cultural diplomacy, soft power, propaganda, national-communism.

ANDREI POPA, ***The 1979-1989 evolution of the historical discourse concerning the coup d'état of August 23rd 228***

The aim of this article is to analyze the way in which the historical discourse concerning the coup d'état of August 23rd evolved on festive occasions such as its celebrations from 1979, 1984 and 1989, due to their historiographical significance. We shall see how the historical discourse presented various aspects concerning the coup, such as explaining why it can be deemed as such. Also, we will observe the role played by political parties in preparing the overthrow of Marshall Ion Antonescu, the role of King Michael, the Army, and of Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu.
Keywords: 23rd August 1944, Romanian historiography, The Romanian Communist Party, King Michael, World War II.

DOCUMENTS

DORIN DEMOSTENE IANCU, OCTAVIANA JIANU, ***The Romanian domestic and foreign policy in Italian diplomatic documents. The report of Italian Ambassador Niccolò Moscato dated August 31, 1972, II 248***

This article contains the translation of a report written by Italian Ambassador Niccolò Moscato at the end of his mission in Romania (November 1964 – August 1972). Dated August 31, 1972, the document was addressed to the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giuseppe Medici, as required by procedure. It reflects important aspects of Romanian domestic and foreign policy during Moscato's time as ambassador in Bucharest. The Italian diplomat's reflections on Romania are grouped into general themes, such as: Romania in the context of the „Prague Spring" and the Warsaw Pact; Romanian diplomatic relations.

Keywords: Nicolae Ceaușescu, Niccolò Moscato, USSR, Italian-Romanian relations, socialist countries

BIOGRAPHIES

ANA-MARIA CĂTĂNUȘ, *Vasile Paraschiv (1928-2011)*.....*261*
Vasile Paraschiv was a symbol of the struggle for free trade unions in Romania. A member of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) since 1946, Paraschiv resigned from the Party in 1968, disillusioned by the growing gap between its official rhetoric and its practical implementation. From that moment onward, he devoted himself to the fight for trade union freedom, producing thousands of pages of petitions, memoranda, and reports addressed to Party and state authorities, including President Nicolae Ceaușescu. Between 1969 and 1989, Paraschiv was repeatedly arrested, abducted, tortured, and forcibly confined to psychiatric hospitals. While in France in 1978, he testified about the communist regime's use of psychiatry as an instrument of political repression. Following the 1989 Revolution, he continued his efforts to preserve the memory of anti-communist resistance and to bring to justice those responsible for political abuses.
Keywords: Vasile Paraschiv, Nicolae Ceaușescu, free trade unions, political abuse of psychiatry, political repression.

© The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, 2025.