

Can Anti-fascism Still Play a Role? A Case Study of Romania

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Present authoritarian tendencies and actual totalitarian manifestations are generally a result of the crisis of capitalism. They can be better explained, in more detail, through examining the continuity and discontinuity of comparable phenomena, such as fascism and anti-fascism, through analyses of the official and popular representations of the anti-fascism of sixty years ago, by making a link between the old fascism and the present authoritarian tendencies, and by stressing the crisis of today's democracies.

Keywords: Fascism; Anti-fascism; Anti-Semitism; Present Extreme Right; Populism; Inter-war Romania; Present Romania.

Authoritarian Tendencies

Authoritarian tendencies include: the militarization of politics, stress on political formalism and a gap between the top political institutions and the population; pre-eminence of security over democratic rights; a new pre-eminence of the nation over human rights; vulnerability and fragility of liberal democracy;¹ the rise of new intolerant, brutal, aggressive, nationalist, racist and obscurantist ideologies.

All of these puts into doubt the traditional conception of democratic right-wing ideologists who posit that 'totalitarianism' is a useful way to characterise specific political regimes. Rather, the present world-wide reality sketches out a new concept of totalitarianism: as a description of not only a political regime, but a socio-economic system.

If one looks carefully, one may see continuity between the old anti-fascism and the present world struggle against totalitarian tendencies in the present capitalist system—but only if the old anti-fascism and its participants undertake a serious self-critique helped by today's researchers, intellectuals and ordinary people. If this is not done, then old anti-fascism will remain a heroic, extraordinary phenomenon firmly rooted in the past, with a history which few know well, if at all.

¹ Don't forget that inter-war fascism emerged from liberal democracy.

There will also remain a discontinuity between the old anti-fascism and the present situation.

First, the present struggle, which is only taking shape, goes beyond the familiar frame of the national fight against fascist invaders and oppressors. The present stage of transnational capital requires an internationalist struggle (and not the realisation of an illusion, a 'good capitalism', developed and with 'human face' in one country).

Second, the present democratic struggle can no longer be only against dictatorships as such; it requires a conscientious struggle against the underlying causes of totalitarianism.

The critique of the old anti-fascism is, and has to be, made on two levels. First, to show the contribution of old anti-fascism in developing and maintaining a democratic conscience and institutions after the end of World War II (including the social pressure for the welfare state), thus creating a democratic memory and collective history. Second, to emphasize the historical role and thus the inherent shortcomings of anti-fascism.

It is important to underline that the living image of anti-fascism and the living image of anti-fascist opinion is at least a weapon against the political manifestations of contemporary totalitarian tendencies. Romania is a case in point.

History of Romanian Anti-fascism

Romania's anti-fascism was weak from the beginning. Communists were few and illegal, and social-democrats exhibited their anti-fascism only at the end of World War II, when they made an agreement with the communist and bourgeois democratic parties to arrest the dictator, Antonescu—at a time when the Soviet army was already on Romanian territory, three days from Bucharest.

Even if there were some anti-fascist demonstrations,² especially after 1935, the majority of the population was not involved—peasants fighting for everyday survival—and the consequences of that lack of action illustrate perfectly the progress of the 'spiral of silence'. Majority public opinion, as backward as it appeared to be, was only an intermediary factor between the population and the dominant political message coming from the top, which was the main directing element of the population's political alignment. In other words, public opinion was the consequence of political direction, not the other way around.

But that is not to deny that there were enough supporters of the extreme right: inside the bourgeoisie and the big landowners, the rural and urban bureaucracy (priests, notaries, estate superintendents, teachers, professors, doctors and office workers), as well as within the worker and peasant communities.

² From a political standpoint, the participants in those demonstrations were heterogeneous. The main and average political attitude contained the defence of fatherland (that is of nationalism, against the invaders who were expected to rob the good old national capitalist state of its resources) and, at the same time, a critique of the decay of traditional democracy but blaming it on the corruption inside the right-wing parties.

As Nazi Germany retreated from the USSR, its victory in the war no longer assured, the anti-fascist spirit grew. But this manifested itself only in the form of anti-war (and not anti-anti-Soviet Russia) sentiment. The majority of the population hoped for something better after the war but most were confused as to what that meant in practice. Within the groups of open-minded democratic people and thinkers, communists kept the most consistent line.³

Stalinism gave a more rosy image of the Romanian anti-fascist spirit and number of supporters of communists and anti-fascists than was actually the case. Anti-fascism appeared as a monochrome, communist-type public opinion built against the Nazi army and readying for the preparation of the Communist Party's rise to power.

Anti-fascism and Anti-Semitism

An important aspect of anti-fascism is its Jewish component. In Romania as elsewhere, some communists were Jewish and the extreme right and the democratic right put out the message that 'communists are Jews' and that 'anti-fascists are Jews'. This message was taken over by Stalinists who removed Jews from the history of communist and anti-fascist struggle.⁴

It is interesting to note that the officials from the Federation of the Jewish Communities from Romania (FJCR) reconstituted, in a common right-wing attitude, anti-fascism as a struggle principally against anti-Semitism. By reducing the complexity of WWII to the struggle between anti-Semitism and democracy, the Jewish leadership also reduced the complexity of the struggle for democracy to the struggle against anti-Semitism (that is they argued that fascism would have directed itself solely to the persecution and destruction of the Jews. While this was one of the most significant components of the brutality of fascism, it was not its only component). By isolating the Jewish community from the rest of the population—thus taking up a right-wing and nationalist position—the Jewish leadership tacitly supported Romania's own nationalist tendencies.

Fighting anti-Semitism is one of the core elements of anti-fascism, but there is more. In this respect, one has to understand that anti-Semitism has never been an exception, a kind of malefic excrescence on the body of political democracy. Rather it is a form of racism and nationalism that is intrinsic to capitalist democracy: part of the 'foreigner-as-enemy' paradigm. The industrial-type systematic assassination of Jews in WWII (and before this, the ideological preparation of society to accept,

³ This consistency was late and, in that period of history, inherently limited. See A. Bazac, 'Popular Fronts Nowadays', *Eszmélet*: Hungary, 70, summer (2006).

⁴ For example, I want to remember Haia Lifschitz, a communist girl who, in the 1940s, undertook 40 days' hunger strike (and died) with a boy of Hungarian origin who survived and became, after the war, a leader of the Communist Party. He died early enough for the officials to give his name to a big market in a new, mostly intellectual and office servant's district: Haia Lifschitz was the name of a little street—but in an 'aristocratic' area—from 1968 to 1979. Moghioros (in the Romanian transcription), the name of the market, was changed after 1989, but nobody uses the new name, not as silent rebellion but just because the original name is more specific than the new.

legitimise and enjoy the destruction of Jews) was only a horrible mirror of the (western) advanced capitalist civilisation. For this reason, one cannot forget that inter-war and WWII anti-Semitism meant to be a kind of vigilance against any repetition of the poisonous infiltration of a 'foreigner-enemy'.

Romanian Anti-fascism Today

Thus after 1989, maybe because there are no longer many Jews in Romania,⁵ the state officials, indifferent to which party they belonged, began a large-scale public analysis that looked at neither fascism (and the Romanian legionari) and anti-fascism nor at anti-Semitism. In Romania, even if in an elitist review of the 'civil society'⁶ there were some articles about Jewbawne,⁷ no one analysed the state of things in post-1989 Romania.

Only the very small Association of Anti-fascists from Romania (AAR) wrote in its so-called review,⁸ *Tribuna Anti-fascista*, that anti-fascism is: first, not a Jewish attitude (as communism is not Jewish) but a consistent democratic and humanist one. Secondly, anti-fascism is a historical phenomenon and has to be again analysed from an *a posteriori* standpoint that could throw better light on it. And, thirdly, the present use of anti-fascist slogans is not just to keep the memory of old anti-fascism alive, but also to militate for the *spirit of anti-fascism*, against all kinds of discrimination and the reduction of democracy and human rights to formal proceedings, and against the causes of discrimination and violation of democracy. Nobody reacted, of course, except the extreme right newspapers of the Great Romania Party that spattered mud over the AAR. Parliament (during the social-democrat leadership!) also rejected the demands of the AAR to be considered as an institution providing a public service and thus be sponsored by the state.

⁵ Not as in Poland, but the fact that Jews become older and there are very few young Jews leads to a kind of 'anti-Semitism without Jews'. It is important, however, to mention that because there were some 'investors' of Jewish origin who, naturally, tried to gain from their friendship with some social-democrat leaders (who, as we know, were in power for the most part after 1989) and from the theft of state ownership—as all the foreign and Romanian businessmen did—many newspapers and some TV broadcasts stressed the ethnic origin instead of the logic of capital.

⁶ Which is formed exclusively from different type right-wing intellectuals (who found in different 'associations', 'organisations', 'groups'—all founded by the state and from outside—the opportunity to become well-paid 'civil society' bureaucrats).

⁷ See J. T. Gross, *Neighbours: the Destruction of the Jewish Community at Jewabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Even if in Romania that type of atrocity did not take place—at least no one did research and find it—the general indifference, and even the profiting, of those who moved into Jewish homes when they were forced to concentrate in the district capitals (when they were not deported) never constituted a subject of public analysis. Gross' book was translated in 2002, but was not a base for discussion, either publicly or inside the academic environment.

Concerning the research and the standpoint of its origins, I have to show that the Research Centre on the History of Jews (in Romania) and obviously the FJCR officials keep away from focusing on the responsibility of Romanian anti-Semitism, just because this focus would be interpreted as an attack on Romanians and Romania. This standpoint, which began under Stalinism, is not only nationalist but also supports irrationalism. Today, the point of view is the same as before 1989: 'for all, it's better to not discuss about the dark ages; this focus on responsibility only emphasizes anti-Semitism; and Romanians are not anti-Semites'.

⁸ Which cannot be sold because neither its previous nor the present leadership paid for that.

Thus, anti-fascism is a subversive word and position. Just for this reason, the mainstream politics imposed, in Romania too, a kind of 'post anti-fascism':⁹ every fact that remembers anti-fascism—so a position of rebellion against the collaborationist status quo—is erased from the collective memory. Just as every realisation of Stalinism, such as industrialisation, urbanisation, teaching to read and write more than 40 per cent of the population who were illiterate before 1944, mass culture—which were all manifestations of a welfare state that were naturally limited by the level of the country and the Stalinist bureaucracy—is erased from the collective memory.

All these facts illustrate the first point: if the past is hidden and falsified in an Orwellian manner, then representative political democracy becomes increasingly similar to the explicit extreme right political regimes. In other words, capitalist democracy aids the development of totalitarianism. But underlying this is the issue that totalitarianism is part of the inner structure of capitalism.

The Extreme Right in Romania Today

The Holocaust was the paroxysmal moment of fascism, but fascism cannot be reduced to the Holocaust. A product of the 'negative dialectics' of the capitalist civilisation (Adorno), fascism ought to be criticised in its entirety, as a complex of social, economic and cultural, super-structural phenomena, that is with all its complex causes. By doing so, fascism will not appear as an exceptional event, an accidental fall of western civilisation into barbarism.

The Holocaust was the result of fascism and, therefore, if people want to learn from fascism—to ensure it is not repeated¹⁰—they must not consider it as a fact of history, a fact that can be forgotten as easily as others. (Culture cannot be 're-established' to the one before Auschwitz, because this culture not only contained the elements of fascism but contained it because of the distorted democratic forms which then existed.¹¹)

After 15 years, the Romanian officials (including the former social-democrat president Iliescu) finally spoke about the Holocaust which took place under the jurisdiction of the Romanian authorities. But they only did so under pressure from western countries and, in a perverse style, distorting and covering up facts and responsibilities. The assertion that Romanians had acted to save Jews, as well as the insistence that 'not only the Jews experienced Holocaust' and 'why are we not talking

⁹ The term is Gaspar Miklos Tamas's, but see also S. Luzzatto, *La crisi dell'anti-fascismo*, Torino (Italia: Giulio Einaudi, 2004).

¹⁰ Auschwitz generated a new 'categorical imperative', which claims 'Auschwitz would not repeat itself, nothing similar would happen'. However, as Adorno explained, Auschwitz was this relapse and 'barbarism continues as long as the fundamental conditions that favoured it continue largely unchanged. That, precisely, is what is horrendous'. T. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Seabury Press, 1966); p. 365.

¹¹ See T. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: NLB, 1951). T. Adorno, *Prisms* (London: Neville Spearman, 1955). In the latter is the essay 'Cultural Criticism and Society' (1949). Here is the famous phrase: 'writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (p. 34).

about the suffering of Romanians after the Vienna treaty', accustom people to the rejection of rational analysis and self-critique.

The present centre-right president and government have announced the foundation of the Holocaust Museum in Bucharest.¹² But, at the same time, neither the present government¹³ nor the former, social-democrat one, acted to make effective the order of government from 2002, which forbids xenophobic organisations and symbols. (In any case, the interdiction through law and punitive sanctions does not annul xenophobia. If a really democratic atmosphere does not support the law, all will be formal and inefficient.)

Currently, xenophobic organisations still exist and nobody disturbs them.¹⁴ It is significant that a leader of the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania, a parliamentary representative, had asked the Romanian Public Prosecutor's Department to begin an investigation about the official spreading of an explicit extreme right monthly review. The editorial of the issue he officially received contains demands for the castration of gypsies, putting Jews into concentration camps with forced labour, the expulsion of Hungarians and the exclusion of women from social life.

When he invited all the parties to condemn these types of movements and reviews, the member of Parliament was greeted with either a hypocritical attitude or an explicit rejection. Vadim Tudor, the president of the Great Romania Party, said that the representative had no reason to speak about this case because he himself was the advocate of a 'Nazi', Albert Vass.¹⁵

As we do know, the education of universal, humanist and democratic principles is hard and continuous work.¹⁶ Can we trust the formal intentions of political institutions when they reduce these intentions into a practice that is so ambiguous?

¹² At the Museum of Holocaust Yad Vashem. See the newspaper *Adevarul*, 17 March 2005.

¹³ Extreme-right-wing people exist inside the democratic parties. For example, the leader of a former explicit extreme-right-wing party created in 1992 was a candidate of the present Alliance in power, according to *Adevarul*, 25 November 2004. We do not know what happened after the signal of the newspaper, which did not follow up the story. It is another reason for the existence of a non-ethnic NGO with supporting universal values that could monitor the incidence of the extreme right in political life.

¹⁴ A military arsenal and fascist symbols, inside merchandise from Italy, was discovered at a customs post, but nobody found out who was behind it. *Adevarul*, 13 August 2003. The New Right—Romanian extreme-right organisation—was one of the organisers of a political festival against Jews and Turks in Greece. *Gandul*, 7 July 2005.

¹⁵ See *Adevarul*, 1 March 2005. I have to mention also that the president of the extreme-right new Party of the New Generation (PNG) declared that he would be a candidate in the elections for mayor of Bucharest only to fight Ludovic Orban, a Hungarian-born liberal and present vice-mayor (*Adevarul*, 10 February 2005). In this case, the National Liberal Party picked another liberal candidate. What is extremely important is that the same personage, Gigi Becali, bought an armament plant, not by auction of real estate, but by improved final supply, according to *Adevarul*, 8 March 2004. Concerning the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania, even if its main aim is to underline its 'European spirit', sometimes it persists in supporting dubious personages from the inter-war and WWII period (to attract the nationalist extreme Hungarians from Romania).

¹⁶ According to a poll by Blenheim Palace (Museum of Winston Churchill), Hitler is a fictitious person for one British person in ten (*Adevarul*, 6 April 2005). But more significant, in an American national test on high school seniors, 18 per cent believed that the Germans were the allies of USA in World War II. See B. Cole, 'Ordinary Virtues: Cultivating Our Civic Life', *Humanities*, 24: Nov-Dec (2003), p. 6, <<http://www.neh.fed.us/news/humanities/2003-11/ordinary.html>>, accessed 30 March 2005.

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Democracy's Ambiguity

Ultimately, this ambiguity is determined¹⁷ by the convergence of interests of the world-wide ruling political elites to preserve their position and to confuse, weaken and oppress the ruled. Like fascism, the ambiguity of present democracies versus authoritarianism is not at all devoid of class motivation. This is the way we understand facts as, for example, the law—promulgated by G. W. Bush before the second elections in October 2004¹⁸—which allows the US to monitor anti-Semitic acts around the whole world (without monitoring all the acts that violate the human rights, first of all, by Americans and in the United States). The law is pharisaic and incites anti-Semitism. Furthermore, it provides a new pretext for the escalation of racism and xenophobia by considering people who are different from one standpoint or another as enemies. Without solving the structural causes of the social problems, they can only be controlled and, at the best, diminished.

The present Romania, with its Great Romania¹⁹ Party (GRP), the third party in the parliament after the centre-right Justice and Truth Alliance (JTA)²⁰ and the Social-Democrat Party (SDP), has no visible neo-fascist movement, with skinheads marching on the streets, attacking foreigners or burning the American flag. But there is not only the GRP but also another extreme right type party, the Party of the New Generation (PNG) which shares the same bigoted and nationalist slogans.

¹⁷ This determination ought not to be understood in a simple and dogmatic manner. The constitution of the 'ideological apparatus of the state' (Althusser), with the ambiguity of dominant messages, is the result of the process through which politics became autonomous, and so the political techniques develop from the logic of politics. But, because this logic has the goal to maintain power—the relations of domination—submission—this logic itself is the 'constructor' of these relations. In other words, agreeing with the fact that every social fundamental subsystem is also a medium term towards the others, politics mediates the relations between the economical and the ideological. People have social interests—to gain power or to fight for it—and to realize these interests in special types of activities, institutions and techniques.

This type of politics became more and more autonomous. Politics is an instrument but also a generative factor, of the social structure (classes that have different class interests). At the same time, interests reflect, *au fond*, the level of productive forces: if people need private property this means that private property is the only fundamental condition (relation) which assures survival and welfare, just because the means of existence are scarce. For this reason, people regulated the use of these means through laws (we have no laws about the use of air). Interests are linked directly to the productive/social relations, because these are linked directly to the productive forces ('directly' is here a didactic simplification).

Politics links directly to interests. But, because politics became more and more autonomous, politics is also generative of interests. In this process, it develops social mentalities, which are ideological because they reflect different social (class) positions. Finally, the autonomy of politics explains why, today, the interests linked to private property are so powerful when the abundance of productive forces, of assets, is greater every day.

¹⁸ Bush announced the law to the Jewish community in Florida, one of the largest in the world. Three in four American Jews voted for Kerry, according to ABC online (Spanish), 4 January 2004.

¹⁹ Two months during the spring–summer of 2005, GRP named itself as Popular Party Great Romania. The term 'popular' was added for this extreme-right type party to have respectable support in the European Parliament and, on the other hand, for the European Popular Party to have more representatives. Even the discussions of the European Popular Party with the Romanian extreme-right type party is a sign of the new leeway of conservatives—after that which existed between the two world wars—and a sign of a new stage of the crisis of capitalism.

²⁰ It is formed by the National Liberal Party and the Democratic Party, which was originally social-democrat, a faction of the first social-democrat party.

One cannot forget an explicit extreme right movement, the Legionary Movement (LM), which is legal because it includes in its statute that it is no longer anti-Semitic and so on, but whose reviews continue to develop in a 'modern' extreme right direction. LM has many local organisations and youth instruction camps. When newspapers reported the chanting of racist slogans in stadiums, nothing was done. And, again, when newspapers reported the desecration of Jewish funeral monuments, nothing was done to counteract against it. Even though it is forbidden in the universities to be political, there is open advertising for Legionary newspapers, and nothing is done to stop it. Rather, the young mass basis of the extreme conservative 'public opinion' is controlled and tolerated under the aegis of a non-harsh presence. The *open* extreme right is, for the time being, graceless.

Romanian Populism

This does not mean that there are no extreme right type manifestations in the entire political class. No one protested in the Parliament or civil society against the demolition of the statue '1907' which commemorated the 1907 uprising of Romanian peasants in which 11,000 were killed. Populism is in bloom—as everywhere the social model of the state is demolished—and promoted not only by explicit extreme right leaders: Iliescu had populist messages, as did and does Basescu. Anti-immigrant sentiment, popular in western European states, does not yet exist in Romania where, instead, there exists a verbal compassion for the poor against wealth and corruption, which are worse than ever.

Generally, people are confused by the propaganda of the democratic parties. That is because the elites mix democracy, entering in the European Union, human rights and the rights of labour, with the sanctity of private property, populism, support for the church, high formalism and bureaucratic lack of respect for transparency and human rights. The population also conflates these and as a result is both democratic and susceptible to populism.

Making Possible the Extreme Right

Romania was a very backward country.²¹ The majority of the population was, sociologically speaking, petty bourgeois, desperate peasants, with less and less land and means for a decent modest life; and office workers (petty bureaucrats) who lived with the threat of being fired at any time. The left, in its social-democrat and communist forms, was weak and became further weakened by the compulsion of the state. This meant also that, between the two world wars, the extreme right was strong.

²¹ For statistics and references see, A. Bazac, 'Az antisztalinista disszidensek és a "vox intelligent(s)iae"' ['The anti-Stalinist dissidence and "vox intelligent(s)iae"'], *Eszmélet*, 60 (2003).

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period.

The strong support of democratic governments for the extreme right generated this development.

After 1944, the modernisation of the country required an industrial revolution as well as a higher cultural level, but the Stalinist political regime eventually produced an opposition between interests: *individuals* who needed a better life and the *community* (meaning also nation and world). These entities were conceived only as the milieu for the life of individuals and not also as an individual's goals. Developing a nationalist standpoint, Stalinism 'in one country' led to a quite liberal image of society: individual plus individual plus individual.

The transition to an explicitly capitalist system strengthened this image: 'anything that is common belongs to no one'. All the governments after 1989 supported not only the dismantling of state property but also the uprooting of social relationships. As in the inter-war period, they supported excessive right-wing messages and processes. Diversions to reduce the size of the left (which became increasingly feeble, fragmented, ambiguous and marked by national 'communism'), right-wing messages, the frame of a world of warfare, uncertainty, the bureaucratic behaviour of the entire political elite, have all led to the population's attraction towards a 'strong leader',²² coupled with a lack of interest in the proceedings of democracy. Even if television has an important role in accustoming people to democracy, people are sick of hearing words that do not cover reality or respond to their needs. The ambiguity of the social-democrat government led to the victory of the centre-right. This political change is a mark of the power of citizens to choose representatives, but only from a general viewpoint. Concretely, it is a sign of the defeat of the people:²³ they voted to punish the team in power and cherished illusions that the new team will offer a better life.

From a political viewpoint, Romania is divided in two parts. One is formed by the poor citizens, mostly rural or living in small towns where the factories and mines were closed, and who voted for the social-democrats. The other is formed from those living in the capital, the new middle-class and, as everywhere, young people who are hoping for a better life under a 'real' capitalism and not in the bureaucratic one led by the former apparatchiks.

One could say that in Romania the social-democrats won with the help of the explicit right, and that the right-wing victory was won with the help of the social-democrats.

The behaviour of the so-called left (or centre-left, such as the social-democrats, and the 'left', such as the diversionist and mystifying tiny parties: 'worker', 'socialist' and now a Stalinist 'communist' party is also in preparation) must bear more of the guilt for this situation than the explicit right. Only this 'left' spread confusion, emitted nationalist messages and consciously promoted false ideas (that the capitalist political

²² Not forgetting that Vadim Tudor, the president of GRP, was the challenger of Iliescu in the presidential elections in 2000.

²³ I do not speak only about the last political changeover, in November 2004, but about the whole post-1989 period.

democracy would bring welfare and that welfare is possible). Only this 'left' supported restoration tendencies—especially for the church and monarchy, the destruction of state ownership, the violent fight against the feeble left critiques,²⁴ as well as the mainstream ideology which repeated *ad nauseam* that 'communism'²⁵ destroyed culture, generating a cultural desert. All of these drastically diminished the level of social consciousness and, as in the inter-war period, the 'left' prepared the terrain for the extreme right.

Crisis of Opposition

As in the whole world, authoritarian tendencies in the leadership are introduced gently, step by step, but under a democratic political regime, which is, nevertheless, important for people. On the surface, things are not so bad: the majority of men and women have common sense, know that they have rights, have a sense of human dignity. But people are being manipulated and become increasingly over time what Adorno called the 'authoritarian personality' in that they want to receive orders, like conformity, stability ('law and order'), are submissive to authority, intolerant and superstitious and have stereotyped patterns of thinking.

Present authoritarian tendencies, the course of its modern history and the concrete social situation in Romania, all highlight the crisis of anti-fascism (which deepened with the revolution of 1989) that had its roots in the development of inter-war anti-fascism and after, within Stalinism.

One must also note that, if totalitarian tendencies (in other words, let us say fascism) become the protagonist of our times, anti-fascism is not yet in a position to oppose it. Why? Because of the historical crisis of the (world) left—a crisis that has yet to be resolved.

What is Anti-fascism?

This paper began with a particular element of fascism, anti-Semitism, but it was mentioned that fascism is more than anti-Semitism. Thus, anti-fascism ought not to be reduced to fighting anti-Semitism. At the same time, because the present extreme right's facts and ideas took off from classic fascism, we have to identify current neo-fascist phenomena—all totalitarian tendencies—as the (present) extreme right. Thus we have to explore its depth, complexity of causes and, at the same time, simplicity of its messages. In the last instance, we have to answer the question implicit in Bertholt Brecht's famous phrase that racists are people who have mistaken their anger: why does anger push people towards the extreme right?

²⁴ In 1992, when the social-democrats were in power, a young Romanian engineer who wanted to reconstruct the Communist Party was killed (run over by a train). His family was very afraid and nobody asked the authorities to investigate the case. But, of course, especially after so many years, all proof of foul play has disappeared.

²⁵ For all these, Stalinism was communism and, of course, communism was fascism.

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At present anti-fascism means, first, to keep alive the memory of anti-fascist fighters and victims and to debate why, today, there are people who feel bound to destroy this memory.²⁶ Secondly, anti-fascism also means discussing and fighting the causes of the spread of extreme right ideas. In fact, why are ordinary democratic parties taking up extreme right messages?

From the viewpoint of social theory, the analysis of anti-fascism in a country like Romania helps to highlight the continuing influence of the old struggle for democracy and peace, also warning against the effects of continuing the clichés about inter-war anti-fascism.

As is well known, fascism was a totalitarian political regime that accentuated, in a paroxysmal manner, capitalist relationships.²⁷ For this reason, popular anti-fascist struggle and a general anti-fascist atmosphere have existed only when there have been prestigious leaders who have supported it.

Moreover, the situation in Romania has illustrated the fact that, because of strong right-wing manipulation, after the victory of modernity the majority of the population did not react against the domination-submission relations.²⁸ Only a tiny (eclectic) social stratum has not been, let us use the word, opportunist, but has idealistically fought against oppression. In the last instance, this historical fact was the result of the level of productive forces that imposed the political division of work—between rulers and the ruled.²⁹

But, disregarding the complex social causes, the reality that the majority of (many) populations kept quiet and did not oppose fascism—on the contrary most people collaborated with it—is a reason to honour the men and women to whom the principles of democracy, peace and human dignity were more important than their own desire for an easy life.

In Romania, an ally of Nazi Germany, the situation was different to that of the occupied countries. In these countries, the spirit to oppose the occupants was both

²⁶ See the provocation of the deputies of the neo-fascist National Party of Germany who demonstrated by leaving the floor of the Saxony state parliament during a minute of silence called for the victims of the Nazi dictatorship and the war. U. Rippert, 'Germany: Behind the ultra-right provocation in Saxony's parliament', *ICFI/World Socialist* <<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2005/an2005/saxo-j31.shtml>>, 31 January 2005. See also the image about Nazism: 31 per cent of Austrians think that Nazism 'also had positive aspects', which does not mean that they are anti-Semite, as mentioned the researchers of Fessel-JfK Institute in the poll realised by it. *Adevarul*, 14 July 2004. We see again the reduction of fascism to anti-Semitism. But right-wing and also the present extreme right parties are keeping away from the accusation that they are anti-Semitic. There are only few political personages who are nostalgic about classical fascism. In Italy, Alessandra Mussolini left *Allianza Nazionale* in November 2003, when Gianfranco Fini, its leader, apologized in the Knesset (equating fascism to anti-Semitism), accessed 31 January 2005.

²⁷ See an excellent concrete analysis by the American journalist and anti-fascist, George Seldes, in *Facts and Fascism* (1943), <<http://www.maebrussell.com/Articles%20and%20Notes/Facts%20and%20Fascism.html>>, accessed 15 February 2005.

²⁸ The fact that the majority of intellectuals, for example, have been conformist is described as consequence of the post-1848 situation (and not only in a country like Romania). See C. Charles, *Les intellectuels dans l'Europe du XIXe siècle. Essai d'histoire comparée* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1996).

²⁹ See Ana Bazac, 'Aristotle and the labour force. Aristotle's tradition in the ideology of the present day industrial revolution', *Revue Roumaine de Philosophie*, 1-2 (2004), pp. 87-106.

normal and the condition that united the entire population, as in the old periods of the bourgeois revolutions. In these countries, anti-fascism meant, first of all, a struggle against the occupying power.

On the contrary, in Romania the weak anti-fascist spirit resulted from the government's legitimisation of the anti-communist war as the fight to regain Bessarabia. (Of course, the Vienna Diktat did not produce any legitimisation of an opposition to Nazi Germany.) But even after the Romanian army continued to fight further, in Stalingrad and Caucasus, there was no significant anti-war opposition, but only a muted rumour. In Romania there was no national anti-fascist unity or national struggle against fascism. The majority of the population believed the dominant slogans: the re-conquest of Bessarabia, taken in 1940 by USSR, the right to 'fight against the Bolsheviks', who were depicted as 'anti-Christian, murdering people and communising women'. And even if there were Romanians who saved Jews, the majority was silent and sometimes profited.³⁰

From the 1930s to Today

It is very important to discuss real anti-fascism, not just how it is been characterised. The differences between the proportions of anti-fascist opposition could help to explain the force of fascism. In contrast with the Romanian situation, in Great Britain

at Hyde Park, in 1934, 100,000 people marched against fascism. There were at least 150,000 blocking the fascists at Cable Street, in 1936. Similar numbers took the streets at Bermondsey in 1937. When Mosley was released from jail, towards the end of 1943, around one million people signed a petition to protest.³¹

Thus, 'the real importance of anti-fascism has been that it has provided the most immediate obstacle to the growth of any more significant fascist party ... organised anti-fascists have been able to transform the situation'.³²

Certainly, anti-fascism is not only a question of proportions but has specific qualities. The first is 'anti-fascists distinguished themselves from neo-fascists ... through their stress on activity'. The second is 'the stress on organisation' because individuals cannot beat fascism. The third: to counter-pose 'alternative values' to the fascist slogans and to the social problems. Only by realising these qualities, anti-fascism differentiates itself from non-fascism or even partial fascism. Anti-fascism means *acting to stop and prevent fascism*.³³

³⁰ A colleague from the Centre of Judaic History related that there was Jewish opposition in Romania. However, I agree with Dave Reston who observed that 'the Jewish anti-fascists ... mixed class politics with a form of communal solidarity'. D. Reston (University of Sheffield), 'A provisional History of Anti-Fascism in Britain: The Forties'. Paper given to the Northern Marxist Historians Group, 18 September 1996. <http://members.lycos.co.uk/mere_pseud_mag_ed/History/Renton1.htm>, accessed 30 January 2005.

³¹ Ibid. This situation continued: the Anti Nazi League carnival in 1994 attracted 100,000 people.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

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Facing the Mythology of Anti-fascism

The position of Romania in the war against the USSR and the behaviour of the Antonescu government against the Jews were dark pages in the history of Romania and thus Romanian Stalinism tended to pass over them in silence. And because, as is known, after the war Stalinism developed myths of anti-fascism³⁴—of national unity, of national struggle against fascism, of salvation in good time—Romanian Stalinism tried to impose images of Romanian inter-war and war history through these myths. Romanian anti-fascist official history becomes very interesting when counterposed with other countries' myths of anti-fascism because these are based, at least partially, on reality.

Not even the revolution of 1989 led to a serious analysis of the war period. Historians and politicians swung between hiding the dark aspects³⁵ (considering that the disclosure would be anti-national, put Romania in an uncomfortable position and would be an attack on Romanian self-esteem) and silence, (including liberals). The focus is kept firmly on the present situation in which Romania has to accept multicultural diversity as a key element to safeguarding political democracy.

There was no public debate about the culpability of the population towards the Jews, similar to that that the liberal Michnik initiated in Poland. This lag, even from the standpoint of the analysis of history, is a result of Romania's weak liberal intellectuals in comparison to other countries, such as Poland. The tradition of the opposition to fascism was weaker in Romania than in Poland. Poland was occupied and, during the occupation, a certain debate on democratic values could develop (which did not take place in Romania). For this reason, the tradition of opposition to Stalinism was weaker in Romania.

Thus, the Romanian intellectuals—who are either liberal-conservative or nationalist extreme right—took over liberal values from the West in a selective manner. For this reason, the mainstream of the Romanian liberals is rather conservative. For instance, they did not protest against the construction of a mega-cathedral in Bucharest when the capital has other pressing problems that could diminish with the money used for this construction. They only protested against a previous proposed site for the cathedral.

The example of Romania highlights the fact that anti-fascism has to be analysed in the face of its myths. Only this type of analysis prevents and demolishes attacks from

³⁴ For this reason, anti-communism developed a critique of anti-fascism, equating it with Stalinism, or an instrument of Stalinism, depriving it of democratic spirit. After 1991, a debate on anti-fascism developed. For the critique of the above-mentioned anti-communist viewpoint and critical account of the different standpoints in the debate, see B. Groppo, 'Fascismes, anti-fascismes et communismes', in M. Dreyfus, B. Groppo, *et al.* (eds) *Le Siècle des Communismes* (Paris: European Schoolbooks, Editions de l'Atelier/Ed. Ouvrière, 2000), pp. 499–512.

³⁵ Only the historians from the Centre of Judaic History began to disclose the presence of Jews in the history and culture of Romania and the ordeal of Romanian Jews in WWII's period. I have noticed that only a Marxist philosopher, Radu Florian (who died in 1997), dared to show the link between this ordeal and the socio-political causes. It should also be mentioned that the historians from the Centre for Judaic History keep away from these links.

the right. In all the countries, anti-fascism had to defeat the stereotypes of submission. In all the countries—class societies—anti-fascist unity was relative: citizens had different class interests and objectives. The resistance against the Nazi invaders was the common objective because even an important part of the national bourgeoisie's interests was under threat. But everywhere the mass basis of the struggle was left-wing workers and intellectuals. Anti-fascism is not politically neutral and this essential aspect is highlighted by the past and, but more importantly, by the future.

However, if anti-fascism was essentially the opposition against the fascist political regime then its adherents could be either left or right wing. If one considers anti-fascism in a more broad sense, as an opposition against the basic values of fascism³⁶—discrimination, of all kinds, discretionary power of domination, irrationalism, anti-social compulsion on people—the adherents of anti-fascism can be right-wing no more. Even the inter-war history showed that the more consistent

³⁶ Fascism has to be understood not only through the values it supported, but rather through its specificity. In a letter to Max Shachtman, Trotsky underlined that fascism was not a Bonapartist dictatorship, such as that of Primo de Rivera in Spain between 1923 and 1930, which was a movement initiated from above and did not spend much time convincing people ('What is fascism?', November 15, 1932), being rather a classical authoritarian political regime. Fascism had a *mass component*. It began and developed as a spontaneous plebeian movement of the *petty bourgeoisie* that was afraid of the worker's movement and *lumpenproletariat*, and just this aspect was exacerbated through the socialist and nationalist demagoguery. While Fascism is not the rule of the petty bourgeoisie, but of monopoly capital, it does need a mass movement and mass adhesion.

I think that the present stage of capitalism needs and applies a *mélange* of state repression from above with the kind of powerful manipulation usual in a fascistic political regime. From the point of view of the concentrated world class, *great bourgeoisie-high bureaucracy*, the present stage is a regime from above. While the former periods of capitalism did succeed in stabilising capitalism through social reforms—as in the welfare state—and authoritarianism, the present stage of capitalism, reducing welfare but rising authoritarianism and manipulation, cannot stabilise capitalism. I think the present stage can no longer develop a mass enthusiasm for fascism, or a fascist mass movement, because this stage cannot tolerate mass movements. (That is not to say that capitalism does not sustain fascistic-type parties. On the contrary, we have sufficient examples in Italy, Netherlands and Austria (where Jorg Haider want to be the leader of the Party of Liberty again) as well as in Great Britain.) Just the democratic right, and the social-democrats, come to power with some extreme right slogans.

What is happening under present capitalism is an accentuation of the fragmentation of society (by increasing individualism) through strong obscurantist manipulation, churches, sects, etc. But the play is not over, even if at present it can offer no new arguments against the ossification of social theory.

Comparing fascism with the present stage of capitalism, another feature of fascism that is difficult to come into actuality is the tendency of the 'praetorian guard' to become autonomous towards the big bourgeoisie—high bureaucracy. Because fascism developed as a mass movement to which the bourgeoisie gave the task of destroying the worker's movement, fascism could take over power as an autonomous force. Fascism was not an independent petty bourgeois force. But what is important is that present-day capitalism does not allow a 'praetorian guard' at all. We ought never to forget the class analysis: are there still petty bourgeois layers that supported fascism before? One argument goes that this layer no longer exists in the old form, but rather continues as a proletarianised category of wage earners. But, it must be added, these people are living under threat of being laid-off from work and, as former lumpenproletariat, are susceptible to manipulation against the so-called 'foreign enemies', etc. Moreover, there are many entrepreneurs who have their petty deals. The present tendency of lumpenproletarianisation and the petty entrepreneurs could lead to the support for Bonapartist regimes, which oppose transnational capital and economic regional and world integration. The question is: are there more powerful national capitalists who prefer economic isolation than there are transnational ones? I think not, and even if it would be possible, a nationalist regime would be temporary, a 'blot' in the world domination of transnational capital.

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anti-fascists were those who desired to fight not only for a democratic political regime but also for the unflinching development of human rights: for everyone and for all, culturally, politically and economically.

In this sense, one could say that if the left means to be against the domination—submission relations—and right means to support these relations—anti-fascism could exist only if it fights consistently. If not, it dissolves itself in a particularistic means to oppose xenophobia and excessive authoritarianism. Obviously, this situation could occur. Nevertheless, it would be a pity: anti-fascism fought from a universal standpoint.³⁷ Its logical development is the fight against the social causes of discrimination, abolition of human rights and authoritarianism. This fact is so obvious that all the dominant forces look at anti-fascism with at least some reserve. Thus, the future of anti-fascism lies in assuming a consistent and efficient left position or anti-fascism as such will not exist. The future of democracy and peace is to assume this anti-fascism.³⁸ Once more, not to be a fascist does not necessarily mean being anti-fascist.

Why Remember?

Is it important to remember fascism and anti-fascism, outside of the important anniversaries? It is.

Gáspár Miklos Tamás observed that the present manner of rule, on a world scale, broke 'with the enlightenment tradition of citizenship as a universal entitlement'

Furthermore, just as in the Russian Revolution of February 1917, when the liberals dismissed the Tsar because he no longer served to maintain the power of the dominant classes, the authoritarian regime of Mussolini was 'saved' by the army which arrested him because he no longer served to attract people. 'His regime had been transformed over a period of years from a classical fascist dictatorship with a mass base into a Bonapartist regime resting solely on the state repression', F. Weston, *Trotsky and the struggle against Fascism*, <<http://www.marxist.com>> March 2000, accessed 25 January 2005.

Let us remember that the Romanian army did not oppose the arrest of Antonescu. The present stage changes the political actors through democratic means: through the vote, but stability is not strong. For this reason, when there are mass demonstrations against war, the change of political actors must be helped with the fascist-type movements/parties: when people no longer want lies from either a democratic party or from any other, the extreme right parties are, as in Romania, 'a greater evil'.

³⁷ I do not speak about a universal morality, which could hardly be demonstrated, but about human rights as universally accepted (if we do not accept the old demand of Popper to minimise suffering).

³⁸ Even if someone could say that the above-mentioned phrases are a joke or a sign of 'Marxist dogma', the present tendencies in the development of technologies show an increasing antagonism inside the mode of production thus, at the same time, between the productive forces and the complex of dominant forces (even if the antagonism will last at the level of a *longue durée*).

But the aspirations of ordinary people for a society not based on class domination are strong. Let us remember an American poll which shows that, even if this aspiration is unconscious, it is strong. See the survey commissioned by Columbia Law School in May 2002, which showed that at least one third of Americans think Karl Marx's, 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' either was, or may have been, included in the Constitution (the question was, 'Does the American Constitution include the following statement about the proper role of government: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs?'; and the answers were: yes, 35 per cent; no, 31 per cent; don't know, 34 per cent). The state of confusion shows that, in the same survey, 60 per cent think that in time of war or other declared national emergency, the President may suspend the Constitution's Bill of Rights <<http://www.wethepeople.gov/newsroom/annnesia.html>>.

which led to the loss of meaning of citizenship and democratic participation and so to a 'racialised global liberalism', a 'peaceful fascism', without intra-groups critique.³⁹ In the present period of system crisis, with the entire progress of the present industrial revolution and the trend of the long wave, fascism is not over as a phenomenon. Naturally, it is not the old forms that are being discussed here. Global governance tends to be of a rather fascistic type, a 'global fascism', a 'militarised control that includes a repudiation of the authority of international law and of the United Nations'.⁴⁰ Through a philosophical analysis, Deleuze wrote about the elastic 'control society' (*société du contrôle*) where the individual is dominated through permanent economic compulsion and, at the same time, discrete dependence. In this respect, philosophy is merely re-discovering what Marx wrote more than 150 years ago about alienation and what the Frankfurt School developed. Traditional philosophy treats things on the level of superstructure. A more consistent paradigm is to integrate macro-economy on a world scale. That aside, the question is: has alienation not led to increasingly authoritarian relationships?

We cannot say goodbye to the past because it is present, not only through memory, but through political tendencies in world politics.

The evolution of present-day capitalism is normal, like the post-war welfare state. Every period was and is the result of the logic of the structural relations of capitalism. Every period is normal. The fact that racist and authoritarian tendencies came to light shows only that capitalism is in a stage of crisis. As the contradictions inside the international capitalist system grow worse, and since the failure of the European Stalinist system, capitalism no longer has the counter-model of the social state. The old post-war illusion of peace and a life of harmony is over.

The illusion that it would be possible to return to the good old days of the national welfare state damages the fight for democracy and peace. The variety of capitalist tendencies can hoax us, mystify the reality and is a supplementary factor of instability. But the task of rational people is to understand these. Even as the classical bourgeois parties disappoint people more and more and, at the same time, the new world proletariat is only in *statu nascendi* and thus cannot yet organise itself in a satisfactory manner,⁴¹ we cannot surrender.

Remembering fascism also entails discussing the problems of fighting it. The inter-war union between social-democrats and communists was slowed down—by the

³⁹ M. G. Tamas, 'What is Post-fascism?', *Open Democracy.net*, 14 September 2001 <<http://www.opendemocracy.net/debate/ViewPopUpArticle.jsp?id=10&articleId=306>>.

⁴⁰ R. Falk, 'Will the Empire be Fascist', *Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research*, 24 March 2003 <http://www.transnational.org/forum/meet/2003/Falk_FascistEmpire.html>.

⁴¹ The entire post-Marx epoch was the one of historical crisis of the left. See A. Bazac, 'The historical crisis of the left', in Balkan Socialist Center 'Christian Rakovsky', 2nd Conference, 15–19 March 2001, Athens. In this epoch, the collapse of some bourgeois parties opened up big possibilities for workers/left-wing people to organise and press the governments for rights. It was not only due to the tradition of leaders and opposition to the Trotskyites that the left parties collapsed, but the objective historical conditions determined the subjective ones. But is the fact that, for example, the Spanish Communist and Socialist parties did not impose the republic in 1975—the form of government before Franco—a historical proof of the pre-eminence of the objective conditions, or on the contrary a proof of the relative autonomy of the subjective ones?

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former but also by Stalinists—and thus the rise of fascism was lightened. But nowadays anti-fascism could no longer be efficient if it repeats the scenario of national unity in preparation for a capitalist democracy.

What Role Does Anti-fascism Play Today?

Anti-fascism has a concrete purpose: to warn against the taking over of slogans of the present extreme right—anti-unionist, anti-immigrant policy,⁴² hidden nationalism⁴³—by the democratic parties;⁴⁴ to warn against the extreme right hysteria;⁴⁵ to warn against the new 'McCarthyism'; and also to warn that the extreme right parties, even if they are forbidden, re-emerge under new names.⁴⁶

It should not be forgotten that anti-fascism warns against the ambiguous treatment of extreme right, populist leaders by democratic personalities.⁴⁷ The point is that there are not only extreme right individuals who 'infiltrate' the democratic right, but also political lines. The taking over of extreme right type slogans—in a 'soft' variant—re-fortifies the right, offers a new kind of legitimacy. More, in this manner, the right can attract confused people who ordinarily vote for the extreme right but also the extreme left. Nevertheless, when the traditional right is no more attractive, the populist right takes the power.⁴⁸

It is alarming when the Spanish socialist government invited four members of the Francoite fascist Blue Division to the National Day military parade⁴⁹ and the Justice

⁴² See the slogans of the Tories in the present campaign for elections in Great Britain. See also the shift to the right of liberal newspapers. For example, *The Guardian*, in which there were no critiques of the position that the welfare state could not be shared with foreign citizens. See A. Talbot, 'Nationality, ethnicity and culture: Guardian hosts the racist ideas of David Goodhart', *ICFI*, 6 April 2004 <<http://www.wsws.org>>.

⁴³ See the 'anti-racist commitment' of the present extreme right British party, UK Independence Party (UKIP), but at the same time its strong opposition against the 'dominated by France and Germany' EU. We must not forget the strong support of the UKIP by many VIPs and experts in public relations (as in Romania).

⁴⁴ This phenomenon is the result of the rise of populist extreme right parties taking over the power. After a shorter or longer period when they were in power, people saw the opposition between the populist slogans from the campaigns and the reality, and the solution was the radicalisation of the traditional democratic parties (when new parties are not created).

⁴⁵ See the vote, through phone and Internet, for Pim Fortuyn as 'the biggest Dutchman of all the times' in Netherlands in November 2004, two years after his assassination.

⁴⁶ Recently, in Belgium the former Vlaams Blok revived after it was banned.

⁴⁷ For example, in Romania, the present president helped an extreme right leader who was investigated by the public prosecutor's department for the taking over of some properties from the Army, *Adevarul*, 26 February 2005.

⁴⁸ A significant example is Switzerland in 2003.

⁴⁹ See P. Stuart and V. Short, 'Spain: Socialist Party government moves to rehabilitate Francoite fascists', *ICFI*, 20 October 2004 <<http://www.wsws.org>> (The Blue Division was created by Franco in 1941.) This aspect is not the only one in the present socialist policies. The attitude of socialists/social-democrats towards fascism has to be linked to the main tendency of the present social-democratic politics: to be a formal political alternative of the explicit right-wing, to be the realisation of the interests of capital. The present Spanish socialist government has begun removing symbols of the Franco dictatorship from public places. We have also to note the intention to open the mass graves containing the bodies of the victims of Franco's death squads. This is not only positive from a historical point of view but also demanded by broad categories of Spanish citizens. See V. Short, 'Spain: Socialist Party demands opening of Franco's mass graves', *ICFI*, 31 October 2002 <<http://www.wsws.org>>.

ministries of the UE renounced, on 24 February 2005, the inclusion of the banning of Nazi symbols in a text about the struggle against racism and xenophobia. Of course, the symbols are not essential and the interdiction does not solve things. However, symbols are significant and people have to be educated about what the symbols mean.⁵⁰ Moreover, democracy does not mean in any way that it is right to obstruct a law against racism in the name of the liberty of expression—as Italy did in 2003; or that the trials against former SS members should be abandoned because of the old age of defendants;⁵¹ or that the democratic parties should form coalitions with extreme right parties.⁵²

All these are excessive, visible, manifestations of 'post-fascism' and they exist not only in one country or in another but on an international level. In the first days of March 2005, Estonia and Lithuania refused to participate in the 9 May ceremonies in Moscow because Russia did not condemn the Ribbentrop–Molotov pact.⁵³ It is not only a radical right-wing position; it is also a stupid one. To not celebrate victory over fascism means to be on the side of the loser.

The Baltic countries were occupied in 1940 by the USSR. But once Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the three countries entered into the German sphere of influence. Until the end of the war, the leadership in the three countries was extreme right, developing anti-Semitic policies and hunting down people who opposed them. (Lithuania was occupied by Germany from 1941 to 1944.) Before 1940, the three countries, all with a Germanic tradition, did not have a good standard of living and, from 1934 on, all three had authoritarian regimes. After the end of the war, the frame of agreements which accepted the standpoint of the victorious USSR were favourable to the workers but not to the Baltic bourgeoisie, and the three countries became members of the USSR, suffering under the Stalinist repressive political regime but, at the same time, developing their economies.

To speak about the totalitarian Soviet regime, but not about the authoritarian regimes of the pre-Soviet era, means simply a *parti-pris* of the later. And to ask Russia to condemn the Ribbentrop–Molotov pact without the leaders of the three countries condemning the behaviour of the Baltic bourgeoisies which ruled ruthlessly over their own people, is inconsistent. Up until the establishment of different spheres

At the same time, one must not omit that 'Zapatero needs to differentiate himself from the Aznar government without significantly changing economic or social policies. The removal of the Francoist symbols was something with which he had associated himself when in opposition'. V. Short, 'Removal of Francoist symbols heightens class tensions in Spain', *ICFI*, 14 April 2005 <<http://www.wsws.org>>. The standpoint of Short is correct: 'a genuine reckoning with the past cannot be limited to cosmetic gestures criticising the Franco years. It must include a frank examination of the transition itself'.

⁵⁰ According to philosophy, a sign of a cultivated person is being capable of managing symbols.

⁵¹ E. Zimmermann, 'Germany: Trial against former SS member Herbertus Bicker abandoned', *ICFI*, 24 March 2004.

⁵² M. Salzmann and U. Rippert, 'Austria: Social democrats form coalition in Carinthia with Haider', *ICFI*, 23 March 2004. But see Italy, and also the use of GRPP now by the Alliance, before from the Iliescu regime.

⁵³ *Adevarul*, 11 March 2005. See also the statement of Voronin—the 'communist' president of Moldavia, recently re-elected with the help of the explicit right-wing parties only because the candidate announced it would be possible not to be present in Moscow on 9 May. *Adevarul*, 15 April 2005.

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of influence where international politics is led by superpowers, one cannot condemn the international position of the USSR without also criticizing the position taken up by all the great powers and superpowers, as well as the Baltic states, and without an analysis of specific historical causes. Moreover, until the general consensus is for democratic political regimes, a democratic standpoint cannot refuse to celebrate the victory over fascism.

During the days around 9 May, the behaviour of Bush and the allies of the USA was orchestrated to minimise the importance of the victory against fascism. The dominant and subservient media all over the world (in Romania, as well, of course) were not concerned with the rising anti-fascist spirit during the war. They accused the USSR alone of imperialist tendencies. They absolved the Baltic bourgeoisie of its line during the war, they ignored 60 years of historical continuity and excluded from consideration, from 9 May on, the whole history of fascism and anti-fascism, in a simple series of historical tales. This type of behaviour was only a form of international political pressure as well as a demonstration of the present international relations of power.

Conclusions

It is important to underline that because general capitalist policies are not anti-fascist they do not prevent extreme right tendencies and mentalities that appear and develop. The democratic parties treat the extreme right as a natural fate. In this way, the extreme right never disappears because its social causes are not destroyed. On the other hand, its social causes are not destroyed because they are intimately linked to the democratic right.

As stressed above, the present extreme right does not manifest itself in the classical fascist forms. From this standpoint, there is no danger of fascism—as of a new and clear excessive, assumed extreme right political regime⁵⁴—not only because the social structure is today different to the inter-war period,⁵⁵ but because this kind of regime would destabilise capitalism by provoking a massive reaction against it. For instance, the anti-Iraqi war movements rendered visible the world's dominant categories: the former democracy becomes authoritarian, promoted by respectable democratic parties and supported by the 'left' parties which demoralise their supporters through their inconsistent class policies. The fascistic-type messages are insinuated into the democratic ideology and fascistic/extreme right gangs, organisations, paramilitaries were, and are, supported to intimidate the struggle for democracy.⁵⁶ The entire complex of authoritarianism—democracy plus reducing civil/human rights plus

⁵⁴ This viewpoint belongs to those who could not propose other politics than the one of the 'national unity' of the left-type parties along with the democratic right.

⁵⁵ It is correct, but we know that barbarisation of thought and feeling of people could happen very quickly. The sure fact is only that people know much through communications and information technology and this knowledge is a weapon in democracy's favour.

⁵⁶ This is also the standpoint of Alan Woods in 'Is there a threat of Fascism in Europe?', *In Defence of Marxism*, 20 May 2002 <<http://www.marxist.com>>. There are interesting examples of neo-fascist organisations in post-war history.

extreme right tendencies—has a main goal: to destroy the potential unity of the European and world labour force.

There are big differences between democratic and non-democratic political regimes. The whole history of the inter-war period and of the war and the sixty post-war years highlights them. At the same time, the differences between political regimes and the socio-economic system, the concepts of fascism and capitalism, help us to understand the common features between the fascist behaviour and the democratic behaviour of a country. Speaking about the past, even the existence of some questions without answers—such as, why the railway to Auschwitz was not bombarded by the allies and why the USA and Great Britain did not adopt the practical measures required to help more victims of the Hitlerite machine during the war—is linked to the same structure of the socio-economic system in both the fascist and democratic political regimes. In its turn, the present highlights the common features of capitalism under different political regimes. All those aspects which we observe today—such as world warfare, the reduction of the welfare state, the poverty of billions, the attack on human dignity, the rise of discrimination, prostitution and violence, the general lack of security, the irrational developments realised by the desire to maximise profit—cannot be understood without the analysis of the interests and consequences of human action.

The present state of things cannot be understood by examining the psychology of different actors: Hitler's psychology cannot explain fascism.⁵⁷ And to isolate the critique on totalitarianism and present authoritarian tendencies from the realities of the north-south relationship, the present stage of capitalism and international politics and warfare, will not help people's understanding or their lives.

The black book of capitalism must be written today, before it is too late.⁵⁸

Education about anti-fascism is not made through legal orders, but through open public debates. Politics is contradictory and so is the political atmosphere. Many political messages are not at all democratic; if repeated often enough, they will be absorbed.

At the same time, to control tendencies towards disintegration, and also to demonstrate that those in power are democratic, there are bans against fascist symbols or books. The *values* of the extreme right, though, are not banned but dissolved and absorbed and, overall, the bans cancel themselves out.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ It is significant that the film *Downfall: Hitler and the end of the Third Reich* (2004), directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel, script by Bernd Eichinger, insists on this psychology, but we can, however, see the Nazi group psychology. Only 12 days are described and so the complex individual psychology does not contain the fact that Hitler was also a swindler who cheated the fiscal institutions. The 405,494 ReichMarks debt Hitler had in 1933, according to the archives of Bavaria, were erased in 1934, through a secret agreement. *Courrier International* online, 26 October 2004 <<http://www.courrierinternational.com>>.

⁵⁸ Gáspár Miklos Tamás, *Az ávó bosszúja*, in 'A hét' (Romania), III/12 (2005), március 24, 15 o.

⁵⁹ A Czech editor of *Mein Kampf* was condemned to jail (for editing Hitler's book), but the Supreme Court annulled the decision, *Adevarul*, 13 August 2003. I think that *Mein Kampf* could be read freely, just for people to know the simple and horrible logic of fascism. The point is not the lecture of the book, but the general ambiguous political atmosphere.