

# Romanian Perceptions of Communism

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A little more than twenty years after the fall of the Communist regime, for many people the past is still alive, while for others it is only a culturally mediated memory, or simply a part of history. It is a history learned at home, at school, here and there, even from contemporary commercials for brands from the Communist period: chocolate (ROM, promoted today as „Strong Emotions since 1964”) or detergents (DERO, as „The Scent of the Most Beautiful Years”, referring to 1960 – 1970), advertisements which clearly trade on a bitter-sweet feeling of recollection. At a deeper level, some Romanians do feel nostalgia for the pre-1989 past, while others reject it—following the position taken by President Traian Băsescu in 2006—as „illegitimate and criminal”.<sup>1</sup>

Between August and October 2010, the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism and the Memory of Romanian Exiles (IICCMER), in collaboration with CSOP (The Center for the Study of Opinion and the Market), produced two opinion polls: „Attitudes toward and Comments on the Communist Regime in Romania”<sup>2</sup> (the second survey being a repetition and elaboration of the first,

1 Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrinu, Cristian Vasile (ed.), Comisia prezidențială pentru analiza dicturii din România, Raport final [Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Romanian Dictatorship, Final Report], București, 2007, p.12.

2 [http://www.crimelecomunismului.ro/ro/evenimente/arhiva\\_evenimente/arhiva\\_evenimente\\_2010/iiccmmer\\_prezinta\\_perceptiile\\_actuale\\_ale\\_romanilor\\_asupra\\_regimului\\_comunist/](http://www.crimelecomunismului.ro/ro/evenimente/arhiva_evenimente/arhiva_evenimente_2010/iiccmmer_prezinta_perceptiile_actuale_ale_romanilor_asupra_regimului_comunist/), [http://www.crimelecomunismului.ro/ro/presa/comunicate/comunicate\\_de\\_presa\\_2010/iiccmmer\\_prezinta\\_perceptiile\\_romanilor](http://www.crimelecomunismului.ro/ro/presa/comunicate/comunicate_de_presa_2010/iiccmmer_prezinta_perceptiile_romanilor); <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-8113632-sondaj-aproape-45-dintre-romani-considera-comunismul-idee-buna-dar-prost-aplicata.htm>, accessed 23.03.2011.

to verify and possibly refine the answers). The initiators aimed „to elaborate a public policy for democratic education, fundamental for understanding and coming to terms with the Communist past”.<sup>3</sup>

The poll was a response to a signal interest of some parts of the media, as well as groups of intellectuals concerned with education, culture, or politics. One year earlier, in reference to another opinion poll on the same theme, a newspaper wrote, „It is interesting, aside from measuring Romanian’s inclinations to the left or right, to see the extent to which Romanian society still bears a mentality of ‚residual Communism.”<sup>4</sup> In Septimiu Chelcea’s analysis of 1999, roughly 57% of Romanians over the age of 18 agreed with the proposition that „Communism was a good idea, poorly put into practice”. Today, 10 years after the study cited and 20 since the fall of Communism, this percentage has grown slightly, to 64%.<sup>4</sup> The uneasiness generated by this kind of comment has made it clear that the public should be surveyed in greater detail, in order to establish appropriate strategies for anti-Communist education.

The 2010 opinion polls were performed on groups of 1123 – 1133 people, with an estimated margin of error of 0.95%. The questions covered a large pallet: from broad opinions regarding the Communist regime, to the role

3 Percepția actuală asupra comunismului – rezultatele studiului din Octombrie 2010 [Current perceptions of Communism – results of the October 2010 study], <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-7815580-video-sondaj-61-din-romani-considera-prezent-comunismul-drept-idee-buna-jumatate-din-populatie-afirma-inainte-decembrie-1989-eramai-bine-romania-cum-explica-mihai-neamtu-paradoxurile-din-sondaj.htm>

4 <http://www.jurnalul.ro/stire-special/romanii-nu-regreta-comunismul-526525.html>, accessed 23.03.2011.

## General Opinions of Communism (%)

	August 2010	October 2010
It is a bad idea	27	29
It is a good idea, poorly put into practice	47	44
It is a good idea, well put into practice	14	15
I don't know/ no response	12	12

of the state and to issues of repression, lustration, and collaboration.<sup>5</sup>

The statements that generated the most comment and argument were those in response to questions that asked for general opinions about Communism.

What was shocking, above all, was that the majority believed Communism was a good idea, regardless of the way this idea was put into practice. Sex and residence environment made negligible differences, while those based on age and region were also modest. Thus, for the October 2010 poll, people under 20 years old, who have no personal memory of Communist time, gave the greatest number of non-responses (37%). As age increases, the number of non-responses drops and the number of those who think Communism was a good idea grows (23% of participants over 60 believed Communism was a good idea, well put into practice, and 51% a good idea, poorly put into practice, for a total of 74%). The 40 – 60-year age group is close to the over-60 group, while participants from 20 to 40 are more balanced (36% bad idea, 37% good idea poorly applied, 12% good idea well applied).

<sup>5</sup> The complete text of the surveys was provided to us by Professor Bogdan Murgescu. See <http://www.crimelecomunismului.ro/>

Regionally, negative opinions about Communism are stronger in Bucharest and the Center of the country (46% believed it was a mistake), while positive opinions were most numerous in the South-East and North-East (25% and 19%, respectively, believed Communism was a good idea well applied, and 44% and 52%, respectively, a good idea poorly applied). Positive opinions are also greater than the national average in the South and South-west (Muntenia and Oltenia), while the idea that Communism was mistaken is over that average in the West and North-west. The regional differentiation suggests a correlation between positive opinions about Communism and relative economic and social underdevelopment. Similarly, responses to other questions confirm the significance of social and economic factors for the participants. Of the 49% who, in 2010, said that Romania was better before 1989 than in the present, many gave as reasons statements that, „there was no unemployment, everyone had a job (62%), decent standard of living (26%), the fact that everyone had housing, faith in the future, order, good and free schooling, discipline, equality, good health system, stable national currency, the fact that there was no corruption.“ Clearly, we are dealing with a myth, one that combines some true elements with some clos-

er to utopia. At the same time, in answers to the same question, negative opinions about Communism remained in the minority: only 23% of participants compared Communism unfavorably with the present, 14% believed it was the same, and 14% did not respond. Of the 23% that believe things were worse before 1989, most blamed the lack of freedom (69%) and poverty (lack of food and public services—49%).

The responses above converge with widespread Romanian opinions about the state. The greatest number of responses to the October 2010 question regarding what the state ought to do referred to job security (72%), planned economy (51%), state-fixed prices (44%), and property restitution (43%). It is obvious that the Communist discourse of jobs, equality, and rights still influences Romanian opinion, and that, in their desires for protective figures in the state, many participants associate the Communist regime with a certain sense of stability and security. The cold, long lines, those 10 eggs per month, and the antennas to watch TV from neighboring Socialist states are blotted out by the political and cultural kitsch of everyday life. The most troubling responses are those to the question, whether „you, yourself, or your family suffered, under the Communist regime?“ Amazingly, almost 78% respond „no“ (83% in the second survey), a fact which calls urgent attention to the problems of trauma, suffering, and perceptions of oppression and repression. For those that said they did suffer, the harm is characterized as poverty/lack of food and services (47%), or the confiscation of goods, political prisoners in the family, persecution, harassment, deportation (etc.). Asked directly about repression, 50% of respondents admit its existence, compared to 22% who believed we could not

say anything like it existed. The blame for suffering is equally divided between „Romanian Communist Party leaders“ (45%) and „Securitate leaders“ (44%). Regarding the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the system, 42% believe that it was an illegitimate regime, but when asked who played the biggest role in instating Communism in Romania, most participants pointed to the Soviet Union (48%, compared to 17% who pointed to the Communist Party). Evidently, we are dealing with an externalization of evil, a mechanism which became the consensus in Romania, after 1989. But, if opinions are clear regarding the beginnings of the communist regime and, broadly speaking, regarding the period of Soviet influence (until the end of the 1950s), many participants were ambivalent regarding the leader of national Communism. 46% of participants believe that Nicolae Ceaușescu did both good and harm to Romania, compared to 15% who state that he did harm and 25% that he did good. The pollsters included questions regarding access to Securitate files, lustration, and the memorialization of Communism. The responses seemed more complacent than reflections of deep convictions. Thus, the delicate and much debated problem of access to Securitate files was important to 40% of the subjects and unimportant for 49%. In contrast, 51% are of the opinion that there should be a National Museum of Communist Dictatorship in Romania (an idea promoted by the IICCMER), and that December 22 should be a day to commemorate the victims of the Communist regime (16%).

Mass media remain the most important source of information regarding the history of Romanian Communism (56%), followed at a distance by school (33%), family (21%), books (21%), movies (20%), and the Internet (9%).

Remarkably, in comparison with our 2006 survey<sup>6</sup> of high school students born between 1987 and 1992, regarding their sources of information about the December 1989 Revolution, the current survey about Communism confirms the relative decline of school as a source of information, but it emphasizes the larger role of mass-media in comparison with the family.

Most commentators have emphasized the positive opinions toward Communism, believing them to be expressions of nostalgia, and they have interpreted the surveys as cause for alarm. A similar attitude was fed by the public position papers from the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism and the Memory of Romanian Exile, which took the surveys as signs that democratic education must be intensified. Regarding the positive opinions, they concluded, “This opinion must be connected to the fact that the population has not had and does not have more than limited access to information that would clarify the culpability, crimes, and abuses of the Communist period. Their opinion of Communist regime is also understandable within the political and economic dimensions of daily life in Communism. Alongside the duty of state institutions and Romanian mass media to promote complex, nuanced, and responsible discussion of the Communist past, the Romanian state must enact clear and

6 Mirela-Luminița Murgescu, *Construirea memoriei istorice despre 1989 - percepții ale tinerilor cu privire la însemnătatea relativă a diverselor surse de informare cu privire la Revoluția din 1989* [The Construction of the Historical Memory of 1989—Young People’s Perceptions of the Relative Importance of Various Sources of Information Regarding the 1989 Revolution], „Memorial 1989. Buletin științific și de informare” [1989 Memorial. Research and Information Bulletin], 1(3)/2008, p.19-23.

coherent policies for issues connected to the party-state dictatorship: Securitate archives, lustration, compensation, the pensions of ex-high officers and leaders of the Securitate, or memorials of the Communist period”.<sup>7</sup> “The survey results, articulating Romanians’ current perception of the Communist regime, touch an open wound: in Romania, de-Communization has not even begun”, they argue, emphasizing that the survey proves “the failure of Romanian anti-Communist activities in the last 20 years [...] Anti-Communism in Romania continues to be a limited production for intellectual consumption, in which academic gestures are not followed by a creative communication strategy that would attract a broad audience, which is the final target of any de-Communizing action. Anti-Communism in Romania remains, thus far, trapped in an ivory tower.”<sup>8</sup> At the same time, attempts to justify the responses have been sought in the experiences of other post-Communist nations, arguing that the results in Romania are no exception in the post-Communist world. When asked about Romanian nostalgia for Communism, Adam Michnik declared, “The longing for Communism in Romania or Poland is like the longing for Hitler or Mussolini in Germany or Italy”.<sup>9</sup> Although the Polish dissident’s response was meant more to inspire interpretive restraint, some representatives of the IIC-

7 Percepția actuală asupra comunismului – rezultatele studiului din Octombrie 2010 [Current perceptions of Communism – results of the October 2010 study], p. 4.

8 Vlad Mixich, *Eșecul anticomuniștilor în România* [“The Failure of Anti-Communists in Romania”], 10 December 2010, <http://www.contributors.ro/politica-doctrine/esecul-anticomunistilor-din-romania/>, accessed 02.04.2011.

9 <http://www.tvr.ro/articol.php?id=97611>, accessed 27.04.2011.

CMER have proposed a classification of nostalgics into various categories.<sup>10</sup> This has been met with sarcasm from some intellectuals working to redefine the Romanian left. These people took the survey and its interpretations as an effort to politicize memory and make a political use of Communism: “Along with the secret police, nomenclatura, neo-Communists, barons, moguls, etc., the gallery of ‘enemies’ against which, as remnants of the past, anti-Communists were continuously called to fight during the transition, another has been added: the ‘nostalgic,’ with a protean face and a wide age-range. To put it another way: if up until now the enemy figures were more or less clearly outlined, along certain ideological axes clearly enough defined, in this new stage, the entire population, without exception, may become, at any time, guilty, given the lax structure of the new norms of categorization. Nostalgia can strike anyone, even the young, or especially them”.<sup>11</sup> The accent moves from failures of education to social and economic failures. “This means that we are not talking about ignorance, at all. My opinion is that nostalgia for Communism denotes, pure and simple, a total failure of the current system to furnish an entire category of essential public goods: prosperity, jobs, decent standard of living. We are not amnesiacs, we do not ‘sweeten the past’, and we are not ignorant”.<sup>12</sup>

10 Adrian Cioflâncă, Nostalgia pentru comunism [Nostalgia for Communism], “22”, 28 September 2010, <http://www.revista22.ro/nostalgia-pentru-comunism-8962.html>, accessed 15.03.2011.

11 Florin Poenaru, Nostalgie, pedagogie, umor sau despre a doua venire a anti-comunismului [Nostalgia, Pedagogy, Humor, or on the Second Coming of Anti-Communism], CriticAtac [CriticAttack], 12 October 2010, accessed 15.03.2011.

12 Victoria Stoiciu, Nostalgia “Epocii de Aur” și legitimitatea morală a foamei [“Golden Age”

Because the media have exploited the subject of nostalgia in various ways (*History Textbooks Ignore Communism* is the title of a newspaper article, reposted by the site of a popular history magazine<sup>13</sup>), some commentators have tried to temper the fear of a Communization, or a Romanians turn to the left, and to turn attention to the responsibility of the political class: „It is, however, scientific to base our statements on available data. What we now know suggests that we avoid the conclusion that Romanians would prefer Communism or that they have a strong leftist, anti-Capitalist inclination. On the basis of the supplemental data [...], we can see that we should not rush to accuse, insult, or scorn ‘the people.’ It is wrong and unfair. Romanians are like they are and have their own problems. But we should not impute them with things that are not clearly imputable. [...] The responses to questions about Communism are, first of all, a function of the performance, in any domain, of our political and media elites. If someone is to blame, then that someone is these elites”.<sup>14</sup>

Nostalgia and Moral Legitimacy of Hunger], Critic Atac [CriticAttack], 5 October 2010, <http://www.criticatac.ro/1843/nostalgia-%E2%80%99Eepocii-de-aur%E2%80%9D-si-legitimitatea-morala-a-foamei/> accessed 15.03.2011.

13 Laurențiu Ungureanu, Manualele de istorie ignoră comunismul [History Textbooks Ignore Communism], Adevărul [Truth], 18 October 2010, [http://www.adevarul.ro/scoala\\_educatie/liceu/Manualele\\_de\\_istorie\\_ignora\\_comunismul\\_0\\_355764897.html](http://www.adevarul.ro/scoala_educatie/liceu/Manualele_de_istorie_ignora_comunismul_0_355764897.html), accessed, 04.05.2011), [http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv\\_web/stiati/articol/manualele-istorie-actuale-ignora-comunismul](http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/stiati/articol/manualele-istorie-actuale-ignora-comunismul), accessed 04.05.2011.

14 Dragoș Paul Aligică, Sunt românii stîngiști comuniștoizi (Și o notă pentru liderii PDL) [There Are Leftist Communistoid Romanians (And a Note for the PDL Leaders)], 20 December 2010, <http://www.contributors.ro/dezbateresunt-romanii-stangisti-comunistoizi-si-o-nota-pentru-liderii-pdl/>

At the same time, a recent study by the Soros Foundation brings our attention to the fact that “in spite of a lack of any direct experience of the Communist regime, more than a third (38%) of adolescents believe that was a better time than now”, and “more than 26% of adolescents interviewed stated that the subject has never come up in school. The result is, in the least, surprising, in view of the fact that Communism is explicitly listed as a subject in the curriculum of several different disciplines”.<sup>15</sup> In a recent discussion, a history teacher remarked that young people do not lack interest in the Communist period. Many times they are able to point out clashes between what they learn from the education system and their textbooks, on the one hand, and the opinions of their parents, on the other. The memory they get from home is most often made up not of stories, but of simple affirmations about the concrete situation of the Communist period. Aside from young people’s interest or lack of interest in a past that is becoming more and more *a foreign country*, opinion polls show that for a large part of the population, the Communist regime no longer signifies a trauma, and the regime is not passed on to the young generation as a traumatic experience. For some analysts, the Soros Foundation survey brought to light a fact that is, at least, worrisome: “A group of adolescents, abnormally cynical for their age, whose idealism seems to shatter when they hit the wall of reality. With the help of study, they describe a generation that is anti-system in the most conventional way possible, constructing their great adolescent utopia around dystopias inherited from their parents, including a nostalgia for Communism, instead of creating

15 [http://www.soros.ro/ro/comunicate\\_detaliu.php?comunicat=153](http://www.soros.ro/ro/comunicate_detaliu.php?comunicat=153), accessed 26.04.2011.

a great dream for the future, theirs or even their children’s. In 62% of cases where the parents have a positive attitude toward the Communist past, the children pick up this opinion, while 60% of those who believe information about politics is important get their political information from their parents. Where is this generation’s rebellion? Who is responsible for the fact that their spirit of protest capitulates, sometimes before it is even formed?”<sup>16</sup>

In recent years, the problem of Communism has become a major theme in Romanian films. If, in the beginning of the post-Communist period, films concentrated more on the 1950s and Stalinist repression, sometime in the middle of the second post-Communist decade attention began to shift toward the years of the Ceaușescu regime. In this context, films about the 1950s have not disappeared, but they have diversified their themes and approaches. This diversification is exemplified by the coexistence of films about the mountain resistance („Portrait of the Fighter as a Young Man”, directed by Constantin Popescu, 2010) with others that touch on the absurd affects of politics on daily life, as in the story of a wedding forced, by the period of mourning for Stalin’s death, to take place in silence („Mute Wedding”, dir. Horațiu Mălăele, 2008). Cristian Mungiu has set the tone for films based on the Ceaușescu period, proposing they treat, not the system, but personal stories within the system.

16 Victoria Stoiciu, Liceenii anti-rock&roll și imposibila schimbare la față a României [Anti-Rock&Roll High School Students and the Impossible Transfiguration of Romania], Critic Atac [CriticAttack], 25 April 2011, <http://www.criticatac.ro/6707/liceenii-anti-rockroll-si-imposibila-schimbare-la-fata-a-romaniei/>, accessed 02.05.2011.

Cristian Mungiu's award-winning „4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days“, honored at Cannes with the Palmes d'Or, opens what the director intends to be his *Trilogy of the Golden Age*. At first, the director intended to begin the project with a comedy, as he tells us: „I gave the script to some younger people to read, and they said, ‚Mamă, it must have been so wacky to live back then.‘ I said, ‚No, that's not what I wanted to say!‘ So I decided to begin my trilogy about this period with something more serious. I put the other project on hold. I began with ‚4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days.‘“<sup>17</sup>

„4 Months 3 Weeks and 2 Days“ (2007) engages an extremely sensitive issue, that of women's options under a regime that prohibited abortion. It is the story of two friends who attempt to resolve the problem of an unwanted pregnancy, and the individual (it is hard to call him anything else) who resolves the extreme situation, all of which takes place in a brutal and brutalized world, but one not depicted in political terms. The film takes a skeptical-neutral approach to the story of the many, tragic illegal pregnancy terminations, an issue also addressed in a film from the Communist period, Andrei Blaier's „Picture Postcards with Wild Flowers“ (1975)<sup>18</sup>.

Cristian Mungiu, this time as producer and co-director, gives another perspective on Romanian Communism in the 2009 film anthology *Tales from the Golden Age*, directed by Hanno Höfer, Răzvan Mărculescu, Cris-

tian Mungiu, Constantin Popescu, and Ioana Uricaru. The title is meant to evoke the Ceaușescu period, also called, pompously, The Golden Age. The script is based on a variety of sources: the film-makers' own memories, stories, articles from period magazines, even a contest for urban legends. The two sequences of 4 and 3 films were distributed under the titles „Comrades, Life is Beautiful!“ („The Legend Of The Official Visit“, „The Legend Of The Party Photographer“, „The Legend Of The Zealous Activist“, „The Legend Of The Chicken Driver“) and „Love after Hours“ („The Legend Of The Air Sellers“, „The Legend Of The Chicken Driver“, „The Legend of the Flying Turkey“)<sup>19</sup>. The director describes his aim: „I did not want to talk about the system. I think that the films made by our generation distinguish themselves from those made about Communism in the '90s by their tone, the fact that they do not talk about the system, that they talk about stories that did not happen to us. They are not commentaries on the system, they are stories“. *Tales from the Golden Age* is intended as „an homage to and a revisiting of that period“.<sup>20</sup>

A different approach to the Communist past is Andrei Ujica's film, „The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu“, a collage of archival images, without narration, in more or less rapid sequence. They are images of the Ceaușescus in various official and intimate states. As we learn from the website synopsis, „during his and his wife's summary trial, Nicolae Ceaușescu reviews his time in power: 1965 – 1989. We witness a panorama of the epoch, whose breadth recalls, for example,

19 <http://www.talesfromthegoldenage.com/>  
20 <http://www.mediafax.ro/cultura-media/mungiu-vrem-sa-vedem-cu-amintiri-daca-o-comedie-despre-comunism-mai-adeuce-publicul-lacinema-4923115/>, accessed 01.05.2011.

17 Nicoleta Zaharia, Cezar Paul-Bădescu, Cristian Mungiu: „Poveștile din comunism au un potențial exploziv“ [Cristian Mungiu: „Stories of Communism Can Be Explosive“], „Adevărul/ [Truth], 22.09.2009, [http://www.adevarul.ro/cultura/Povestile-Cristian-Mungiu-potential-exploziv\\_0\\_121187908.html](http://www.adevarul.ro/cultura/Povestile-Cristian-Mungiu-potential-exploziv_0_121187908.html), accessed 15.04.2011.

18 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0071651/>

American film frescoes about the Vietnam war generation.<sup>21</sup> Because, the director concludes, „in the end, the dictator is nothing but an artist who gets the chance to put his egotism into practice. It’s only a difference of aesthetics that makes him be called Baudelaire or Bolintineanu, Louis XVI or Nicolae Ceaușescu”.<sup>22</sup>

Although this approach to the Communist past would seem closer to the expectations of a large part of the population, one that seems to reject official anti-Communist discourse in the name of more nuanced family memories and frustrations with the present, in fact, the Romanian public has shown rather a small interest in these award-winning and critically praised films. „4 Months 3 Weeks and 2 Days” was seen by 89,339 people, in part because it benefitted from a special distribution strategy (a film presentation caravan), becoming the second most seen film in Romania 2007, after „Pirates of the Caribbean at the End of the World” (98,961 people).<sup>23</sup>

Tales from the Golden Age (parts 1 and 2) was seen by only 45,470 people in 2009 (28, 105 for Part 1, and 17, 365 for Part 2).<sup>24</sup> As for „The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu”, launched in October 2010, by the end of 2010 it had attracted only 12,013 people, placing it fourth among Romanian films in 2010<sup>25</sup>. These

21 <http://www.autobiografia.ro/#sinopsis>, accessed 03.05.2011.

22 <http://www.autobiografia.ro/#sinopsis>, accessed 03.05.2011.

23 [http://www.cncinema.abt.ro/Vizualizare-DocumentHTML.aspx?htm\\_ID=htm-378](http://www.cncinema.abt.ro/Vizualizare-DocumentHTML.aspx?htm_ID=htm-378) accessed 04.05.2011.

24 In 2009, at the top of the Romanian box-office was Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs, U. S. A. 2009, 334,217 people, ([http://www.cncinema.abt.ro/Vizualizare-DocumentHTML.aspx?htm\\_ID=htm-414](http://www.cncinema.abt.ro/Vizualizare-DocumentHTML.aspx?htm_ID=htm-414), accessed 01.05.2011).

25 <http://www.capital.ro/detalii-articole/>

numbers show a much lower level of interest than the public has for international films. The 2010 statistics for the top films for Romanian audiences: „Alice in Wonderland” (222,314 people), „Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time” (171,701), „Shrek Forever” (157, 149).<sup>26</sup>

Clearly, the new Romanian wave films about Communism interest only a small cultural elite, and not the deep levels of the population. In these conditions, we believe the anxieties provoked by the opinion polls of memories of Romanian Communism must be nuanced. Romanians in 2010 do not live in the past. Aggressively interrogated about Communism, they responded by expressing their frustration with contemporary society (the surveys were done during a severe recession and dramatic reduction in state salaries, and these employees make up a significant section of society), and their preference for a paternalistic state, one that provides their lives stability. But, beyond these preferences, for most Romanians today, Communism is not really a problem.

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[stiri/cele-mai-vizionate-filme-romanesti-in-2010-142693.html](http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-film-8124819-video-alice-tara-minunilor-lider-box-office-2010-romania-tron-asteptat-depaseasca-doua-saptamani-succesul-celui-mai-popular-film-romanesc-anului.htm), accessed 01.05.2011.

26 Iulia Blaga, „Alice in Tara Minunilor”, lider de box-office 2010 in Romania [“Alice in Wonderland,” 2010 Romanian Box-Office Leader], 13 December 2010, <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-film-8124819-video-alice-tara-minunilor-lider-box-office-2010-romania-tron-asteptat-depaseasca-doua-saptamani-succesul-celui-mai-popular-film-romanesc-anului.htm>, accessed 02.05.2011.

She had a Mellon Fellowship (2000), DAAD Fellowship (2000), Korber Senior Fellowship, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Vienna (2006), various research stages at MSH Paris (2003, 2004, 2005), GWZO, Leipzig (2010).

Besides numerous academic studies and book chapters, she has edited 6 volumes (including *Nations and States in Southeast Europe*, Thessaloniki, 2005, also Serbian, Greek, Croat, Bosnian, Albanian and Macedonian editions, second edition 2009) and published

*Între "bunul creștin" și "bravul român". Rolul școlii primare în construirea identității naționale românești (1831-1878)* [*Between the "Good Christian" and the "Brave Romanian". The part of elementary school in constructing the Romanian national identity (1831-1878)*], Iași, 1999 and *Istoria din ghiozdan. Memorie și manuale școlare în România anilor 1990* [*History from the school bag. Memory and schoolbooks in Romania during the 1990s*], București, 2004.

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## The Official Condemnation of Communism in Romania and its Repercussions

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On December 18, 2006, seventeen years after the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu and shortly before Romania's accession to the European Union, President Traian Băsescu condemned the Communist government as an "illegitimate and criminal regime." He based his condemnation on the final report of the "Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania," which he had called for in April 2006 and to which he set the task of providing a scholarly foundation for this official position.<sup>1</sup> Intellectual circles had called for President Băsescu's condemnation several times since his election at the end of 2004, and nearly all the mem-

bers and experts of the commission had been recruited from their ranks. The convening of the commission also followed from the rivalry and tension between the President and the Premier. At the end of 2005 the Premier at the time, Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, had founded the "Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism in Romania" and for this reason the questions of the treatment of the Communist past and its condemnation were brought onto the political agenda.

The sought after condemnation of Communism certainly did not pass without controversy and it was criticized and dismissed by the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the nationalistic Greater Romania Party (PRM). The condemnations of this sort were harshly polemical and contained little factual basis. The level of the PRM's opposition was demonstrated during the introduction of the report in

1 Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România: Final report, edited by Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrințu, Cristian Vasile, București 2007