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The Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary and Romania During
the Post-Communist Era (review)

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manner. But given the complexities of cooperation within the American Jewish community (including the fatalistically Messianic view of the *Chabad* itself during the war), the then incomprehensibility of the Holocaust that the Nazis perpetrated during the war, and the ongoing resistance of the American government to anything that might “taint” the war effort with a “Jewish” motive, I’m not sure that the story he tells really supports the implication of his conclusion that “All [the rescue of Jews] took was letter writing, a few thousand dollars, and the courage to speak up.”

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The Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary and Romania During the Post-Communist Era, edited by Randolph L. Braham. Holocaust Studies Series. New York: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, distributed by Columbia University Press, 2004. 215 pp. \$45.00.

This collection, like most others of this type, is made up by articles of greatly varied size, importance, ambition, and quality. Rita Horváth’s piece on Hungarian family novels is no more than a catalog of titles uneasily wedded to literary theory à la Hayden White. Kinga Frojimovics’ short article is a useful description of the role of Joint and the World Jewish Congress in helping Hungarian Jewry after 1945. She is, however, far from convincing in arguing that the ironic result of the good work of foreign organizations was that, unlike in the rest of Eastern Europe, at least half of the survivors decided to stay in their country of birth. Surely the main reason for Hungarian Jews’ deciding to stay was that they had been far better integrated into the life of their country than, let us say, Polish or Romanian Jews. By contrast, Ivan Sanders’ short article on Kertész’ *Fateless* is a brilliant analysis of the Nobel Prize winning author’s ambivalence toward his Jewishness and Hungarianness. It is the best short appreciation of Kertész’ art I have seen anywhere.

Andrei Pippidi’s work is harmed by his carelessness as a historian (he seems to think that Lenin died in 1921 and Birobidzhan was established in 1928 [p. 145]) and a convoluted style, which makes me uncertain that I understood his points correctly. I think he is arguing that while extreme antisemitic expressions can be found in Romanian publications, they make little impressions on the Romanian people. When they vote for an antisemitic demagogue, such as Vadim Tudor, they vote for him not because of his opinions about the

Jews, but because of social disaffection. The interesting part of this article is Pippidi's citing the most primitive and shameless rewriting of history that one can see anywhere. We learn that Romanians had never mistreated Jews, but on the contrary, it was the Romanians who have always been victimized.

Randolph Braham, of course, is the dean of historians of the Hungarian Holocaust. My guess is that no one will ever write a more detailed and reliable description of that sad story than what is contained in his *Politics of Genocide*. In his piece in the current volume he is concerned with the treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary today. There are politicians and other public figures in Hungary who are antisemites by any definition and who have a pathological pre-occupation with Jews. However, their party, the Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, is expected to receive no more than one or two percent of the vote in the elections of 2006. Braham is more disturbed by a far larger segment of the political spectrum, the supporters of the moderate right wing Fidesz Party. He rightly dubs them as "history-cleansers." Fidesz derives its legitimacy from association with the unattractive, conservative, and antisemitic pre-war Horthy regime. Partisans of Fidesz intend to remove the dark spots of that regime, and in general they deny or underplay the enthusiastic collaboration of Hungarians in the destruction process in 1944.

Michael Shafir's article is the most ambitious and valuable in this volume. He writes not only about Hungary and Romania, but also about the other countries of Eastern Europe and discusses not only the present situation, but also the entire post-war period. He demonstrates that Holocaust denial, belittling of suffering, and distortions of various kind exist in all ex-communist countries. He is particularly good in describing the various forms of denial and distortions such as deflecting guilt from the perpetrators to the Germans, and even to the victims. He rightly argues that misremembering is not only an insult to the victims, but also a danger to the fragile democratic regimes of the region. History must be faced.

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Post-Shoah Dialogues: Re-Thinking Our Texts Together, edited by James F. Moore. Studies in the Shoah, Vol. XXV. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004. 270 pp. \$35.00.

It is not often that one is confronted with a text so complicated, so densely packed with challenging ideas, and so critical for truly moving Christian-Jew-