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PAGE 01 BUCAR 10366 261445Z  
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INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-01	BIB-01	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	OASY-00
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R 261443Z OCT 94  
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0055

BUCHAREST 010366

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, SOCI, RO  
SUBJECT: THE JEWS OF CLUJ - A WELL-RESPECTED COMMUNITY  
THREATENED BY OLD AGE

1. THIS CABLE WAS PREPARED BY THE U.S. INFORMATION  
OFFICE IN CLUJ.

2. SUMMARY: THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF CLUJ, ONCE A  
SIZEABLE MINORITY IN PRE-WAR DAYS, IS STRUGGLING WITH  
EVER SMALLER NUMBERS TO PRESERVE CENTURIES-OLD  
TRADITIONS. CONTRARY TO OTHER ETHNIC MINORITIES,  
HOWEVER, THE FEW, MOSTLY ELDERLY, JEWISH CITIZENS IN  
THE REGION ARE FULLY INTEGRATED INTO ROMANIAN SOCIETY,

AND THEY UNDERScore THAT ACTIVELY ANTI-SEMITIC  
SENTIMENTS IN TRANSYLVANIA ARE VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT.  
WHILE THREE FUNCTIONING COMMUNITY CENTERS EXIST  
THROUGHOUT TOWN, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS HOPEFUL THAT  
ADDITIONAL PROPERTIES IT FORMERLY OWNED WILL BE  
RESTORED BEFORE LONG. END SUMMARY.

3. ACCORDING TO J. TISCHLER, THE SECRETARY OF THE  
JEWISH COMMUNITY IN CLUJ, THIS MINORITY IN THE REGION  
IS SLOWLY DYING OUT, WITH ONLY 500 MEMBERS LEFT IN THE  
COUNTY, DOWN FROM MORE THAN 18,500 IN PRE-WAR DAYS.  
TODAY, 90 PERCENT OF THE COMMUNITY IS OVER 60 YEARS  
OLD, WITH MOST OF THEIR CHILDREN HAVING EMIGRATED TO  
ISRAEL DURING THE CEAUDESCU ERA; ONLY ONE CHILD UNDER  
THE AGE OF 20 REMAINS. OUR CONTACT, THE FORMER MANAGER  
OF THE LARGEST DEPARTMENT STORE IN CLUJ, NOTED THAT THE  
COMMUNITY SUFFERED TREMENDOUSLY UNDER THE GERMAN-  
HUNGARIAN OCCUPATION OF NORTHERN TRANSYLVANIA (1940-44)  
AND THAT ONLY EIGHT PERCENT RETURNED TO THE REGION  
AFTER 1944. BY THE SAME TOKEN, TISCHLER SAID JEWS IN  
THE REST OF ROMANIA GENERALLY FARED BETTER DURING THE  
SECOND WORLD WAR. (NOTE: WE DID NOT BRING UP THE

4. HISTORICALLY, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF CLUJ WAS  
DIVIDED INTO THREE TRADITIONAL GROUPS: ORTHODOX,  
SEPHARDIC, AND REFORMED. AS A GENERAL RULE, JEWS HERE  
MADE A LIVING AS BUSINESSMEN, SMALL SHOP-OWNERS, AND  
SKILLED CRAFTSMEN. MANY LATER BECAME FACTORY WORKERS  
WHEN THEIR BUSINESSES WERE NATIONALIZED AND THE PUSH  
TOWARDS FORCED INDUSTRIALIZATION BEGAN. JEWISH  
INTELLECTUALS ALSO PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE CITY

DURING THE INTER-WAR PERIOD. TODAY, A LARGE SYNAGOGUE  
NOT FAR FROM THE MAIN TRAIN STATION SERVES AS THE  
MEETING POINT FOR THE COMMUNITY. MEMBERS OF THE GROUP  
NOTE THAT THEY DO NOT SENSE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST  
DISCRIMINATION AND CONSIDER THEMSELVES LOYAL CITIZENS  
OF THE ROMANIAN STATE.

5. POLITICALLY, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS NO PARTICULAR  
AFFILIATION BUT ENJOYS THE RESPECT OF MAYOR FUNAR OF  
THE NATIONALIST PUNR. WE ARE TOLD THAT RELATIONS WITH  
STATE AUTHORITIES, NOTABLY THE PREFECT AND THE ROMANIAN  
ORTHODOX HIERARCHY, ARE CORDIAL AS WELL. AT PRESENT,  
THE COMMUNITY IS TRYING TO SECURE SOME FORMER PROPERTY  
IT HELD, SUCH AS A PUBLIC BATH, WHICH WAS TURNED INTO A  
SPORTS COMPLEX DURING THE COMMUNIST PERIOD AND IS  
CURRENTLY RENTED BY THE STATE TO A PRIVATE COMPANY.  
TWO SHOPS IN THE CENTER OF TOWN WERE ALREADY RESTORED  
TO THE COMMUNITY LAST YEAR. OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS,  
THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS ALSO BEEN TAKING CARE OF THE  
MORE THAN 20 JEWISH CEMETERIES IN THE REGION.

6. TISCHLER NOTED THAT INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS, IN HIS  
VIEW, WERE TOO POLITICIZED IN TRANSYLVANIA, AND THAT  
BOTH THE PUNR AND THE UDMR WERE EXPLOITING THE  
NATIONALIST CARD FOR THEIR OWN POLITICAL PURPOSES. HE  
ALSO LAMENTED THE ETHNIC HUNGARIANS' RECENT BOYCOTT OF  
THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF CLUJ, ADDING  
THAT THE LOCAL ROMANIAN PRESS WAS OFTEN EQUALLY  
INSENSITIVE TO THE HUNGARIANS' CULTURAL HERITAGE IN  
TRANSYLVANIA.

7. COMMENT: AFTER A CENTURIES-OLD PRESENCE IN CENTRAL  
TRANSYLVANIA, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF CLUJ AND  
SURROUNDING AREAS IS RAPIDLY DYING OUT, WITH MOST OF  
ITS MEMBERS HAVING EMIGRATED TO ISRAEL. THE FEW  
REMAINING ELDERLY JEWS IN THE CITY, HOWEVER, ARE DOING  
THEIR BEST TO KEEP ALIVE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY, ALTHOUGH  
HEAD OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HERE IS AN INTELLECTUAL IN  
THE BEST OF THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN TRADITION AND  
EXPRESSED HIS INTEREST IN MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR MOSES  
DURING ONE OF HIS FIRST WORKING VISITS TO CLUJ. A  
SOFT-SPOKEN, GENTLE MAN, TISCHLER SHOWED NO TRACE OF  
BITTERNESS OVER THE HORRIFIC SUFFERING AND DEATH THAT  
MANY OF HIS CO-RELIGIONISTS EXPERIENCED PRIOR TO 1944.  
END COMMENT. RICKERT

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IS/FPC/CDR *slu* Date: 1/3/94

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PAGE 01 OF 02 BUCAR 11829 00 OF 03 090549Z  
ACTION EUR-00

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BUCHAR 11829 00 OF 03 090549Z

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UNKNOWN ANYWHERE ELSE IN EUROPE, AND AN ANOMALY WHICH WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT BE DUPLICATED.

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	OIC-02	PA-01	PM-00	PRS-01	P-01	SCT-01	SP-00
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R 100550Z DEC 94  
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1574  
INFO EASTERN EUROPEAN POSTS COLLECTIVE

BUCHAREST 011829

E.O. 12356: N/A  
TAGS: PHUM, SCUL, SOCI, RO  
SUBJECT: ROMANIA'S JEWS; AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

1. SUMMARY: ROMANIA'S JEWS, ONCE A LARGE AND PROSPEROUS MINORITY, HAVE DWINDLED TO A FEW THOUSAND, AND SEEM TO HAVE NO HOPE, OR INTENTION, OF REESTABLISHING A MAJOR JEWISH PRESENCE. VIRTUALLY EVERYONE WHO WANTED TO HAS ALREADY EMIGRATED, MOSTLY TO ISRAEL, AND THE FEW WHO REMAIN ARE CARED FOR IN LARGE PART WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE U.S. AND ISRAEL. A RICH HERITAGE SEEMS SURE TO BECOME A PART OF HISTORY, WITH

STRANGELY FEW REGRETS FROM ANYONE INVOLVED. END SUMMARY.

2. ROMANIA'S PRE-WORLD WAR II JEWISH POPULATION WAS APPROXIMATELY 800,000. 400,000-450,000 OF THESE DID NOT SURVIVE THE WAR YEARS OF 1939 TO 1945. SINCE 1946, 92 PERCENT OF ROMANIA'S REMAINING JEWS HAVE LEFT FOR ISRAEL. MOST OF THEM STAYED THERE, THOUGH SOME MADE THEIR WAY LATER TO THE U.S., CANADA, AND OTHER DESTINATIONS. TODAY, WHILE THE MOST RECENT GOVERNMENT CENSUS COUNTS SOME 9,000 JEWS STILL IN ROMANIA, JEWISH LEADERS HERE BELIEVE THAT THE REAL TOTAL IS BETWEEN 14,000 AND 17,000, WITH 8,200 OF THEM IN BUCHAREST. AT LEAST PART OF THE DISCREPANCY IS ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE FACT THAT SOME JEWS MAY CONSIDER THEMSELVES JEWISH FOR RELIGIOUS PURPOSES BUT NOT FOR CENSUS PURPOSES.

3. THE AVERAGE AGE OF ROMANIA'S JEWS IS 72. THEIR CURRENT SITUATION IS A BITTERSWEET MIXTURE OF BROTHERHOOD AND RESIGNATION, OF CHOICES MADE TO STAY AND LIVE OUT INDIVIDUAL LIVES IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE TIDE OF EMIGRATION HAS EFFECTIVELY DOOMED THE JEWISH PRESENCE. FOREIGN JEWISH AID, MOSTLY AMERICAN, IS DEDICATED TO MAINTAINING A DECENT LEVEL OF LIFE, HUMAN DIGNITY, AND JEWISH SOLIDARITY WHILE THAT PRESENCE STILL SURVIVES.

4. THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN ROMANIA IS 72-YEAR-OLD NICOLAE CAJAL, M.D., PH.D., AND LONG-TIME PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST AND OFFICIAL OF THE ROMANIAN ACADEMY.

HIGHLY RESPECTED ACROSS ROMANIAN SOCIETY, IT IS WIDELY THOUGHT THAT CAJAL ALONE HAD THE STATUS TO REPLACE AS FEDERATION PRESIDENT THE LEGENDARY RABBI MOSES ROSEN, WHO BEFORE DYING A YEAR AGO AT THE AGE OF 83, HAD LED THE FEDERATION AND ASSURED THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTINUED EMIGRATION THROUGHOUT THE DEJ AND CEAUDESCU DICTATORSHIPS. UNIQUELY, ROSEN WAS BOTH CHIEF RABBI OF ROMANIA AND PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION; SOMETHING

5. ROSEN'S EFFORTS WERE NOT UNCONTROVERSIAL. IN ORDER TO KEEP THE WAY TO ISRAEL OPEN FOR HIS FLOCK, ROSEN CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH HIGH ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. HIS ASSOCIATION WITH CEAUDESCU (ALTHOUGH ROSEN DENIED IT TO OTHERS), WAS SEEN AS A CLOSE ONE, AND HE WAS, AND IN SOME QUARTERS POSTHUMOUSLY CONTINUES TO BE, VILIFIED FOR THIS. BUT WITHIN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HERE, THERE IS NO AMBIVALENCE. EMIGRATION WAS HISTORICALLY AND CULTURALLY A REQUISITE ROAD FOR THE JEWS WHO TOOK IT, AND PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN SO FOR MOST OF THEM EVEN WITHOUT THE TERRIBLE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS THEY AND OTHER ROMANIANS WERE FACING. THE EFFORTS OF RABBI ROSEN TO PAVE AND MAINTAIN THIS ROAD ARE CONSISTENTLY VIEWED IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HERE AS A GREAT GIFT TO HIS PEOPLE.

6. MEANWHILE, PRESIDENT CAJAL AND OTHERS ARE DEDICATED TO KEEPING JEWISH LIFE IN ROMANIA STILL VIBRANT FOR AS LONG AS IT SURVIVES. THE MATERIAL MEANS FOR THIS COMES

FROM OVERSEAS, LARGELY ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES. THE AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE (AJDC) GIVES ABOUT THREE MILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY IN DIRECT AID, AS WELL AS PROVIDING A GENERAL DIRECTOR FOR THE FEDERATION. THE INCUMBENT IN THIS POSITION IS ALEX SIVAN, A ROMANIAN EMIGRE WHO HAS RETURNED TO BUCHAREST TO ADMINISTER THE FEDERATION'S PROGRAMS. BORN IN BUCHAREST IN 1946, HE EMIGRATED TO ISRAEL WITH HIS FAMILY IN 1961. A CAREER AVIATOR IN THE ISRAELI ARMED FORCES, NOW RETIRED, HE WAS RECRUITED FOR THIS JOB BY THE AJDC, ASSUMING IT AT THE START OF 1993.

7. AS WAS TRUE IN MANY PLACES IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD, THE JEWISH MINORITY, ALONG WITH THE ETHNIC ARMENIAN AND GREEK POPULATIONS, MADE UP THE VISIBLE BULK OF THE MERCHANT CLASS IN ROMANIA PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II. AFTER FOUR DECADES OF COMMUNISM, VIRTUALLY ALL SIGNIFICANT JEWISH HOLDINGS ARE GONE, ALTHOUGH AN EFFORT TO SECURE RESTITUTION OF A CONFISCATED HOME OR ARTWORK OCCASIONALLY SUCCEEDS. WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUCH MATERIAL LOSS, THE FOCUS OF THE FEDERATION'S EFFORTS IS GIVING AID TO ROMANIA'S JEWS WHILE CONSCIOUSLY ALLOWING THEM TO MAINTAIN THEIR DIGNITY.

THERE ARE NO ILLUSIONS OF A JEWISH RENAISSANCE HERE, NOR ANY DESIRE FOR ONE. IN THE PAST YEAR, ACCORDING TO SIVAN, THERE WAS ONE JEWISH WEDDING PERFORMED IN THE WHOLE COUNTRY, AND THREE OR FOUR BAR MITZVAHS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE COMMUNITY AVERAGES A FUNERAL A DAY

NATION-WIDE. THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF ROMANIA'S REMAINING JEWS ARE OLD PEOPLE WHO HAVE CLEARLY DECIDED TO LIVE OUT THEIR LIVES IN THE ONLY HOME THEY'VE EVER KNOWN. IN ALMOST ALL CASES, THEIR CHILDREN OR OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS HAVE LEFT. (COMMENT: POLOFF RECOGNIZED THIS PHENOMENON -- PROUD OLD MEMBERS OF A RELIGIOUS MINORITY CHOOSING TO END THEIR LIVES APART FROM THEIR CHILDREN IN A CENTURIES-OLD HOME THAT HAD GROWN INDIFFERENT AND EVEN HOSTILE -- HAVING SEEN IT ON A TWO-WEEK VISIT TO ISTANBUL IN 1992. THERE, THE LAST OF THE OLD PATRICIAN GREEKS OF OLD CONSTANTINOPLE, SMALLER IN NUMBERS EVEN THAN ROMANIA'S JEWS, HAVE SIMILARLY DECIDED TO STAY AMIDST THE DISTANT MEMORIES OF PAST CONTENTMENT MIXED WITH THE PAIN OF MORE RECENT

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PAGE 02 OF 02 BUCHAR 11829 00 OF 03 090549Z  
DISAPPOINTMENTS. IN BOTH PLACES, POLOFF SPOKE WITH  
NUMEROUS OLD FOLK WHO PROUDLY DESCRIBED THE  
ACHIEVEMENTS OF THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN IN  
OTHER LANDS, AND WHO EQUALLY PROUDLY WERE STAYING WHERE  
THEY WERE, ALONE, TILL THEY DIED. END COMMENT.)

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BUCHAR 11829 00 OF 03 090549Z  
VERY AGED, GENTLE, AND FRATERNAL CONGREGATION.  
ATTENDING SABBATH SERVICES DURING HANUKKAH CONFIRMED  
FOR POLOFF THE VERY COLLEGIAL NATURE OF CONSERVATIVE  
AND ORTHODOX JEWISH WORSHIP HERE. (THERE IS NO  
REFORMED JEWISH PRESENCE IN ROMANIA.) WHAT WAS CLEAR

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8. NOT EVERYONE AGREES THAT THE DECISION OF A SIZEABLE  
NUMBER OF ELDERLY JEWS TO LIVE OUT THEIR LIVES HERE IS  
THE RIGHT ONE. JEWISH ACTIVISTS BOTH HERE AND IN  
ISRAEL HAVE BENT THEIR EFFORTS TOWARDS THE IDEA OF  
ENCOURAGING IMMEDIATE MIGRATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE  
COMMUNITY. BUT BOTH THE FEDERATION AND THE AJDC AGREE  
THAT THE MORE HUMANE COURSE IS INDIVIDUAL CHOICE. AND  
WHERE THE CHOICE IS TO REMAIN, DR. CAJAL, DIRECTOR  
SIVAN, AND THE WHOLE COMMUNITY ARE INTENT ON MAKING  
THAT CHOICE AS FULL AND MEANINGFUL AS POSSIBLE.

9. THE FEDERATION'S EFFORTS ARE AIMED AT BOTH BODY AND  
SOUL. WITH HALF OR MORE OF ROMANIA'S JEWS LIVING IN  
BUCHAREST, THE SITE OF FEDERATION HEADQUARTERS, THE  
BULK OF ITS ACTIVITY IS HERE IN THE CAPITAL. BUT EVERY  
POSSIBLE FUNCTION AND PROGRAM IS EXTENDED WHEREVER A  
JEWISH COMMUNITY OF ANY SIZE IS RECOGNIZED. THERE, THE  
COMMUNITY MEMBERS THEMSELVES ADMINISTER FEDERATION  
PROGRAMS.

10. A COMMUNITY CAFETERIA IN BUCHAREST SERVES OVER 500  
FULL HOT KOSHER MEALS EACH MIDDAY, AT LOW COST BUT ONE  
VARYING WITH THE ABILITY TO PAY. (EVEN THE MOST  
DESTITUTE ARE, BY DESIGN, ASSESSED A CHARGE OF 150 LEI  
-- LESS THAN AN AMERICAN DIME -- THUS ALLOWING THEM THE  
GESTURE OF PAYING FOR THEIR OWN MEAL.) MOREOVER, TO  
THE SHUT-IN OF BUCHAREST, 400 HOT MEALS ARE DELIVERED  
DAILY. A LARGE FOOD-BOX, CONTAINING BOTH STAPLES AND  
TREATS, IS DELIVERED FREE EVERY SIX WEEKS TO MORE THAN  
2,000 JEWS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, WHO QUALIFY BASED ON LOW  
INCOME. A FULL MEDICAL CARE PROGRAM IS ADMINISTERED,  
AND ALL RENT AND UTILITY PAYMENTS ARE MADE BY THE  
FEDERATION FOR ALL OFFICIAL PARTICIPANTS IN ITS  
ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS. IN RETURN FOR THIS FINANCIAL  
ASSISTANCE, THE LAST SURVIVOR OF A HOUSEHOLD MUST AGREE  
TO BEQUEATH WHATEVER ESTATE EXISTS TO THE FEDERATION.  
WITH LITTLE REAL PROPERTY AND FEW ITEMS OF GREAT VALUE  
REMAINING TO MOST MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND USUALLY  
NO ONE INTERESTED IN CLAIMING WHAT DOES REMAIN, THIS  
PROVISION IS MORE SYMBOLIC THAN MATERIAL. WHAT IS  
ACCOMPLISHED IS THE PREVENTION OF REVERSION TO THE  
STATE OF ANY PROPERTY THAT DOES EXIST.

11. THE FEDERATION ALSO ENSURES THAT ENERGETIC  
RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL, AND HEBREW-LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION  
PROGRAMS EXIST WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ESPECIALLY FOR THE  
FEW YOUNG MEMBERS OF THE FAITH STILL HERE TO TAKE  
ADVANTAGE OF THEM. TRADITIONALLY, A COMMUNITY'S RABBI  
SUPERVISES SUCH INSTRUCTION. (NOTE: IN THE JEWISH  
FAITH, A RABBI'S SPIRITUAL ROLE IS THAT OF A TEACHER,  
AND NOT THAT OF A LITURGICAL CELEBRANT. WHERE JEWS ARE  
GATHERED TOGETHER, THEY DO NOT REQUIRE THE LEADERSHIP  
OF A RABBI TO WORSHIP. RABBI ROSEN'S DEATH UNDERSCORES  
THIS, FOR IN HIS ABSENCE, WORSHIP GOES ON EVEN THOUGH A  
75-YEAR OLD RABBI IN TIMISOARA IS CURRENTLY THE ONLY  
RABBI IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. END NOTE.) THE  
FEDERATION QUICKLY SELECTED DR. CAJAL TO REPLACE RABBI  
ROSEN IN HIS ROLE AS PRESIDENT, BUT A YEAR LATER, THE  
EFFORTS TO RECRUIT A NEW CHIEF RABBI FROM ISRAEL STILL  
HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED.

12. COMMENT: FROM POLOFF'S OBSERVATIONS, WHENEVER THE  
NEW CHIEF RABBI IS SELECTED AND ARRIVES, HE WILL FIND A

FROM ALL POLOFF'S OBSERVATIONS OF BOTH SACRED AND  
SECULAR ASPECTS OF THE COMMUNITY, WAS A PALPABLE SENSE  
OF SHARED EXPERIENCE WITHIN ROMANIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY.

WHILE THERE WERE A FEW YOUNG PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE AT  
THE SERVICES, IT WAS THE PRESENCE OF THE OLD SURVIVORS  
THAT SET THE TONE. THEY HAVE ENDURED AND SHARED A  
GREAT DEAL TOGETHER, AND HAVE SEEMINGLY PROUDLY  
RESOLVED TO SHARE TOGETHER TO THE END. END COMMENT.

13. FIVE SYNAGOGUES CONTINUE IN OPERATION IN  
BUCHAREST, AND A FEW OTHERS SCATTERED ACROSS THE  
COUNTRY. IN TIRGU-MURES, THE AJDC HAS DEDICATED A  
SUBSTANTIAL SUM TO RENOVATING AND PRESERVING A  
MAGNIFICENT SYNAGOGUE AS A PART OF THE ROMANIAN-JEWISH  
CULTURAL HERITAGE. IN OTHER CITIES WHERE ONLY HANDFULS  
OF THE FAITHFUL REMAIN, AND WHERE THE TEMPLES -- OFTEN  
ARCHITECTURAL MASTERPIECES -- HAVE DECLINED TO SAD  
GHOSTS OF THEIR FORMER BEAUTY, LOCAL COMMUNITIES HAVE  
ATTEMPTED TO DEED THE BUILDINGS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN  
THE HOPE OF PRESERVATION AS HISTORICAL MONUMENTS. BUT  
FUNDS ARE SCARCE, AND WHILE THE DESIRE FOR SUCH  
PRESERVATION IS KEENLY FELT, JEWISH LEADERS HERE DOUBT  
THAT MONEY CAN BE FREED UP TO RESTORE OR MAINTAIN EMPTY  
JEWISH HOUSES OF WORSHIP IN A COUNTRY THAT HAS MANY  
OTHER MORE PRESSING PUBLIC NEEDS.

14. COMMENT: PRAGMATIC LEADERS LIKE SIVAN AND CAJAL  
ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERE IS NO OFFICIAL ANTI-SEMITISM IN  
ROMANIA, AND THAT THE GOR PUBLICLY OPPOSES UNOFFICIAL  
MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTI-JEWISH SENTIMENT. MOREOVER,  
VIRTUALLY NO PUBLIC OR PRIVATE CLEARLY ANTI-SEMITIC  
ACTS CAN BE POINTED TO, EITHER NOW OR IN THE RECENT  
PAST. HOWEVER, ROMANIAN LIFE STILL PROVIDES DAILY  
EVIDENCE OF THE DEEPLY-ROOTED ANTI-SEMITISM WHICH HAS

CHARACTERIZED ROMANIAN HISTORY. WHETHER SUCH  
OCCURRENCES BE THE RHETORIC OF THE EXTREME NATIONALIST  
PRESS OR POLITICIANS, THE CONTINUED DENIAL BY MANY  
PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY OF ANY ROMANIAN  
COMPLICITY IN THE HOLOCAUST, THE EFFORTS AT  
REHABILITATING WORLD WAR II DICTATOR MARSHAL ANTONESCU,  
OR EVERYDAY GRUNBLING BY FELLOW ROMANIANS, THE  
REMAINING JEWS HERE HAVE NOT STAYED BECAUSE THEY FIND  
IT A CONGENIAL ATMOSPHERE. IN HIS TENURE, RABBI ROSEN  
FOUGHT SUCH ANTI-SEMITIC FIRE WITH EQUIVALENT VERBAL  
FIRE OF HIS OWN. DR. CAJAL AND THE REMAINING  
LEADERSHIP ARE LESS CONFRONTATIONAL IN THEIR APPROACH.  
IN ANY EVENT, A CLOSE LOOK AT THE WORKINGS AND EFFORTS  
OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THIS IS A  
HOLDING ACTION. AS ONE LEADER TOLD POLOFF: "IN TWENTY  
YEARS, THE LAST OF US WILL JUST LOCK THE DOORS." AND  
THE STRANGE THING IS, APART FROM THE HUMAN EMOTIONS  
EVOKED BY THE PASSING OF THE LAST OF A GENERATION OF  
OLD-TIMERS, THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE MUCH REGRET ABOUT  
IT ALL.  
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PAGE 01 OF 02 BUCAR 07962 00 OF 03 170631Z  
ACTION EUR-00

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NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE CLAIMS ON THEIR BEHALF. IN ADDITION, THE COMMUNITY SEES RESTITUTION AS A LEGITIMATE WAY OF RAISING BADLY-NEEDED FUNDS TO SUPPORT ELDERLY MEMBERS AND TO CARRY OUT NUMEROUS SOCIAL PROGRAMS.

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-01	BIB-01	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	OASY-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	EB-00	ED-01	FBIE-00	NHS-01
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SECSTATE WASHDC 9005

BUCHAREST 007962

BRUSSELS FOR AMBASSADOR EIZENSTAT

E.O. 12356: N/A  
TAGS: PHUM, PREL, SCUL, SOCI, RO  
SUBJECT: RESTITUTION OF JEWISH PROPERTIES -- A SCENE-SETTER FOR AMBASSADOR EIZENSTAT'S VISIT TO ROMANIA

1. DECONTROL UPON RECEIPT - SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

2. SUMMARY: THE ISSUE OF RESTITUTION OF JEWISH COMMUNAL PROPERTIES IS GAINING MOMENTUM IN ROMANIAN GOVERNMENTAL CIRCLES AND GOR OFFICIALS HAVE RECENTLY INDICATED MORE FLEXIBILITY AND POLITICAL WILL TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM. THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL MINORITIES, CHAIRED BY GOR SECRETARY GENERAL VIOROL KREBENCIUC, WHICH INCLUDES THE LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY, IS WORKING TO INTRODUCE A BILL IN PARLIAMENT WHICH WOULD RESOLVE THE COMPLEX RESTITUTION ISSUE FOR ALL MINORITIES IN ROMANIA. IN THE MEANTIME, THE GOR SEEMS PREPARED TO OFFER RESTITUTION OF A SMALL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES ON A LIST PREPARED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND PRESENTED TO THE GOR BY THE COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD JEWISH RESTITUTION ORGANIZATION (WJRO) IN A GESTURE OF "GOOD WILL" PRIOR TO PRESIDENT ILIESCU'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON IN LATE SEPTEMBER. END SUMMARY.

SOME BACKGROUND

3. ROMANIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS BEEN IN A STATE OF CONSTANT DECLINE OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES. NUMBERING APPROXIMATELY 800,000 IN PRE-WORLD WAR II YEARS, ABOUT FIFTY PERCENT OF ROMANIA'S JEWS SURVIVED THE WAR, BUT THEIR NUMBERS HAVE SHRUNK DRASTICALLY TO LESS THAN 20,000, LARGELY AS A RESULT OF EMIGRATION DURING THE COMMUNIST PERIOD. ACCORDING TO COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES, SOME 15,000 MEMBERS ARE REGISTERED TODAY, WITH A FEW THOUSAND HAVING ONLY RECENTLY "COME FORWARD." HOWEVER, THE AGING COMMUNITY (WITH AN

AVERAGE AGE OF 70 PLUS) LOSES ROUGHLY 1,000 MEMBERS EVERY YEAR AS A RESULT OF DEATH OR EMIGRATION. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE STATISTICS, A SPEEDY RESTITUTION OF PROPERTIES HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY. COMMUNITY LEADERS ARE NOT ONLY CONCERNED THAT FEW PEOPLE ARE LEFT TO IDENTIFY FORMER COMMUNITY PROPERTY BUT ARE EQUALLY WORRIED THAT, IN THE LONG RUN,

4. THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF THE COMMUNITY IS RESTITUTION OF NON-RELIGIOUS COMMUNAL PROPERTIES, SUCH AS SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, CLINICS, HOMES FOR THE AGED, AND CHILD-CARE FACILITIES. THE COMMUNITY HAS INTENTIONALLY SEPARATED THE RESTITUTION OF SYNAGOGUES AND OTHER PRIMARILY RELIGIOUS PROPERTIES FROM THE OTHER COMMUNAL PROPERTIES IN RECOGNITION THAT THE RETURN OF JEWISH RELIGIOUS PROPERTY IS ENTANGLED WITH THE GREATER, AND MORE CONTROVERSIAL, ISSUE OF THE STATUS OF THE RELIGIOUS PROPERTIES OF THE GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH THAT WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE ORTHODOX CHURCH DURING THE COMMUNIST PERIOD. THE COMMUNITY IS ALSO INTERESTED IN RECEIVING BACK PERSONAL PROPERTIES SEIZED FROM ROMANIA'S JEWS, BUT IT IS GIVING THIS ISSUE A LOWER PRIORITY.

THE SITUATION TODAY: PERSONAL PROPERTY

5. IN JUNE, THE ROMANIAN PARLIAMENT PASSED A CONTROVERSIAL NATIONALIZED DWELLINGS BILL WHICH FAVORED CURRENT TENANTS OVER FORMER OWNERS WHOSE PERSONAL PROPERTIES WERE NATIONALIZED BY THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT. IN JULY, THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT WHICH REVIEWS NEW LAWS FOR CONSTITUTIONALITY BEFORE THEY ARE PASSED TO THE PRESIDENT FOR ENACTMENT, DECLARED SEVERAL PROVISIONS OF THE LAW TO BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND SENT IT BACK TO PARLIAMENT FOR RECONSIDERATION. THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT OBJECTED TO THE ARTICLE THAT ALLOWED ONLY ROMANIAN CITIZENS RESIDING IN ROMANIA TO CLAIM PROPERTY, BUT DID NOT QUESTION THE LEGALITY OF ARTICLES THAT FAVORED CURRENT TENANTS OVER FORMER OWNERS. WITH PARLIAMENT OUT OF SESSION FOR THE SUMMER, IT IS UNCLEAR AT THE MOMENT WHETHER THE MEASURE WILL BE RETURNED TO COMMITTEE FOR A COMPLETE REWRITE OR WILL BE LIGHTLY REWORDED TO OVERCOME THE FINDINGS OF THE UNCONSTITUTIONALITY. THE GOR DOES NOT HAVE THE TWO-THIRDS OF THE VOTES IN PARLIAMENT IT WOULD NEED TO OVERRIDE THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT'S FINDINGS AND PASS THE BILL IN ITS PRESENT FORM. BARRING A COMPLETE REWRITE, IT APPEARS NOW THAT JEWISH CLAIMANTS OF

PERSONAL PROPERTY, SIMILAR TO OTHER EMIGRANTS FROM ROMANIA, WILL HAVE A RIGHT TO RESTITUTION ONLY IF THEY HAVE RETAINED THEIR ROMANIAN CITIZENSHIP.

6. IN A RECENT INTERVIEW, JULIAN SORIN, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY'S SECRETARY GENERAL, NEVERTHELESS PLAYED DOWN

THIS ISSUE, STATING THAT THE COMMUNITY HAD NO INTEREST IN GETTING INVOLVED IN A DISPUTE OVER THE RIGHT OF PERSONAL PROPERTY RESTITUTION. THE COMMUNITY, HE SAID, PLACED FAR MORE IMPORTANCE ON THE ISSUE OF COMMUNAL PROPERTY, WHICH IS NOT MENTIONED IN THE NATIONALIZED DWELLINGS LAW. IN A RELATED MATTER, THE ISRAELI PARLIAMENT'S RECENT CRITICISM OF THE NATIONALIZED DWELLINGS BILL WAS NOT RECEIVED POSITIVELY BY THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT (REF A), AND EVEN SOME MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY TERMED IT COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. MEANWHILE, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, THE ISRAELI-BASED "ORGANIZATION OF JEWS FROM ROMANIA" RECENTLY DECIDED TO OPEN AN OFFICE IN BUCHAREST WITH THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF IDENTIFYING FORMER PERSONAL JEWISH PROPERTIES.

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Non-Responsive Info

EO Citations: 95033937

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PAGE 02 OF 02 BUCAR 07962 00 OF 03 170631Z

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THE SITUATION TODAY: COMMUNAL PROPERTY

7. ROMANIA CURRENTLY HAS NO LAW ON NATIONALIZED COMMUNAL PROPERTY. EARLIER ATTEMPTS TO DEAL WITH THE COMMUNAL PROPERTY ISSUE THROUGH GENERAL LEGISLATION ON THE STATUS OF MINORITIES AND RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS FAILED, PARTLY AS A RESULT OF UNRESOLVED PROPERTY ISSUES OF ROMANIA'S GREEK CATHOLICS AND ETHNIC HUNGARIANS. THERE IS NOW, HOWEVER, HOPE FOR MORE PROGRESS. THE GOR'S COUNCIL OF NATIONAL MINORITIES WHICH INCLUDES REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND OTHER MINORITIES IS WORKING ON A DRAFT BILL ON COMMUNAL PROPERTY RESTITUTION FOR ALL MINORITIES, REGARDLESS OF THEIR ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND. IN

MID-JUNE THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHED A SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR RESTITUTION ISSUES HEADED BY SORIN, WITH MEMBERS OF THE BULGARIAN AND GREEK COMMUNITIES AS VICE-PRESIDENTS. ONE REPRESENTATIVE EACH OF THE MAGYAR DEMOCRATIC UNION (QDMR) AND THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC FORUM SERVE AS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES. DURING AN EARLY JULY SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE, IT WAS DECIDED TO EXCLUDE RELIGIOUS PROPERTY AND PLACES OF WORSHIP FROM PROPERTIES TO BE RESTITUTED, AN ISSUE WHICH WOULD BE COVERED BY SEPARATE LEGISLATION. AS FOR COMMUNAL PROPERTY, PRESENT THINKING IS THAT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES WOULD PRIMARILY RECEIVE A RIGHT TO PROPERTY TITLES, RATHER THAN FULL AND IMMEDIATE PHYSICAL POSSESSION OF THE PROPERTIES IN QUESTION. ACCORDING TO SORIN WHO AGREES WITH THIS APPROACH, THE RENTS RECEIVED FROM SUCH PROPERTIES WOULD BE OF TREMENDOUS HELP TO THE COMMUNITY, WHICH IS ALREADY HARD-PRESSED FOR FUNDS. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL WHEN DRAFTING OF THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION MIGHT BE COMPLETED.

8. FOR ITS PART, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS ALREADY COMPILED A LIST OF CLOSE TO A THOUSAND COMMUNAL PROPERTIES WHICH WERE NATIONALIZED, EXPROPRIATED, OR SOLD. THE WJRO HAS ALSO BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN IDENTIFYING FORMER PROPERTIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. ALL MINORITY GROUPS WILL AT SOME POINT HAVE TO COMPLETE AND SUBMIT SIMILAR INVENTORIES, AND THE WJRO EXPECTS THAT ITS RESEARCH ALONE WILL TAKE SEVERAL YEARS.

RELIGIOUS PROPERTY - ROMANIA'S CAN OF WORMS

9. RESTITUTION OF RELIGIOUS PROPERTIES IN ROMANIA HAS BEEN COMPLICATED, INTER ALIA, BY THE ONGOING DISPUTE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX AND THE GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCHES OVER PROPERTIES THAT WERE HANDED OVER TO THE ORTHODOX IN 1947. MOREOVER, ROMANIA'S HUNGARIAN REFORMED CHURCH HAS ASKED FOR THE RESTITUTION OF HUNDREDS OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS THAT IT ADMINISTERED BEFORE THE WAR. AS FOR SYNAGOGUES, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS SEEKING RESTITUTION OF FORMERLY ABANDONED PLACES OF WORSHIP THAT WERE NATIONALIZED BY THE STATE OR NOT FUNCTIONING AS SUCH OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES. THE PROBLEM OF RESTITUTION OF SYNAGOGUES WILL HENCE HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF BEING RESOLVED SEPARATELY BARRING ENACTMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE LAW FOR ALL RELIGIOUS MINORITIES CONCERNED. SO FAR, SUCH LEGISLATION HAS NOT YET COME UP FOR DISCUSSION.

GOR LIKELY TO BUDGE SOONER THAN EXPECTED

10. WHILE SORIN RECENTLY CONFIRMED TO CHARGE THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINORITIES WOULD NOT HAVE A DRAFT LAW READY FOR GOR REVIEW BEFORE PRESIDENT ILIESCU'S LATE SEPTEMBER VISIT TO WASHINGTON, WE HAVE RECEIVED INDICATIONS THAT THE GOR IS WILLING TO CONSIDER RESTITUTING A NUMBER OF COMMUNAL PROPERTIES COMPILED ON

A "SHORT" LIST WHICH WAS PRESENTED BY THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND THE WJRO TO FOREIGN MINISTER MELESCANU AND GENERAL SECRETARY HREBENCIUC, RESPECTIVELY. THESE PROPERTIES ARE NONCONTROVERSIAL, IN THAT THEY ARE NOT OCCUPIED BY OTHER TENANTS AND AS SUCH, THEY COULD BE HANDLED QUIETLY AS A MATTER SEPARATE FROM THE LARGER LIST OF PROPERTIES WHICH WOULD FALL UNDER THE COUNCIL OF MINORITIES' DRAFT LEGISLATION. AMONG THE PROPERTIES MENTIONED ON THE "SHORT" LIST IS THE NATIONAL JEWISH THEATER IN BUCHAREST. FOREIGN MINISTER MELESCANU HAS TOLD THE CHARGE THAT THE GOR WOULD BE AS FLEXIBLE AS POSSIBLE AND TRY TO MOVE ON THE ISSUE PRIOR TO ILIESCU'S DEPARTURE FOR WASHINGTON.

THE WJRO AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY - CONFLICTS OF INTEREST?

11. UNDER THE LATE CHIEF RABBI MOSES ROSEN THE COMMUNITY SIGNED AN AGREEMENT IN 1992 WITH THE WJRO WHICH GIVES THE WJRO A CONSULTATIVE ROLE IN SEEING JEWISH COMMUNAL PROPERTY RESTITUTED IN ROMANIA. MEANWHILE, THE WJRO HAS BEEN TRYING TO CARVE OUT A ROLE FOR ITSELF IN THE PROPERTY RESTITUTION ISSUE AND HAS LED SEPARATE DISCUSSION WITH THE GOR. WHILE THE WJRO LEADERSHIP IS OPPOSED TO SHORT LIST RESTITUTION (REF B) THE ORGANIZATION'S LOCAL REP HAS GIVEN THIS LIST TO THE GOR (HREBENCIUC), AND HAS SUBMITTED A DRAFT AGREEMENT FOR GOVERNMENT CONSIDERATION. HREBENCIUC TOLD US, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF ENTERING INTO ANY

AGREEMENT THAT DID NOT HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP. MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THE WELL-RESPECTED UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR AND LEADER OF THE COMMUNITY DR. CAJAL, HOWEVER, REMAIN CONVINCED, THAT THE COMMUNITY'S GREATEST HOPES FOR SUCCESS LIE IN DEALING DIRECTLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE COUNCIL OF MINORITIES AND SEES THE WJRO AS HAVING ONLY A "CONSULTATIVE" ROLE.

12. IN SUM, THE LAST TWO MONTHS HAVE SEEN MODERATE PROGRESS ON THE PROPERTY RESTITUTION FRONT IN ROMANIA. THE COUNCIL OF MINORITIES' ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL RESTITUTION COMMITTEE AND THE GOVERNMENT'S APPARENT WILLINGNESS TO HAND OVER SEVERAL PROPERTIES PRIOR TO THE PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION ON RESTITUTION OF COMMUNAL PROPERTIES ARE TWO SEPARATE TRACKS THAT ARE LIKELY TO YIELD POSITIVE RESULTS. IN THIS RESPECT, THE LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY LEAD BY DR. CAJAL IS THE INTERLOCUTOR OF CHOICE OF THE GOR. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY, FOR THEIR PART, ARE VARY OF A TOO DOMINANT ROLE BY THE WJRO AND INSIST THAT ANY RETURNED PROPERTY SHOULD COME TO THE COMMUNITY. MOREOVER, PASSAGE OF AN ALL-COMPREHENSIVE LAW ON COMMUNAL PROPERTY RESTITUTION FOR ALL AFFECTED MINORITIES IN ROMANIA IS THE ONLY DESIRED LONG-TERM SOLUTION. E.KIK

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TAGS: PHUM, SOCI, RO  
SUBJECT: DIRECTOR OF PERIODICAL DISAVOWS RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR ANTI-SEMITIC ARTICLE

1. THE DIRECTOR OF THE WEEKLY REVIEW "BARICADA", EDUARD-VICTOR GUGUI, HAS DISAVOWED A RECENT ANTI-SEMITIC ARTICLE THAT APPEARED IN THE NOVEMBER 14 ISSUE OF "BARICADA." IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE AMBASSADOR OF ISRAEL TO ROMANIA, WHO OFFICIALLY COMPLAINED ABOUT THE PIECE, AND PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS, GUGUI APOLOGIZED FOR THE LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM AND FOR THE OFFENSE BROUGHT TO THE ISRAELI PEOPLE. THE ARTICLE IN QUESTION WAS ENTITLED "MATZOS MADE FROM

CHRISTIAN BLOOD" AND ALLEGED THAT THE PERSONAL SECRETARY OF A FORMER ISRAELI GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IS INVOLVED IN TRAFFICKING ROMANIAN CHILDREN TO ISRAEL FOR THEIR ORGANS AND BLOOD. GUGUI SAID THAT THE ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE EDITORIAL OFFICE, DOROTHEA IONESCU, AND PUBLISHED WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE EDITORIAL OFFICE, HORIA HARITON, WHILE GUGUI WAS ABROAD. GUGUI STATED THAT THE JOURNALISTS' ANTI-SEMITIC OPINIONS ARE OFFENSIVE TO HIM AND DO NOT REFLECT THE OPINIONS OF "BARICADA". AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR ANTI-SEMITIC REMARKS, GUGUI SANCTIONED IONESCU AND HARITON AND RESCINDED THEIR RIGHT TO PUBLISH ARTICLES IN "BARICADA."

2. THE PUBLICATION IN QUESTION IS A MARGINAL AND SOMETIMES SCURRILOUS REVIEW WITH A CIRCULATION OF LESS THAN 5000 COPIES. GUGUI IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE SPLINTER "ECOLOGIST MOVEMENT OF ROMANIA", WHICH IS PART OF THE NATIONAL UNITY BLOC ALONG WITH THE ROMANIAN PARTY OF NATIONAL UNITY (PUNR) AND THE ROMANIAN DEMOCRATIC AGRARIAN (PDAR) PARTY, AND "BARICADA" IS HIS MOUTHPIECE. THE NATIONAL BLOC ECOLOGISTS (NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE ECOLOGIST PARTY MEMBER OF THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION) IS AN INSIGNIFICANT GROUP THAT ESPOUSES ANTI-COMMUNIST AND PRO-MONARCHIST VIEWS. EMBASSY CONTACTS EXPRESSED SUPRISE AT REPORTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM, SINCE THAT HAS NOT BEEN THE "BARICADA" EDITORIAL SLANT IN THE PAST. EINIK

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