

**LAUDATIO**  
**IN HONOR OF PROFESSOR DR. DENNIS DELETANT,**  
**Professor Emeritus at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies,**  
**University College London,**  
**Officer of the Order of the British Empire**

Today, the academic staff of "Ovidius" University of Constanța had the honor of inviting Professor Dennis Deletant, Romania's most eminent contemporary historian. This invitation stems from the strong academic relationship between our institution and the distinguished guest, as well as "Ovidius" University of Constanța's desire to recognize his remarkable civic activity, dedicated to the moral endeavor of recovering historical memory, which he has been pursuing for several decades. Professor Dennis Deletant has written history, made history, and entered history. The guiding principle of his entire life—professional, social, and personal—has been the belief that moral law is the most important law in the human world.

The trajectory of Professor Dennis Deletant's personal and professional life, encapsulated within these three chapters, is deeply intertwined with Romania, its people, and his enduring presence within its borders. Throughout this journey, he has been steadfastly accompanied and supported by the discreet yet unwavering presence of Mrs. Andreea Caracostea, with whom he has been inseparable since 1973. Mrs. Andreea Caracostea herself is the niece of Professor Dimitrie Caracostea, a towering figure in Romanian literary history who served as a minister in two governments and as director of the Royal Foundations. She is also the daughter of Professor Andrei Caracostea, a distinguished educator at the Polytechnic University of Bucharest, a renowned researcher in the field of construction science in Romania, and author of numerous studies on bridge construction over the Danube, particularly in the Dobrogea region between Hârșova and Cernavodă, projects implemented during the 1970s and 1980s.

As time brings its rewards, Professor Dennis Deletant was granted full citizenship of Romania in May 2022. "Over 60% of me is Romanian," states Professor Deletant, "because it is very difficult for me to be shrewd. I understand that, in order to survive in a society like the one before 1989—and perhaps even after—one had to be crafty. But I cannot be like that. My upbringing—as a baptized Protestant—dictates that I respect the law, be very fair and honest with people, and not conceal certain things." Such is the manifesto of both his professional and personal life, embodying the ethos of the most important historian that Romania has today.

Dennis Deletant first expressed his interest in Romania and its people during his university studies, which he completed at University College London in 1968. His passion was initially ignited by Professor Eric Tappe, who arrived

in Bucharest immediately after August 23, 1944, as a member of the British Military Mission and later served as a lecturer in Romanian studies at the University of London starting in 1946. Eric Tappe, whose biographical volume "Letters from Bucharest/Scrisori din București" was published in Romania in 2006, played a crucial role in protecting the Prime Minister of Romania's last free government, General Nicolae Rădescu, and organizing his escape from the country. During the communist years, Professor Tappe maintained connections with the Caracostea family, which already had two political prisoners.

Between earning a bachelor's degree in Romanian studies and completing a PhD in 1976 at University College London on a topic that may seem eccentric today, focusing on the 17th-century manuscript from Ieud, Dennis Deletant also visited Romania. For the first time, in the summer of 1965, he visited Sinaia, in a country that could be described as an open-air prison. The few years of so-called liberalization at the beginning of Nicolae Ceaușescu's tyrannical rule were also an opportunity for Professor Dennis Deletant to become acquainted with Romania and its people.

Professor Dennis Deletant's academic career, which began in 1969 as an assistant at University College London, spans over half a century, across two continents, and within several of the world's most prestigious universities and research institutes: University College London, Georgetown University (Washington D.C.), the University of Amsterdam, the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington D.C.), the Cold War International History Project, and the Woodrow Wilson Center (Washington D.C.). Universities and research institutes in Romania have greatly benefited from Professor Dennis Deletant's scientific contributions and consultancy over the past three decades.

In the field of history and studies related to the totalitarian regimes in Romania during the period 1940-1989, Dennis Deletant has left an invaluable and impregnable body of work in terms of documentation, argumentation, and moral clarity. These aspects prominently define him among the country's most important intellectuals. "Romania means my mature life, it largely means happiness, but it also means that I understood that people's destiny depends on a political accident, if you will, that is, a birth accident. I certainly rejoice that I was born in London, in freedom. I also had to question myself because, during the communist period, I always asked myself what I would have done if I were Romanian, in Stalinism, in communism?" Dennis Deletant declared when asked if there are feelings towards Romania alongside professional interest.

For nearly 60 years, all the works, conferences, analyses, interviews, and scientific and civic projects undertaken by Professor Dennis Deletant have focused on Romania and its history. His prodigious scientific career, which included courses at the University of London (School of Slavonic and East European Studies), the University of Amsterdam, and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., along with the hundreds of articles and volumes he has

published, are about Romania. He is the author of hundreds of volumes, articles, and scientific studies disseminated in the United Kingdom, Romania, and other places. Professor Dennis Deletant has been and continues to be part of the most important scientific, professional, and moral institutions in the world, including the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, D.C.) and the Woodrow Wilson Center (Washington, D.C.). At present, he is a member of the decision-making structures of the National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania "Elie Wiesel" and the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile.

Regarding the Holocaust in Romania, Dennis Deletant is the author of dozens of articles, scientific studies, monographs, and volumes of documents, and he has also created an analytical system for studying the phenomenon. "The Holocaust in Romania," writes Dennis Deletant, "has specific traits that differentiate it from the extermination of Jews in other parts of Europe and the Soviet Union. The solution to what the military dictator Marshal Ion Antonescu euphemistically called the 'Jewish issue' did not consist of systematic, mechanical killing of Jews—although it is estimated that Romanian and German armies killed over 45,000 Jews in Bessarabia and Bukovina in the summer of 1941, and Romanian forces killed between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews in Odessa in the same year—but rather, in a cruel, unrelenting lack of respect for human life and dignity" ("În căutarea României.../In Search of Romania...", pp. 181-182).

Dennis Deletant was one of the founders of the Memorial of the Victims of Communism in Sighet and served as the rector of the Summer School there. He advocated for the recovery of the memory of the former political prison in Râmnicu Sărat and its transformation into a memorial museum. In 2007, to assist in the rehabilitation of the building, he even carried sacks of cement. However, the Romanian authorities have neglected the project, and the former prison remains in ruins, a testament to society's indifference.

The recovery of memory, through the opening of the Sighet Memorial and the ongoing effort to persuade the Romanian authorities to renovate the former political prison in Râmnicu Sărat, is a bet that Professor Dennis Deletant made with Romanian society, especially with the younger generation. "It is very difficult to explain abnormality to someone who has not experienced it firsthand," says our celebrant today, urging that the younger generation be presented with patience, as accurately and in detail as possible, and especially with landmarks, to understand what went wrong in Romania for almost half a century, and the role dictatorships, the Holocaust, and political, social, and cultural deviations played.

For nearly a decade, from 1981 to 1989, Dennis Deletant served as the treasurer of the International Association for Romanian Studies, headquartered in Amsterdam. Additionally, for another decade, from 1984 to 1993, he represented the British Academy on the British National Committee for the International Association for Southeast European Studies, a UNESCO-affiliated body. Complementing these roles, Professor Dennis Deletant held the position of Dean, serving two non-consecutive terms at the Department of European Languages and Cultures at University College London, from 1980 to 1984 and again from 1996 to 2000, with a brief third term in 2006.

In stark contrast to many of his Romanian counterparts, Dennis Deletant has consistently confronted the subjects and personalities that have shaped Romania's tumultuous twentieth-century history. Two prominent figures have been the focus of his scholarly inquiries, often sparking heated debates and intricate scientific and political entanglements: Ion Antonescu and Nicolae Ceaușescu. The anatomy of these two political regimes, the mechanisms through which they wielded societal control, and the distinct characteristics of these figures have been recurring themes in Deletant's research. This is evident in his numerous publications, articles, and conference presentations. Deletant's works stand as indispensable landmarks within Romanian historiography concerning twentieth-century studies, exemplified by several seminal works where he has achieved the pinnacle of scholarly analysis and critical evaluation. These include "Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940–1944" (2006, translated into Romanian as "Aliatul uitat al lui Hitler: Ion Antonescu și regimul său," Humanitas, 2008), "Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965–1989" (1995, translated into Romanian as "Ceaușescu și Securitatea," Humanitas, 1998), "Romania under Communist Rule" (1997), and "Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948–1965" (1999, translated into Romanian as "Teroarea comunistă în România: Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej și statul polițienesc, 1948–1965," 2001).

Undoubtedly, one of the most poignant histories of Romania in the last decades of the twentieth century and the early decades of the twenty-first century is the stirring memoir by Professor Dennis Deletant, "In Search of Romania" (published in 2022), translated into Romanian and printed by Humanitas Publishing House in 2023 under the title "În căutarea României. O aventură personală din '65 până azi". Among its pages are political, intellectual, social, and psychological vignettes of a society that endured the totalitarian communist inferno and subsequently navigated a wearying transition toward democracy. From the outset, Dennis Deletant diagnosed the present and future of this country, noting that Romania's transition was not guided by reformist communists, as was the case in other Eastern European states. Instead, the communists who worked with Nicolae Ceaușescu swiftly exchanged their

membership cards from the Romanian Communist Party for those of the National Salvation Front.

Professor Dennis Deletant's professional and moral stance is uncompromising: the Securitate was primarily a state of mind during communism, and its devastating effects are still noticeable after 1989 in all domains. However, it is not just the professional value that matters in Dennis Deletant's work. Equally remarkable is the moral clarity with which he approached all of Romania's issues, tackling subjects like Antonescu and Ceaușescu while maintaining a steadfast distance from any temptations.

In areas marked by criminal activities, Dennis Deletant meticulously documented occurrences, amassing a wealth of evidence and persuasive arguments. When analyzing the phenomenon of Romanian communism, Dennis Deletant discerned a disturbing trajectory whereby a multitude of mediocre individuals ascended to the apex of power within the state, highlighting the mechanisms of professional and social counter-selection. He underscored the devastating impact of totalitarianism, which resulted in loss of life, physical and psychological harm, and the derailment of personal and professional trajectories. Embracing this perspective was by no means straightforward in the 1990s, nor is it today, amidst numerous efforts and narratives aiming to rehabilitate a dark historical legacy, often glorifying reprehensible figures associated with communism.

In the view of Dennis Deletant, a Romanian with Anglo-Saxon logic, Romanian communism has several pillars which any analysis, if subjected to them, would not merely survive, but cease to exist: the camps, death, the Securitate, torture, blackmail, the violation of privacy, and countless deprivations. When he, along with Mihai Bărbulescu, Șerban Papacostea, Pompiliu Teodor, and Keith Hitchins, contributed to writing the best-selling "History of Romania," Dennis Deletant strictly approached the topic of communism within these categories, never abandoning any of his principles. Scientific analysis without demonstrated moral clarity would have remained a mere editorial milestone. However, respect for truth transformed this endeavor, alongside all others, into a compulsory reference for understanding Romania's journey through the world of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Professor Dennis Deletant has made history in Romania during his nearly six decades of affectionate engagement with this country. This is not an assertion from our celebrant today but rather a fact borne out by the records of the Securitate and the repressive authorities of the communist era. Deletant's surveillance file amassed no less than 1,500 pages, compiled into six volumes. He defied all of the Securitate's prohibitions during the 1980s and established direct contacts, through visits to their homes, with figures such as Corneliu Coposu, Doina Cornea, Ana Blandiana, Mircea Dinescu, and Șerban Papacostea. No other Romanian embarked on such a moral tour de force. At

the same time, Professor Dennis Deletant met Ion Iliescu before 1989, then the director of the Technical Publishing House, and after 1990, he had meetings with Virgil Măgureanu, the first chief of the Romanian Intelligence Service. He patiently, competently, and morally investigated the trajectory of communist Securitate funds outside Romania and revealed how large fortunes after 1989 originated and multiplied from these accounts.

The meeting with Virgil Măgureanu is one of the most successful photographs that Professor Deletant captured of Romania in the 1990s. "In 1993," our guest today recounts, "I was asked by the Deputy Foreign Minister of Great Britain to help. I was on a committee to aid Romania, formed by the British Foreign Ministry. The Minister summoned me one day and conveyed that he had received a request from Virgil Măgureanu for English assistance regarding the issue of juvenile delinquency, particularly about the legislation applicable in England. The Minister said to me, 'I do not want one of my diplomats to come into contact with Mr. Măgureanu, because we know his past. But if you are willing to facilitate the transfer of this legislation, we would be grateful.' In exchange, from Virgil Măgureanu, Professor Dennis Deletant received, for reading, documents from the communist Securitate archives, the first among civilian Romanians, concerning the establishment of the institution in August 1948, the anti-communist resistance in the mountains, files from Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu's trial, and reports from the 1950s referring to the Dobrogea region and Constanța."

Dennis Deletant has left an indelible mark on history through several unique circumstances in his life. During the historic inaugural visit of U.S. President Richard Nixon to Romania in 1969, our honoree, despite being of British nationality, was integrated into the American technical team. On this occasion, amidst a brief interlude of President Nixon's stay at one of the official residences designated for him in Bucharest, Dennis Deletant briefly held the position of custodian of the U.S. nuclear briefcase, the paramount symbol of nuclear authority, then and now. Nearly a decade later, in July 1978, Professor Dennis Deletant was among the ten interpreters engaged by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the official visit of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu to London. Concomitantly, Mrs. Andreea Caracostea was enlisted during this diplomatic exchange, her role being affiliated with the Ministry of Industries, under the tutelage of Ioan Avram, one of the former protégés of Professor Andrei Caracostea, her father.

Additionally, Dennis Deletant contributed significantly to the British action committee "Save Romanian Village," an organization that levied direct criticism against Nicolae Ceaușescu's policies for their detrimental impact on Romania's historical legacy and the wholesale demolition of traditional rural settlements. Endorsed by His Majesty King Charles III, who was at that time His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, this committee wielded considerable

influence in disseminating vital truths and realities that were either overlooked or misunderstood by the free, Western world. Dennis Deletant's contribution to this endeavor has been pivotal, prompting public opinion and the contemporary political class of Romania to assess the issue in its true material and moral dimensions.

One of the most vivid and evocative images of the totalitarian communist regime led by Nicolae Ceaușescu in the late 1980s, as described by Professor Dennis Deletant, can be found in his memoirs published in Romania in 2023: "Power outages left the city in darkness, and thus the streets were deserted, except for the patrols of militiamen armed with AK-47 assault rifles. They patrolled in groups of six, under the command of a non-commissioned officer. When we arrived at the Athénée Palace Hotel, we witnessed an incredible scene. The militiamen were attempting to capture several stray dogs that had been released into the square. Attached to their tails were handwritten notes, in printed letters and black ink, saying 'Down with Ceaușescu.' It turned out to be a portent" (p. 95).

For acts of defiance against communism, in November 1988, the Ceaușescu regime declared him *persona non grata* and prohibited his entry into Romania. However, Professor Dennis Deletant stands as a moral victor over evil.

In less than two years, on December 29, 1989, he was back in Bucharest. In January 1990, he visited Corneliu Coposu again, this time at the headquarters of the Christian Democratic National Peasants' Party, in Rosetti Square. The question posed to the country's most important opposition leader was whether there were any chances for Romania to become a democracy again. Corneliu Coposu's response was simple and clear: "I am very disappointed because here in the CDNPP (PNȚCD), I am surrounded only by Securitate agents." That was the moment when Professor Dennis Deletant wholeheartedly engaged in the effort to help Romania regain its lost memory, democratic attributes, and constitutional history from the period before the Second World War.

For a decade, between 1990 and 1999, Professor Dennis Deletant served as an official consultant to the British Government, offering projects and solutions regarding Britain's relations with Romania and other states in the region, primarily the Republic of Moldova. In this capacity, he also acted as an observer on behalf of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), later the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in the parliamentary and presidential elections in Romania in 1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004, as well as in the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova in 1994 and 1998. For nearly 20 years, between 1984 and 2001, Dennis Deletant served as a consultant to the BBC on Romanian affairs.

Because he is one of the most important analytical landmarks of Romania's evolution after 1989, Professor Dennis Deletant was invited, and graciously accepted as usual, to elaborate on the introductory chapter of an anniversary volume titled "Post-Communist Progress and Stagnation at 35: The Case of Romania," which will be published this year by Palgrave Macmillan in London. The volume is coordinated by two members of the academic staff of the "Ovidius" University of Constanța, Lavinia Stan (Doctor Honoris Causa recipient in 2017 from our University) and Diane Vancea, the President of the University Senate. Among the contributors is Florin Anghel, a professor at the Faculty of History and Political Science.

The most emotionally significant project of historian Dennis Deletant unfolded on July 28, 1995, in the ceremonial hall of the "N. Iorga" Institute of History in Bucharest, under the presence of the United Kingdom Ambassador to Romania, Andrew Bache, and the Institute's director, Academician Șerban Papacostea. At that moment, the Institute's Library, founded by N. Iorga, received the only collection of British diplomatic documents dating from 1919 to 1959, which continues to be accessible in Romania's reading spaces to this day. The official gift from the Government of the United Kingdom, through the commitment of the historical department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, also had a symbolic aspect. Professor Dennis Deletant wished to show his appreciation for the person he considers his professional and moral mentor, Academician Șerban Papacostea, one of Romania's greatest professional and moral authorities during the communist decades and at the beginning of the present century.

Academician Șerban Papacostea played an overwhelming role in the professional and intellectual formation of today's celebrant.

Dennis Deletant portrays his mentor, after over 40 years of encounters in the wood-paneled apartment filled with books, located at No. 19, Caragea Vodă Street in Bucharest, as "a symbol of rectitude and firmness rarely encountered in a society torn apart by communism and compelled to turn its gaze from West to East." There, "he always awaited me with a cup of coffee, a glass or two of Cinzano, a small bowl of fruit salad, and a large tray of langues-de-chat biscuits," while they discussed history, politics, events, and colleagues. "Șerban had a sense of respect for truth and instilled in me the respect for its importance in a society that largely paid rhetorical tribute to communist ideology," continued the celebrated professor today. They first met in 1974, at a time when Șerban Papacostea was not allowed to travel abroad or establish relations with foreigners. Fate played a part here too, with the former director of the "N. Iorga" Institute of History explaining that he found a loophole to evade the questions of informers and Securitate officers, justifying his meetings through the old friendships between the Papacostea and Caracostea families from the 1930s-1940s, which included members of the government and



national intellectual elites. Șerban Papacostea reshaped Black Sea studies in Romania after 1990, served as a professor at the Faculty of History and Political Science of "Ovidius" University in Constanța from 1996 to 2006, and received the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from "Ovidius" University in Constanța in November 2006. For almost two decades, Dennis Deletant followed in the footsteps of his mentor, holding in his hands the certificate of excellence from the University by the Black Sea. Last but not least, Professor Dennis Deletant has entered into history. His exceptional academic career, public stance of impeccable moral clarity, tireless vigilance over democratic processes in Romania, and constant warnings against deviations, imposture, and falsehoods have transformed him into a supreme authority, often sought for a definitive verdict.

On January 1, 1995, Queen Elizabeth II awarded him the Order of the British Empire, Officer rank, for his services to Great Britain in the scientific, cultural, and civic realms. On December 1, 2000, the President of Romania, Emil Constantinescu, decorated him with the Order "For Merit," Commander rank, and on October 26, 2016, President Klaus Iohannis presented him with the highest distinction of the country, the "Star of Romania" Order.

Furthermore, four of the most renowned universities in Romania - "Babeș-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca, "Lucian Blaga" University in Sibiu, "Al. I. Cuza" University in Iași, and the University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Sciences, and Technology "George Emil Palade" in Târgu Mureș - have admitted him into their academic community, awarding him the title of Doctor Honoris Causa. Today, it is the turn of "Ovidius" University in Constanța to undertake this endeavor.

Professor Dennis Deletant is a decision-making member of some of the most important specialized publications in Romania and beyond. Among them are "Donau: Journal of South East Europe" from Groningen (Netherlands), "Arhiva Moldaviae" (Iași), "Brukenthalia" (Sibiu), and "Il Mar Nero" (Rome). He is also part of the select scientific committee for the review and professional endorsement of many specialized journals in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, such as the "Historical Yearbook" journal, which appears under the auspices of the Faculty of History and Political Science of "Ovidius" University in Constanța.

For all these reasons, the Senate of "Ovidius" University of Constanța has decided to confer upon Mr. Dennis Deletant, Emeritus Professor at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College of London, Officer of the Order of the British Empire, the title of Doctor Honoris Causa.

**HONORING A DISTINGUISHED HISTORIAN:  
DENNIS DELETANT AWARDED *DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA*  
BY *OVIDIUS* UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANȚA**

On May 13, 2024, Ovidius University of Constanța bestowed the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon Professor Dennis Deletant, Professor Emeritus at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, and Officer of the Order of the British Empire, recognizing his exceptional contributions to Romanian history.

Professor Dennis Deletant is renowned for his extensive research on Romanian history, particularly the communist era. His career spans nearly six decades, during which he has published numerous influential papers and has been a vocal advocate for historical memory and civic engagement. The decision to honor Dennis Deletant aligns with Ovidius University's commitment to celebrating academic excellence and fostering a deeper understanding of historical studies.

The ceremony commenced with an introductory speech by Dan-Marcel Ilescu, the Rector of Ovidius University. Emanuel Plopeanu, Dean of the Faculty of History and Political Science, delivered the Laudatio. Moreover, distinguished academic members such as Mioara Anton, Director of the Nicolae Iorga Institute in Bucharest, and Daniel Șandru, Executive President of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile, delivered laudatory speeches, emphasizing the scholarly rigor and civic responsibility that characterize Deletant's work.

The event's highlight was undoubtedly Professor Deletant's acceptance speech, *Lectio Magistralis*, which offered a profound reflection on the critical importance of historical consciousness and Romanian evolution in the 20th and 21st centuries.

This poignant statement underscored the essential role of historical knowledge in shaping informed and mature societies. Therefore, the Doctor Honoris Causa title conferred upon Professor Dennis Deletant by Ovidius University of Constanța serves as a fitting tribute to his distinguished contributions as a historian.