

# **FINAL REPORT**

of the

## **International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania**

Presented to Romanian President Ion Iliescu

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Bucharest, Romania

<p><b>NOTE:</b> The English text of this Report is currently in preparation for publication.</p>
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## HISTORICAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### HISTORICAL FINDINGS

#### *Statement of Fact and Responsibility*

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany, its allies, and collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Not only Jews were victimized during this period. Persecution and mass arrests were perpetrated against ethnic groups such as Sinti and Roma, people with disabilities, political opponents, homosexuals, and others.

A significant percentage of the Romanian Jewish community was destroyed during World War II. Systematic killing and deportation were perpetrated against the Jews of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Dorohoi County. Transnistria, the part of occupied Ukraine under Romanian administration, served Romania as a giant killing field for Jews.

The Commission concludes, together with the large majority of bona fide researchers in this field, that the Romanian authorities were the main perpetrators of this Holocaust, in both its planning and implementation. This encompasses the systematic deportation and extermination of nearly all the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina as well some Jews from other parts of Romania to Transnistria, the mass killings of Romanian and local Jews in Transnistria, the massive execution of Jews during the Iasi pogrom; the systematic discrimination and degradation applied to Romanian Jews during the Antonescu administration—including the expropriation of assets, dismissal from jobs, the forced evacuation from rural areas and concentration in district capitals and camps, and the massive utilization of Jews as forced laborers under the same administration. Jews were degraded solely on account of their Jewish origin, losing the protection of the state and becoming its victims. A portion of the Roma population of Romania was also subjected to deportation and death in Transnistria.

#### *Determining the Number of Victims*

The number of Romanian Jews and of Jews in the territories under Romania's control who were murdered during the Holocaust has not been determined with final precision. However, the Commission concludes that between 280,000 and 380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews were murdered or died during the Holocaust in Romania and the territories under its control. An additional 135,000 Romanian Jews living under Hungarian control in Northern Transylvania also perished in the Holocaust, as did some 5,000 Romanian Jews in other countries. Referring to Romania, Raul Hilberg concluded that "no country, besides Germany, was involved in massacres of Jews on such a scale."

Cognizant of the enormous responsibility that has been placed in its hands, the Commission determined not to cite one conclusive statistic as to the number of Jews killed in Romania and the

territories under its rule. Instead, the Commission chose to define the range of numbers as they are represented in contemporary research. Further research will hopefully establish the exact number of the victims, though there may never be a full statistical picture of the human carnage wrought during the Holocaust in Romania.

Between 45,000 and 60,000 Jews were killed in Bessarabia and Bukovina by Romanian and German troops in 1941. Between 105,000 and 120,000 deported Romanian Jews died as a result of the expulsions to Transnistria. In Transnistria between 115,000 and 180,000 indigenous Jews were killed, especially in Odessa and the counties of Golta and Berezovka. At least 15,000 Jews from the Regat were murdered in the Iasi pogrom and as a result of other anti-Jewish measures. Approximately 132,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz in May-June 1944 from Hungarian-ruled Northern Transylvania. Detailed information about the origin of these statistics, the calculation, and references are provided in the relevant chapters of the report.

A high proportion of those Roma who were deported also died. Of the 25,000 Roma (half of them children) sent to Transnistria, approximately 11,000 perished. Centuries-old nomadic Roma communities disappeared forever.

### *Evolution of Destruction*

The story of the near destruction of Romanian Jewry during the Second World War is filled with paradoxes. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the antisemitic propaganda, instigation, and street violence of the Iron Guard poisoned the political atmosphere and stirred up Romanians' animosity toward the country's Jewish population. During the period in which it played a role in government, from mid-1940 through to January 1941, it spearheaded the enactment of antisemitic laws and decrees that severely damaged the Jews and prepared the way for their destruction by vilifying them and depriving them of rights, property, dignity, and, for the most part, the organizational and material means of self-defense. The victims of the Legionnaire pogroms of January 1941 were few in number compared to those who perished at the hands of the Romanian government, army, and gendarmerie later on. While the Iron Guard advocated violent action against the Jews and is often blamed for the Holocaust in Romania, and while many former members of the Iron Guard and many Iron Guard sympathizers took part in the systematic forced deportations and murders of Jews that began in 1941, the Iron Guard as an organization had been banned by the time most of the killing took place, and its leadership (most of which had fled to Nazi Germany under SS protection) played no role in the country's government. Direct responsibility for the Holocaust in Romania falls squarely on the Antonescu-led Romanian state.

In Romania, as in Hungary in 1941 and Bulgaria in 1942, anti-Jewish discrimination was compounded by geography. Jews were killed first and foremost in territories that had changed hands and were annexed to these countries. In Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, territories once lost to and then regained from the USSR, Jews were being deported and murdered, while in Bucharest,

paradoxically, leaders of the Jewish community were engaged in a dialogue with the government aimed at saving them. Branded enemies of the Romanian nation along with the rest of their kinsmen by an ugly official propaganda, those leaders nevertheless proved able to maintain channels of communication with Romanian officials.

Although the Romanian leadership and bureaucracy shared Germany's desire to liquidate the Jews, they coordinated their efforts with the Germans with difficulty and only for limited periods. Differences over matters of style, timing, and methodology triggered negative reactions from the Germans, who were often angered by the Romanians' inefficient pogrom "techniques," the improvised nature of the "death marches," the haste of Romanian officials in pressing huge columns of deportees across the Dniester in 1941 and the Bug in 1942, and the fact that the Romanians often did this with little clear plan for what to do with the Jews once they were there, or even expected the Germans to handle the problem for them. In addition, in early 1943, Romanian policy was influenced by Realpolitik. German pressure to hand over the Jews of Old Romania produced a counter-effect: no foreign power would be allowed to dictate to Romanian nationalists what to do with their Jews.

In the summer of 1942, the Antonescu regime agreed in writing to deport the Jews of the Regat and southern Transylvania to the Nazi death camp in Belzec, Poland, and was planning new deportations to Transnistria. Yet only months later, the same Romanian officials reversed course and resisted German pressure to deport their country's Jews to death camps in Poland. Initially, Romania had also approved the German deportation of Romanian Jews from Germany and German-occupied territories, which resulted in the death of about 5,000 Romanian citizens. But when the shifting tides of war changed minds in Bucharest, thousands of Romanian Jews living abroad were able to survive thanks to renewed Romanian diplomatic protection. And while Romanian Jews may have been deported en masse to Transnistria, thousands were subsequently (if selectively) repatriated. Ironically, as the vast German camp system realized its greatest potential for killing, the number of murders committed by the Romanians decreased, as did the determination with which they enforced their country's antisemitic laws. Such contradictions go a long way toward explaining the survival of a large portion Romania's Jews under Romanian authority.

Documents do record some instances of Romanians — both civilian and military—rescuing Jews, and many of these have been recognized by Yad Vashem as "Righteous Among the Nations." But these initiatives were isolated cases in the final analysis — exceptions to the general rule, which was terror, forced labor, plunder, rape, deportation, and murder, with the participation or at least the acquiescence of a significant proportion of the population.

The treatment of the Jews from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria triggered a series of external and internal appeals, which influenced Ion Antonescu's decision to cancel the planned deportations from Moldavia, Walachia, and southern Transylvania. Swiss diplomats tried to intervene. The question of whether the Papal Nuncio appealed on behalf of the Jews is still a matter of debate and merits further research. The American War Refugee Board, established in January 1944, was

involved in the rescue of orphans from Transnistria. International Red Cross representatives visited some ghettos in Transnistria in December 1943 and were involved in the rescue of orphans from this area. The Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Emergency Committee in the United States appealed to the Romanian government to put a stop to the persecution of the Jews. Within the framework of the negotiations with Radu Lecca at the end of 1942, the Jewish Agency proposed to transfer the Jews who had survived in Transnistria first to Romania and then to enable them to leave. The ransom plan was viewed as a possibility to make the Romanian government change its policy or at least to win time. And indeed various liberal, or simply decent, Romanian politicians and public figures occasionally intervened on behalf of the Jews or Roma.

It must be remembered, however, that voices of moderation were not the only ones clamoring for Ion Antonescu's attention. He also received numerous pleas to proceed still more vigorously against Romanian Jewry. In an October 1943 memorandum, the so-called 1922 Generation (former Legionnaires and Cuzists) demanded that "all the assets" of the Jews be "transferred to the state" in order that they might "be placed in the hands of pure-blooded Romanians." (Although by that date the assets of the Jews, with few exceptions, had already been transferred to the state.) These diehards continued to demand "the mandatory wearing of a distinctive insignia by all Jews" and the prohibition of Jews from numerous professions. "The radical and final solution of the Jewish question," they wrote as if the recent course of the war had been completely lost on them, "must be carried out in conjunction with [the plan for] the future Europe." When the repatriations of Jews from Transnistria began, Gheorghe Cuza, son of A.C. Cuza of the National Christian Party, and Colonel Barcan, prefect of Dorohoi, publicly protested.

Romania under Antonescu was a dictatorial regime, and Antonescu's orders could condemn to death the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina, just as they might allow for the survival of most the Jews of Moldavia and Walachia. The entire repressive military, police, and judicial apparatus was mobilized against the Jews during the first half of the war. Official propaganda successfully presented the Jews as the most important domestic enemy, as Moscow's or London's agents, and as the main cause of Romania's economic difficulties. Acceptance of these lies weighed more heavily than fear as an explanation for the lack of protest against the regime's policies.

The Antonescu regime's anti-Jewish policies drew strength from a long history of antisemitism among Romanian political and intellectual elites. They also directly borrowed from the ideology of both the fascist Iron Guard and the single-mindedly antisemitic National Christian Party. Longstanding propaganda stances of both parties found their way into Antonescu's positions. Many civil servants in mid-level positions were former members of the National Christian Party. Moreover, the regime's antisemitic legislation was typically fascist and sometimes overtly inspired by Nazi racial laws, even though Romania's first antisemitic legislation was already issued by the National Christian Party government in December 1937 before its alliance with Nazi Germany.

The idea of forced emigration had found widespread support among fascist and non-fascist antisemites in many European countries during the interwar period. The Nazis had promoted such a solution before 1939. In Romania, the Legion of the Archangel Michael and the National Christian Party had propounded this doctrine, which Antonescu wholeheartedly assimilated. Some historians have argued that forced emigration was the intent of the regime's program, but the main tools employed by Antonescu and his regime in their plan to eliminate the Jews from Romania were executions, deportations, forced labor, and starvation.

If the antisemitic policies and practices of the Antonescu regime were inspired by hatred, the behavior of its bureaucrats was guided for the most part by petty, pragmatic criteria, which sometimes lent its practice a distinct, opportunistic flavor. Perhaps Raul Hilberg described the essence of the situation best when he wrote,

Opportunism was practiced in Romania not only on a national basis but also in personal relations...The search for personal gain in Romania was so intensive that it must have enabled many Jews to buy relief from persecution...In examining the Romanian bureaucratic apparatus, one is therefore left with the impression of an unreliable machine that did not properly respond to command and that acted in unpredictable ways, sometimes balking, sometimes running away with itself. That spurting action, unplanned and uneven, sporadic and erratic, was the outcome of an opportunism that was mixed with destructiveness, a lethargy periodically interrupted by outbursts of violence. The product of this mixture was a record of anti-Jewish actions that is decidedly unique.

The result was tragedy for innumerable Romanian Jews, while also leaving the door to salvation open for many. For example, when it became evident that "Romanianization" was having a negative effect on the economy, Antonescu curtailed this extra-legal process. Bureaucratic inefficiency and disorganization also helped. The haste to destroy the Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina created a chaotic situation, which provided opportunities for Jews to improvise means of surviving the process. At first it seemed only a matter of time before the government would deport the Jews of Walachia and Moldavia—those deemed less "treasonous," according to the official line, than the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina—but still deserving of dispatch to the German death camps in occupied Poland. But as time passed, the calculation that it would be useful to have some Jews still alive at the end of the war saved the surviving Jews from this fate.

Internal and external appeals, misunderstandings in Romania's relations with Germany, but mostly Mihai Antonescu's early realization that the war on the Eastern front might be lost impeded

completion of the extermination plan. By fall 1942, a second phase in Romanian policy had begun. Ion Antonescu remained a violent antisemite (in fact, in February 1944, he voiced regret at not having deported all the Jews), but as the war dragged on, pragmatic and opportunistic considerations became more and more dominant in Romanian decision-making.

When Romania joined Nazi Germany in a war against the Jewish people, the Antonescu regime drew on pre-Nazi Romanian antisemitic and fascist ideologies to initiate and implement the Holocaust in Romania. The Romanian state utilized the army, gendarmerie, police, civil servants, journalists, writers, students, mayors, public and private institutions as well as industrial and trade companies to degrade and destroy the Jews under Romanian administration. The orders were issued in Bucharest, not in Berlin.

When the Antonescu government decided to stop the extermination of the Jews, the extermination did stop. The change in policy toward the Jews began in October 1942, before the Axis defeat at Stalingrad, and deportations were definitively terminated in March-April 1943. Discussions regarding the repatriation of deported Jews followed. The result of this change in policy was that at least 290,000 Romanian Jews survived.

Of all the allies of Nazi Germany, Romania bears responsibility for the deaths of more Jews than any country other than Germany itself. The murders committed in Iasi, Odessa, Bogdanovka, Domanovka, and Peciora, for example, were among the most hideous murders committed against Jews anywhere during the Holocaust. Romania committed genocide against the Jews. The survival of Jews in some parts of the country does not alter this reality.

In light of the factual record summarized in the Commission's report, efforts to rehabilitate the perpetrators of these crimes are particularly abhorrent and worrisome. Nowhere else in Europe has a mass murderer like Ion Antonescu, Hitler's faithful ally until the very end, been publicly honored as a national hero.

Official communist historiography often tried to dilute or completely deny the responsibility of Romanians in the slaughter of the Jews, placing all blame on the Germans and déclassé elements in Romanian society. In postcommunist Romania, political and cultural elites often chose to ignore and sometimes chose to encourage pro-Antonescu propaganda, which opened the door to explicit Holocaust denial and the rehabilitation of convicted war criminals. There have been few public voices in opposition to this dominant trend.

#### **CONTEMPORARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on its findings and conclusions, the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania makes the following recommendations:

## **Public Awareness of the Holocaust**

### *Acceptance of the Report*

The government of Romania should issue an official declaration acknowledging the report of the Commission and adopting the entirety of its contents and conclusions.

### *Publication of the Commission's Report*

The full report of the Commission, once accepted and endorsed by the president of Romania, shall be published in Romanian and English and made available in both print and Internet editions. Consideration should also be given to publishing a French language version.

### *Dissemination of Summary Findings*

The full report shall be distributed throughout the country to all libraries, schools, universities, and other educational and research institutions. At the same time, the Commission shall also prepare an abridged summary report of its findings, and all efforts should be undertaken to ensure its widest distribution. The Commission recommends that this could include publication in newspapers or journals as well as the preparation and publication of a paperback book version that would be distributed to each household in Romania, just as the government of Sweden distributed copies of the publication, *Tell Ye Your Children*, to every household in Sweden.

### *Public Information Efforts*

Special consideration should be given to engage the media in order to enhance public interest in the report and the primary sources on which it is based. Efforts should be made to organize conferences and roundtable discussions on radio and television that make use of Commission members and experts to disseminate the report and its findings.

## **Holocaust Education in Romania**

One of the most basic reasons for the creation of the Commission has been the need for correcting and supplementing what is currently known about the Holocaust in Romania. The long-term success of the Commission will, in no small measure, be judged by its impact on the teaching of the Holocaust to present and future Romanian students.

### *Review and Preparation of Textbooks*

Many Romanian textbooks currently in use that do refer to the Holocaust present incomplete or even factually incorrect information. The Commission recommends that the Ministry of Education create a working group, in cooperation with experts of the Commission and appropriate international institutions, with the purpose of reviewing, correcting, revising, and drafting appropriate curricula and

textbook material on the Holocaust based on the findings of the Commission's report, with the goal of completing this work as soon as possible but no later than June 2006. In doing so, consideration should also be given to describing the historical experience of Jews and Roma in Romania prior to their persecution during the Holocaust.

#### *Commission Publication of Material Inserts*

In order to ensure that the findings of the Commission are quickly integrated into school curricula, the Commission should prepare its own (age-specific) materials as a free-standing insert for primary and secondary school use. Those institutions with experience in teacher training (e.g., Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum) should be asked to assist in providing the necessary instruction to Romanian teachers on how to use this new material.

#### *Higher Education*

Universities and the Romanian Academy should be called on to organize conferences and symposia on the Holocaust in Romania. Colleges and universities should be encouraged to establish courses on the subject, not only for their students but also for professional, cultural, and public opinion leaders in the country. In so doing, they should address the long tradition of antisemitism in intellectual circles, which provided a foundation for the Holocaust and current negationist trends.

#### *Teacher-Training and Resource Sharing*

The Ministry of Education should commit itself to the long-term training of teachers qualified to teach about the Holocaust. Several national initiatives in the area of Holocaust education and remembrance are already underway. These include a one-week course offered by the National Defense College, the participation of master teachers in Yad Vashem seminars, and the Romanian application for membership in the International Task Force on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. These initiatives should be commended and supported. Consideration should be given to the creation of a national network that would aid in the distribution and sharing of materials and resources for teaching the Holocaust.

### **Commemoration of the Holocaust**

#### *Government Observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day*

The government of Romania has adopted October 9 as the official date of Holocaust commemoration. The Commission calls on the President and government to mark this date in several appropriate ways, including proclamations by the President and the Prime Minister, convening a special session of the Parliament, a public display of mourning, such as draping official flags in black

and a having a national moment of silence, and organizing seminars and discussions in the media and at universities and other public institutions.

### *Educational Programs to Mark Remembrance Day*

The Ministry of Education and schools throughout Romania should organize special programs and assemblies to mark the commemoration date. Consideration should be given to holding essay contests, inviting Holocaust survivors to speak of their experiences, and other means of engaging students' interest.

### *Other Commemorative Events*

Religious leaders should be encouraged to observe Holocaust Remembrance Day through an interfaith ceremony and service. Additional efforts should be made to engage religious leaders and theological students in the subject, so that they can include the Holocaust in their studies and their sermons.

[Note: When October 9 falls on a weekend, the proposed programs for schools, Parliament, and other institutions should be scheduled on a nearby weekday.]

### *Holocaust Memorials and Exhibitions*

A national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust in Romania should be erected on public property in Bucharest. Additionally, there are several mass graves of Holocaust victims on Romanian territory (most notably victims of the Iasi pogrom), and they should be properly identified and maintained by the government of Romania.

Furthermore, consideration should be given to the establishment of permanent exhibitions on the Holocaust in Romania at the National Historical Museum in Bucharest and at other regional museums. Likewise, a traveling exhibition on the Holocaust should be produced for use throughout the country.

Local authorities, particularly in former centers of Jewish populations, should be encouraged to find ways to recognize their prewar Jewish communities as well as to commemorate the Holocaust. For example, this could be accomplished by special exhibits in local museums, memorial plaques at historically significant sites, and the restoration of the Jewish names to streets and public squares.

### *Documentation of Holocaust Victims*

Every effort should be made to document the names of Holocaust victims in Romania. The Romanian government and its archival institutions and repositories should assist Yad Vashem and the

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in their work of collecting information and digitizing their findings.

### *Archival Access*

Access to Holocaust-related records in the Romanian government archives is essential for present-day and future historians to do their work. The Commission calls on the Romanian government to remove all impediments to access and further recommends that a central Holocaust-related archive center be established in Bucharest at the Central University Library or the Library of the Academy.

### **Unfinished Matters**

In offering its recommendations for furthering awareness and understanding of the Holocaust in Romania, the Commission draws attention to several contradictory and detrimental matters that require swift and positive resolution:

#### *Reversing the Rehabilitation of War Criminals*

Since the fall of Communism in Romania, we have witnessed the rehabilitation of various war criminals who were directly responsible for the crimes of the Holocaust. These include, for example, the noted war criminals Radu Dinulescu and Gheorghe Petrescu, whose “rehabilitation” was recently upheld by the Supreme Court. The government of Romania must take every measure available to it to annul their rehabilitation, and, in any case should forcefully, unequivocally, and publicly condemn these war criminals (and others like them) for their crimes.

#### *Accepting Responsibility for Perpetrators of Crimes during the Holocaust*

The government must also demonstrate that Romania accepts responsibility for alleged Romanian war criminals through actions that include, but are not limited to: initiating prosecution actions for war crimes against individuals in cases where this remains a viable possibility; implementing all provisions of international law and all treaty obligations that pertain to the treatment of war criminals; and cooperating fully with other governments in keeping with the highest standard of international practice in such matters.

#### *Correcting and Enforcing Legislation on Holocaust Denial and Public Veneration of Antonescu*

Romanian legislation presented in March 2002 bans fascist, racist, and xenophobic organizations and symbols. It prohibits the denial of the Holocaust. It also makes illegal the cult of all persons guilty of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity (for which Antonescu was

sentenced to death), including erecting statues, mounting plaques, and naming streets or public places after such people. Although many public monuments dedicated to Antonescu have been dismantled, there are still streets bearing his name. His portrait still hangs in some government buildings, which must be considered public space. Holocaust denial literature continues to be published and sold freely. Furthermore, two commissions of the Romanian Senate proposed amending the law by defining the Holocaust as limited only to actions organized by Nazi authorities, thereby excluding the Romanian experience in which Romanian officials, and not the Nazis, organized the exterminations.

The Commission calls for the formal adoption of the legislation without any changes and urges the government and its agents to enforce all of its provisions and all other existing legal provisions in this area.

### **Implementation and Follow-Up**

The Commission recommends that the government of Romania establish a permanent agency, commission, or foundation that will be responsible for monitoring and implementing the recommendations listed above and fostering the study of the Holocaust in Romania.

## REPORT ABSTRACT

### **The Roots of Romanian Antisemitism**

The Jewish community of Greater Romania was diverse and numerous, with roots in the histories and civilizations of the Regat, Habsburg Austria, prewar Hungary, and the Czarist Empire. According to the national census of 1930, there were 756,930 Jews, or 4.2 percent of the total population, in the country at that time, and there was undoubtedly some increase during the decade that followed. Jews constituted 13.6 percent of the urban population of approximately 3,632,000, and just 1.6 percent of the rural population of approximately 14,421,000. Over two thirds of Romania's Jews lived in cities and towns, less than one third in rural areas. While sharing many common interests and concerns in the new state, the Jewish population was composed of several distinct communities, differentiated by the political history of the region in which they lived, the degree to which they had been assimilated to Romanian language and culture, the degree and visibility of their adherence to Jewish tradition and religious practice, and other factors.

The roots of Romanian antisemitism are intertwined with the origins of the modern Romanian state. The antisemitism that manifested itself in Romania between the two world wars grew directly from seeds sewn at the major turning points of the country's development starting in the mid-nineteenth century. Strong antisemitic currents were present in various forms and with varying intensity in the political, cultural, and spiritual life of Romanian society for most of the century that preceded the accession to power of the National Christian Party in 1937, the installation of the Royal Dictatorship in 1938, and the Antonescu-Iron Guard National Legionary State in 1940—that is, for most of the century that culminated in the Holocaust.

The antisemitic policies of the Goga government, the Royal Dictatorship, and the National Legionary State set the stage for far worse that was yet to come under the wartime regime of Ion Antonescu. Antonescu wanted to eliminate the Jews of Romania through *romanizare* (Romanianization—the deprivation of property and livelihood), deportation, and finally murder. This change was supported—or accepted, at least—by the majority of the country's political, cultural, and religious elite. Even this adjustment in policy was within a framework of fundamental continuity with ideas that had been an integral part of the political, intellectual, and spiritual discourse from the nineteenth-century struggle for the creation of an independent Romanian state to the establishment of Greater Romania, which Antonescu and his acolytes were seeking to reestablish.

One of the issues that evoked an enormous outpouring of antisemitic sentiment from the mid-nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth was the juridical status of Jews in the new Romanian state. The leadership of the 1848 uprisings in Walachia and Moldavia had called for the emancipation of the Jews and political equality. However, after the uprisings were crushed and as the status of the principalities became the subject of diplomatic negotiations among the European Powers, improvement of the juridical status of Jews in the principalities became an issue of international interest.

Thus, Article 46 of the Convention of Paris (August 19, 1858), which set the terms for the unification of Walachia and Moldavia, opened the door to the eventual grant of full juridical rights to the Jews. When the European powers stipulated in Articles 43 and 44 of the Treaty of Berlin (1878) that recognition of Romanian independence was to be conditioned on the grant of citizenship and political rights to Jews, the voices of the new country's cultural elite were as outraged as any in the political realm. This external pressure caused extreme resentment among a Romanian elite seeking to establish Romanian self-determination and sovereignty, and reinforced questions that still persisted a century later about the loyalties and motivations of Romanian Jews seeking full citizenship and equal rights in the Romanian state. Antisemitic expression was not limited to Romania's founding political elite. It was also widespread among the cultural and intellectual elite of the country.

Thus from the earliest decades of the development of modern Romania, there was a strong antisemitic current in the country's political and intellectual life that was not on the fringes of society, but at its very heart. Moreover, the language used to discuss the Jews was extreme, even in those early years. It was the language of separation, de-humanization, and killing. In fact, this extreme antisemitic language echoed through the following decades, right up to, during, and even following the Holocaust.

With the Romanian political and intellectual elite steeped in antisemitic sentiment and producing antisemitic rhetoric uninterrupted for decades, it was not surprising that the two principal political parties of Greater Romania (i.e., Romania after World War I), the National Liberal Party and the National Peasant Party, were indifferent, at best, to the situation of the country's Jewish minority. While neither party had openly antisemitic positions in their political platforms, neither did they take positions that were designed to ensure equal rights, equal status, and security to the Jews. The granting of citizenship en masse to Jews, which was forced upon Romania, angered broad strata of the leadership in both parties, and that anger regularly surfaced in parliamentary discourse and in the press. Some leaders in both the Liberal and the National Peasant parties were intent on promoting antisemitic policies whenever possible, particularly in the economic and education spheres. While these parties were in power, Jews received little effective protection, and the Jewish community found itself regularly on the defensive, and struggling not to lose rights recently obtained. When Romanian Jews appealed for help from Jewish

communities and organizations abroad or from foreign governments, this reinforced the position of those who sought to portray the Jews as anti-Romanian.

During the 1930s, the National Christian Party (PNC)—and, before 1935, Goga's National Agrarian Party—was the principal Romanian recipient of German National Socialist support, despite the closer ideological affinity of the Iron Guard movement to Nazism. And while the PNC's time in power was short, its antisemitic policies exerted considerable influence on the policies of the governments that followed. A significant number of PNC adherents served in the governments of the royal dictatorship and resurfaced again in the civilian bureaucracy of wartime dictator Ion Antonescu. The PNC's platform included the antisemitic positions that had been in the platforms of Goga and Cuza's pre-merger parties. They were pro-monarchy, but advocated modifications of the 1923 Constitution to ensure ethnic Romanian domination in all areas of national life. They sought to guarantee the "national character" of the press and all cultural activity. The *numerus clausus* was to be imposed on the Jews. The PNC and its predecessors wanted to expel Jews if they or their ancestors had entered the country "by fraud" or "after the signing of the peace treaty," and those who remained in the country were to be excluded from all public offices and the civil service.

Governing through decree-laws, without parliamentary sanction, the PNC directed its first administrative measures against the Jewish minority. Most significantly, in accordance with the PNC platform of 1935, the government announced Decree-law no. 169 of January 22, 1938, calling for the review of the citizenship status of Jews. The law, in effect, invalidated citizenship granted to Jews after the beginning of World War I. It required that within forty days of the publication of citizenship lists all Jews submit their citizenship papers along with the specified supporting materials for "verification." Jews who did not comply or whose supporting materials were considered deficient would be declared "foreigners." In addition to the loss of political rights, this would also mean for many Jews the loss of employment or professional rights, and potential deportation at the pleasure of the government.

C.Z. Codreanu founded the Legion of the Archangel Michael in 1923 and its more militant branch, the Iron Guard, in 1930. Antisemitism was a central element of Iron Guard ideology. All the traditional themes were absorbed by the Legion: citizenship; Jewish over-population in Romania's cities; exploitation of the peasantry through alcohol, tobacco and other vices; control of the press; denationalization of Romanian culture; outright service to Romania's enemies; and representation of foreign interests. Guardist antisemitism also contained new elements, however. It was not directed against the Jews alone, but also against "judaized" Romanians—especially politicians—who had been corrupted by Jews and were allowing the "takeover" of Romania by Jews. It embraced dictatorship as an organizational principle and violence as a tool to combat the Jewish menace—the "Judaic State"—which had organized itself around the Talmud and the Kehillah, and more recently in the form of Bolshevism and communism.

And it glorified spiritual struggle and morality grounded in the mystical images of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

As early as 1923, the Legion began identifying “traitors,” with the intention of killing them. Over the next 18 years, the Legion was responsible for vicious incidents of street violence, aimed mainly at Jews; the assassination of two incumbent prime ministers (Ion Duca in 1933 and Armand Calinescu in 1939); and the murders of cabinet ministers and other local and national personalities in both the political and cultural spheres. Iron Guard violence culminated on November 26-27, 1940, with the murder of sixty-four leading personalities and defenders of the interwar political order (including one former prime minister) at Jilava Prison; the murder of six additional police prefects; and the brutal murders of Nicolae Iorga, another former prime minister, and Virgil Madgearu, former minister of the National Peasant Party; and the pogrom of Bucharest with its 121 Jewish victims.

### **Romanian-German Relations before and during the Holocaust**

The beginnings of the German-Romanian rapprochement date back to 1936. Romanian officials were motivated by economic interests as well as security considerations; they wanted Germany to keep Hungarian revisionism in check and to protect Romania against potential Soviet threats. Nevertheless, political relations remained precarious. The increasingly aggressive German revisionist policy was interested not only in a reorientation of Romanian foreign policy, but also in a change in its internal affairs. Therefore, ideologically and financially, Germany supported the Romanian radical right and antisemitic groups, which helped to undermine Romania’s democratic order from within. Germany also played an active role in the internal conflicts of the German minority in Romania, and supported and financed the creation of a Nazi movement from within. According to German historian Armin Heinen, Octavian Goga was the first Romanian politician to be financed by Nazi Germany. During the 1930s Berlin succeeded in bringing the ethnic Germans in Romania under its control. That antisemitism in Germany—one of the major European powers—had become official state doctrine, encouraged antisemitism elsewhere, including in Romania. This rise of this German-influenced antisemitism, which intensified Romanian antisemitism, occurred even before German efforts to draw Romania away from its former allies began to take effect.

After the loss of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union in June 1940, the Romanian government envisaged Germany as a defender against Hungarian and Bulgarian revisionism. Yet, Romanian hopes for German protection were not to be realized, as Hitler supported Bulgarian and Hungarian territorial claims against Romania. At the same time, the use of population transfers as a policy tool was gaining credibility. It was only a small step from that to the implementation of “land cleansing,” of ethnic

purification—a small step that triggered the tragedy of the Jews and Roma under Romanian authority during World War II.

When Romania joined the Axis Powers on November 23, 1940, Ion Antonescu showed an unabashed commitment to “the German option.” The vision of the Antonescu regime was that of a Romania able to retrieve its lost territories and participate in the new international order planned by the Tripartite Pact. The subsequent arrival in Romania of SS-Hauptsturmführer Gustav Richter at the end of April 1941 would have grave implications for the fate of Romanian Jewry. Richter, a special envoy of the RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*), was an “expert” on “Jewish problems.” On May 16, 1941, Richter reported to Ambassador von Killinger that he had the permission of the Romanian authorities to be involved in the Romanianization process, in the supervision of the Jewish Central (*Centrala Evreilor din Romania*; the Romanian equivalent of the *Judenrat*) and in the future deportations.

Antonescu’s June 12, 1941, visit to Munich to finalize the details of Romanian-German military cooperation had a decisive impact on the fate of the Jewish population of Bessarabia and Bukovina. In August 1941, believing that Germany stood on the brink of victory, Mihai Antonescu informed the cabinet that he had discussed the solution to the Jewish problem with representatives of the Reich: “I can report to you that I have already conducted intensive negotiations with a high-ranking German...with regard to the Jewish problem. [They] understand that the Jewish problem will ultimately require an international solution, and they wish to help us to prepare for this international solution.”

On August 7, 1941, Mihai Antonescu asked Himmler to send Gustav Richter, who had returned to Berlin in July, back to Bucharest. Antonescu praised Richter’s activity, stating that he hoped to work with Richter again, “Since the Jewish problem requires an international, radical and final solution, particularly by using the German experience in this field...” Already, following Richter’s advice and some pressure from the German Embassy, the Romanian authorities had set up the Jewish Central, banned all Zionist activity, carried out a census of “persons of Jewish blood,” and launched technical preparations for the deportation of Romanian Jews to the Belzec death camp in southeastern Poland. Moreover, the large-scale massacres of Jews and Antonescu’s tenacity in implementing the Final Solution in liberated Romanian territory and later in Transnistria had aroused admiration among the Nazis and Hitler, in particular.

In June 1942, under the impact of German victories in the USSR and following the Romanian Army’s advance to the Caucasus and its crossing of the Don River, Antonescu agreed to the “Final Solution” for Romanian Jews, which involved their deportation to German-controlled areas. During July/October 1942, plans were drawn up for the deportation of Romanian Jews to extermination camps in the General Government (German-occupied Poland).

Gustav Richter and Radu Lecca, the Romanian government's Commissar for Jewish Affairs, drafted similar detailed plans for the deportation of 250,000 Romanian Jews to Belzec for extermination, enumerating the principal elements of the process: instructions for implementation, including logistics and operational planning; measures to conceal and mislead in order to allay the fears of the Jewish population; settling of legal problems between Romania and Germany; and use of the local Judenrat. According to Richter's plan, the deportees would lose their Romanian citizenship upon crossing the border, and those "unable" to work would be subject to "special treatment." In line with the directive issued by the RSHA, Richter obtained a pledge in writing from Mihai Antonescu, expressing his consent to the deportations. Ultimately, however, the deportation of Romanian Jewry did not come to pass. Ambassador von Killinger, accompanied by Richter, visited Mihai Antonescu on November 26, 1942, to demand an explanation, and the Romanian foreign minister replied that Marshal Antonescu had "decided only to explore the possibility of an evacuation from southern Transylvania, but that the implementation had been postponed." After Stalingrad, the Romanian government officially informed Berlin that "the only solution to the Jewish problem in Romania is emigration." Antonescu did not yield to the Nazis despite intense pressure—initially through the German ambassador and later during April 1943 meetings with Hitler and Ribbentrop—to fulfill his commitment to deport Romanian Jews, thus sparing the Jews in Regat and southern Transylvania from the Nazis and the Final Solution.

### **The June/July 1940 Romanian Withdrawal from Bessarabia and Bukovina**

On August 23, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union concluded a non-aggression treaty, the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. The Soviets demanded the addition of a secret protocol in which the two powers divided up spheres of influence: central and southeastern Europe—an area stretching between the Baltic and Black Seas—as well as Finland, Estonia, and Latvia were assigned to the Soviet sphere of influence; Lithuania and the town of Vilna were assigned to the German sphere. Germany and the Soviet Union then divided Poland. In southeastern Europe, with Germany declaring "complete disinterest for these regions," the Soviets claimed Bessarabia. The German version of the Pact referred to Romanian "regions" to be ceded to the Soviet Union, whereas the Soviet version named only Bessarabia. The Soviets would subsequently use the German version in June 1940 to make additional requests for Northern Bukovina and the Hertza region. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact worsened Romania's geopolitical situation, leading the Romanian Crown Council of September 6, 1939, to proclaim the neutrality of Romania. The Romanian government decided on May 28, 1940, to intensify its rapprochement with Germany, whom it considered the only power capable of containing the Soviets. This about-face in foreign policy was accompanied by an increased collaboration of the Royal Dictatorship with the German-backed Iron Guard.

On the June 26, 1940, the Soviets demanded Romania “return” Bessarabia to the Soviet Union and “transfer” Northern Bukovina. On the advice of Germany and Italy, the Romanian government acquiesced on June 28, but requested that the Soviet-imposed, four-day deadline for evacuation be modified in order to ensure better organization of the operation. The Soviets rejected this demand. As a result of the surrender, Romania lost 50,762 square kilometers of territory (44,500 km<sup>2</sup> in Bessarabia and 6,262 km<sup>2</sup> in Northern Bukovina). The ceded territories were home to 3,776,309 people, of whom 53.49 percent were Romanians; 10.34 percent were Russians; 15.3 percent were Ukrainians and Ruthenians; 7.27 percent were Jews; 4.91 percent were Bulgarians; 3.31 percent were Germans; and 5.12 percent were of miscellaneous ethnicity.

Army units, prefects, recruiting centers, police and gendarmerie, and even local priests were put in charge of the evacuation operations. The civilian population was to be evacuated, but “non-sympathizing ethnic minorities” were slated to remain. The evacuation of reservists and paramilitaries was the first priority, then evacuation of the civilian population. The evacuation plans essentially split a population of millions into privileged and pariah categories, denying the latter the choices of regular citizens.

Soviet troops crossed the border at five points on the night of June 27/28, 1940. By the next morning Cernauti, Hotin, Balti, Chisinau, and Cetatea Alba were already under Soviet occupation. Soviet Commanders dispatched mobile units to move quickly toward the Prut River in advance of the evacuating Romanian troops. The faster-than-agreed Soviet army advance created serious problems for the Romanian army’s evacuation from Bessarabia and the Northern Bukovina. While most in the Romanian military showed competence, honesty, and discipline, there were many instances when Romanian military units simply disintegrated from large-scale desertion. The scope of disintegration of some army units was so great that a large amount of war materiel was simply abandoned behind the evacuation lines. On July 3, 1940, at 2 p.m., the Soviets declared the new Romanian-Soviet border definitively closed.

One of the dominant myths in Romanian historiography about the period of June 28-July 3, 1940, was that the Jews in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina behaved disloyally toward the retreating Romanian troops and civilian administration. This belief, though false, was used to justify subsequent anti-Jewish Romanian actions. Numerous military records and civilian documents do indicate that some Jews from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina participated in anti-Romanian/pro-Soviet activities. And some historians argue that the high number of such incriminating documents reflects a historical reality: that the Jews in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were anti-Romanian.

A critical examination of the documents, however, depicts something quite different. First, many of the so-called incriminating documents contained generic evaluations and accusations about such collective entities as the “Jews from Bukovina,” “Jews from Chisinau,” “the Jewish population from

Balti,” and “Jews and communists from Romanesti.” Moreover, field reports rarely, if ever, indicated specific situations or names. Second, given the dramatic circumstances in which these documents were written, there were myriad instances of rumor-spreading and exaggeration, as many in the withdrawing army and civilian population saw “communists,” “Jews,” and “Jewish communists” everywhere. These distortions were used to disguise the poor organization of the withdrawal. If the Jews had been disloyal en masse to Romania, they would not have withdrawn with Romanian troops, as many did. Fear of Soviet occupation was pervasive among ethnic Romanians and Jews alike, but many Jews were prevented from joining the evacuation columns by Romanian authorities. In certain areas ethnic Ukrainians in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina gave the Red Army a warm welcome. But these reports do not distinguish between Jews and Ukrainians; so, it is impossible to evaluate the level of Jewish participation. There were even cases of ethnic Romanians welcoming the Soviets in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.

Nevertheless, Romanian authorities promoted the myth of collective Jewish guilt, resulting in a series of attacks against Jews during the Romanian withdrawal from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. They took place both in the surrendered territories as well as in the Old Kingdom province of Moldavia. There were no orders from the Romanian High Command or other high military offices to assault or kill the Jews. Rather, the situation started to unravel from below, at the level of small units or individuals. They were usually expressions antisemitism, of anger at the humiliations endured during the withdrawal, or of scapegoating. But the brutality had no specific motivation. They were outbursts of rage against ordinary Jewish citizens who found themselves withdrawing with the Romanian troops and civilian authorities.

There is no evidence that Jewish officers abandoned their units during the withdrawal from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, and the percentage of Jewish soldiers who deserted during the withdrawal was not higher than that of their Romanian counterparts. Yet, evidence shows that soldiers in the Romanian army perpetrated the murder and beatings of many Romanian Jews, and not even Jewish soldiers were spared. Moreover, until mid-July 1940, soldiers and civilians, alike, physically brutalized Jews traveling by train in Moldavia. The scope of this violence was so great that the government sent armed soldiers to patrol trains and railway stations and to arrest stray soldiers. The Romanian military also pillaged and destroyed Jewish property. But the most serious anti-Jewish actions of the Romanian army were the killings in Dorohoi, which had a sizeable Jewish population, and Galati.

The attacks against Jews in Dorohoi began on July 1, 1940, in the Dorohoi cemetery where Romanian soldiers murdered ten Jewish soldiers attending funerals, and the carnage continued with soldiers killing and wounding scores of Jewish civilians (the official body count was fifty-three murdered Jews) all over the city. Investigations showed that the perpetrators purposefully invented stories about the Dorohoi Jews attacking the Romanian army and spread rumors of a Soviet attack to panic the troops. But

none of the perpetrators was court-martialed. The Romanian army was responsible for an even higher number of civilian deaths on June 30, 1940, in Galati, an important evacuation center during the withdrawal from Bessarabia. More than 10,000 evacuees of different ethnicities were then crowded into the city, and the retreating Romanian army soldiers simply opened fire on a crowd of civilians, killing roughly three hundred, most of them Jews. The exact number of number of Jews killed in Moldavia during the withdrawal from Bessarabia and Bukovina ranges between 136 (of which ninety-nine bodies were identified) to several hundred.

After the surrender of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, and the Hertza region, Romania sped up its rapprochement with Germany, and the Royal Dictatorship chose to bring the Legion into the government. At the same time, the absurd argument that the Jews were responsible for the surrender became a popular myth among Romanians. These two developments accentuated the reactionary and anti-Jewish character of the Royal Dictatorship.

On July 4, 1940, the Gigurtu government was inaugurated and immediately proceeded to take discriminatory measures against the Jews, beginning with a decree-law proposed by Carol II on “the legal status of Jews residing in Romania.” This bill divided Jews into certain categories and deprived them of rights and obligations they were previously allowed. The obligation to serve in the army, for example, was replaced by an obligation to pay extra taxes and to do community work. As Germany prepared to force Romania to cede Northern Transylvania to Hungary, the Royal Dictatorship further weakened national solidarity by waging a war against the Jewish citizens of Romania. The fall of the regime at the beginning of September 1940 led to Antonescu’s even harsher dictatorship, to a clampdown on what little was left of civil liberties under the Royal Dictatorship, and to a state-run genocide against the Jews. The beginnings of this genocide can be located in the developments that occurred during the Romanian withdrawal from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in summer 1940.

### **Antisemitic Propaganda and Official Rhetoric on the “Judeo-Bolshevik Danger”**

“Judeo-bolshevism,” one of the central themes of fascist ideology, places the alliance of Jews and communists at the origins of the communist movement (Bolshevik revolution) and considers the Jews to be the true inspirers and main perpetrators of the subversion of the public order. Associated frequently with the concepts of “Judeo-masonry” or “plutocracy,” some critics attacked the notion of democracy as being predominantly Jewish or serving the Jews exclusively. The concept of “Judeo-communism” was primarily a message of propaganda meant to divide people and was completely unrelated to the number of Jewish members in the Communist Party. On one hand, the number of RCP members between 1938 and 1944 was very small: on August 23, 1944, there were only 1,000 members of the Romanian Communist

Party (RCP), out of which 300 were Jewish. On the other hand, after 1924 the RCP was outlawed and had only a very limited political influence.

The Jewish population suffered at the hands of the USSR after the Soviet occupation of Bessarabia and Bukovina in summer 1940, and this is clearly documented by still-extant lists of Jewish citizens from Bessarabia and Bukovina who were deported. The Soviet deportation was made according to the ideological criteria of the “class struggle.” In other words, they targeted the wealthy as well as members of “bourgeois” parties: Zionists, Jewish tradesmen, and Jewish members of the Liberal Party and National Peasant Party. Moreover, during the period of Communist rule in Romania, information about the Holocaust appeared in party writings but either purposefully ignored Jewish victims or referred to them only indirectly as the “cohabiting minority.”

Judeo-bolshevism and Judeo-communism, therefore, are not concepts that can evaluate or even clarify communism as a movement, a party, or a political structure in Romania. They represented then, as they do today, concepts of the antisemitic, nationalist, and totalitarian propaganda.

### **The Holocaust in Romania**

The National-Legionary government came to power on September 14, 1940, and had fifteen ministers appointed by the Iron Guard. By September 20, 1940, Iron Guard members also held the key position of prefect in forty-five counties. According to Antonescu’s supporters, the leadership of the Legion had three objectives in terms of the Jews: to take revenge, instill terror and acquire property. The Legionnaires started abusing Jews—physically, professionally, and economically—immediately after they entered the government. However, the National Legionary government’s antisemitism reflected a larger societal disposition fashioned by the realities of Romania in the 1930s, and the antisemitic legislation imposed by the National Legionary government was not the result of direct German pressure. During the fall of 1940, a power struggle ensued between Antonescu and the Legionnaires, which culminated in the Legionary Rebellion and the Bucharest pogrom in January 1941. Earlier that month, Antonescu had met with Hitler and obtained agreement to do away with the Legion. The days preceding the Iron Guard rebellion against Antonescu and the pogrom of Bucharest, which occurred simultaneously, were marked by strikingly vehement antisemitic statements from the Legion’s propaganda apparatus. During the pogrom, almost 2,000 Jews were abusively detained and then taken to the Legion’s fourteen torture centers. In all, 121 Jews were killed during the Bucharest pogrom. In addition to the slayings, the Legionnaires attacked synagogues and demolished Jewish homes resulting in the destruction of 1,274 commercial and residential buildings.

Antonescu triumphed, however, with the army quashing the Legionary rebellion, and his subsequent regime, which was rife with ideological contradictions and was also considerably different

from other fascist regimes in Europe, remains difficult to classify. Like other fascist governments, it dissolved the Parliament, joined the Axis powers, enacted antisemitic and racial legislation, and adopted the “Final Solution” in parts of its territory. At the same time, however, Antonescu brutally crushed the Romanian Iron Guard movement and denounced their terrorist methods. Still, Antonescu did not redefine the goals of Romanian extreme nationalism; rather, he sought to achieve them. Thus, the political philosophy of the new regime, its methods of rule, and its ideological-intellectual matrix were distinctly Romanian and not imported from Germany. Antonescu’s regime without the Legionnaires did not negate the antisemitic legacy of the Iron Guard and did not cease the state onslaught on the Jews or on humanist values.

Ion Antonescu continued what had begun under the National Legionary State: the evacuation of Jews from villages and small towns. On June 18, 1941, he ordered these Jews to be moved to county (*judet*) capitals and towns and for male Jews between the ages of eighteen and sixty living in the area between Siret and Prut Rivers to be interned in the Targu Jiu camp in southern Romania. By July 31, 1941, the number of evacuees had reached 40,000 people, thus “cleansing” 441 villages and small towns. Jews were forced to wear a distinctive patch beginning in July/August, though Antonescu repealed the measure on September 9, 1941. The revocation, however, did not apply to Jews from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria, for whom a special decree was issued.

The physical destruction of Romanian Jewry—the “cleansing of the land”—began with the Iasi pogrom. Cleansing the land was the Romanian equivalent of the Final Solution and was intended to rid Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Moldavia of Jews. In June 1941, there were 45,000 Jews living in Iasi. Ion Antonescu gave the orders to cleanse Iasi of its Jews and mandated that any Jew who opened fire on Romanian or German soldiers be eliminated. The Romanian Army and the Special Intelligence Service (SSI) laid the groundwork for the Iasi pogrom and supplied the pretext for punishing the city’s Jewish population, while German army units stationed in the city assisted the Romanian authorities. Official Romanian documents depicted the Iasi Jews as collaborators with “the Soviet enemy,” thereby justifying retaliatory action.

Those participating in the anti-Jewish manhunt launched on the night of June 28/29 were, first and foremost, the Iasi police, backed by the Bessarabia police and gendarmerie as well as Romanian army units. Yet there were also individual army soldiers and civilians who participated in the killings and the pillaging. The implementation of the Iasi pogrom consisted of five basic elements: spreading rumors that Jews had shot at the army; warning the Romanian residents of what was about to take place; fostering popular collaboration with the security forces; marking Christian and Jewish homes; and finally, inciting rioters to murder, rape, and rob. During the course of the pogrom, Romanian authorities lost control of events, and the city became a huge area in which the Romanian and German soldiers, the gendarmes, and

Romanian policemen and civilians—organized and unorganized—hunted down Jews, robbed them, and killed them. The German soldiers in Iasi were sent out to arrest Jews, and they committed the same types of atrocities as their Romanian counterparts.

After the massacres, the Jews were forced onto two trains bound for other parts of Romania. Up to 150 Jews (many already wounded) were crammed into train cars with a capacity of only forty people. In the death train that left Iasi for Calarasi, which carried perhaps as many as 5,000 Jews, only 1,011 reached their destination alive. (The Romanian police counted 1,258 bodies, yet hundreds of dead were thrown out of the train on the way.) The death train to Podu Iloaiei had up to 2,700 Jews upon departure, of which only 700 disembarked alive. In the official account, Romanian authorities reported that 1,900 Jews boarded the train and “only” 1,194 died. After the pogrom, the Jewish community carried out a census that determined 14,850 Jews had perished. Although the SSI would acknowledge the deaths of only 13,266 Jews, the army labor recruiting service in Iasi reported in August 1942 that it could not find 13,868 Jews.

After the Iasi pogrom, Marshal Antonescu gave the order to exterminate part of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina and to deport the rest. He chose the gendarmerie and the army to carry out this task. The implementation of the order began on July 9. The Romanian gendarmerie had been ordered to “cleanse the land” a few days before June 21, 1941, in three places in Moldavia: Roman, Falticeni, and Galati. In Roman the inspector general of the gendarmerie, General Constantin (Piki) Vasiliu, informed the gendarmes of their mission to exterminate all Jews in rural areas on the spot and to imprison all Jews in urban areas in ghettos.

The Romanian Army and gendarmerie subsequently executed thousands of Bukovinan Jews in Cernauti, Herta, Siret, Dorneti, Ciudei, Storojinet, Ropcea, Iordanesti, Patrauti, Panca, Broscuti, Stanesti de Sus, Stanestii de Jos, Jadova Noua, Jadova Veche, Costesti, Hlinita, Budinet, Cires, Vijnitsa, and Rostochi-Vijnitsa, Zonlachie, Rapujinet and Cotmani. Likewise, they were involved in mass killings of Bessarabian Jews in Hotin, Noua Sulita, Edineti, Parlita, Balti, Briceni, Lipcani, Falesti, Marculesti, Floresti, Gura-Kamenca, Gura-Cainari, Lincauti, Cepelauti-Hotin, Climauti-Soroaca, Cetatea Alba, Comova, Griforiefca, Chisinau, and dozens of other localities. At the same time, the mobile killing units of Einsatzgruppe D were murdering the Jews in Balti, Hotin, and Chisinau. Whenever the Romanian troops plundered or failed to remove all traces of the mass executions and instead left corpses unburied, the German troops, including the Einsatzgruppe, protested the Romanians’ “lack of planning,” though not the crimes themselves.

In late July, Romanian authorities began to deport tens of thousands of Jews to the area across the Dniester that would soon be called Transnistria. By the end of July, Romanian military units had concentrated about 25,000 Jews from Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia near the village of Coslov on the

Dniester. On July 24, shortly after German-Romanian forces had entered Ukraine, these Jews were sent across the river. German military authorities, however, began to force the Jewish columns back into Bessarabia. In response, the Romanian Fourth Army instructed its units and the gendarmerie to force back all Jews identified as returning from Ukraine. This conflict between Romanian and German armies reached the leaderships of both countries, but the Germans prevailed. As many as 32,000 Jews died during these hasty deportations, and somewhere between 8,000 and 20,000 were killed on the Ukrainian side of the Dniester; most of the survivors were imprisoned in the Vertujeni camp. As a consequence, Romanian War Headquarters concluded that until the status of the Ukrainian territory to be given to Romania was determined, the deportations had to cease. Therefore, Ion Antonescu ordered the establishment of temporary camps and ghettos in Bessarabia. Pending the resumption of the deportations, the Romanian authorities set up several dozen camps and ghettos, from which the Jews were evacuated to seven larger camps, and established the ghetto of Chisinau. By late-August there were already about 80,000 Jews in these ghettos: 10,356 at Secureni; 11,762 at Edineti; 2,634 at Limbenii Noi; 3,072 at Rascani; 3,253 at Rautel; 22,969 at Vertujeni; 11,000 at Marculesti; 11,525 in Chisinau; and 5,000-6,000 in smaller facilities in southern Bessarabia.

Following these deportations and executions, Ion and Mihai Antonescu made the decision to deport the Jews from southern Bukovina. Transcripts of the government meetings of June 25, 1941, and October 6, 1941, document this decision, which resulted in the deportation of 21,229 Jews in 1941 and 1942. Despite promising Wilhelm Filderman on September 8, 1941, that he would treat Old Kingdom (Regat) Jews differently than non-Regat Jews, Antonescu nevertheless ordered the deportation of Jews from Dorohoi County soon thereafter, followed by the Jews from the counties of Campulung, Suceava, and Radauti, which sent shockwaves through the Jewish community.

On August 30, Transnistria's status was finally resolved: the province was transferred to Romanian administration, in keeping with Hitler's promise to Antonescu, and the German army and authorities left Transnistria on September 19, 1941. However, the Germans instructed the Romanians that neither the Jews of Transnistria nor those in the camps and ghettos of Bessarabia and Bukovina could be deported across the Bug River at that time. Accordingly, the Germans insisted, "They must...be concentrated in labor camps and used for various works until, once the operations are over, their evacuation to the East will be possible." The agreement thus confirmed that the final goal was to "cleanse" Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria of Jews.

At the end of August, Antonescu met with the governors of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria to discuss the future deportations. Antonescu made War Headquarters responsible for the deportations, and decided that there would be no administrative formalities, no nominal lists of deportees, only "strictly numerical groups." Thus, the Jews' identity papers were burned at the crossing points over

the Dniester. Moreover, War Headquarters instructed the gendarmerie to execute any Jew who could not keep pace with the convoys, whether due to sickness or fatigue. The deportations commenced on September 16 with the Jews in the Vertujeni camp and concluded by end of December. There was no German involvement in this operation. Columns of Jews crossed the Dniester at Atachi–Moghilev, Cosauti-Iampol, Rezina-Rabnita, Tighina-Tiraspol, and Olanesti-Iasca. On October 6, Ion Antonescu updated the government on the ethnic cleansing in Bessarabia: “As far as the Jews are concerned, I have taken measures to remove them, completely and for good, from these regions. The measures are under way. I still have about 40,000 Jews in Bessarabia who will be dumped over the Dniester in a few days and circumstances permitting, dumped further over the Urals.” During the deportation, thousands of Jews died of hunger, thirst, beatings, and torture; women and girls were raped, and those who resisted were killed; many Jews were murdered during searches for their valuables. Official Romanian reports document the deportation of 91,845 Jews from Bukovina, 55,867 from Bessarabia, and 9,367 from Dorohoi.

According to the Soviet census of 1939, Transnistria’s population exceeded three million people and was comprised mostly of Ukrainians and Russians, about 300,000 Moldavians (Romanians), 331,000 Jews, and 125,000 Germans. Gheorghe Alexianu, a well-known antisemite, headed the administration of Transnistria. Initially the Romanian army was responsible for retaliation, imprisonment, and persecution of Romanian and local Jews, though later the Romanian gendarmes and Ukrainian police would take over. Out of the minimum 155,000 Romanian Jews deported to Transnistria only 47,000 were alive in the fall of 1943. Interned in ghettos and sometimes in camps (like the infamously brutal Peciora camp), they fell victim to epidemics, especially typhus, or executions. The Romanian authorities took no responsibility for the Jews’ subsistence, neither during the deportation nor in the camps and ghettos. Hunger, maltreatment, humiliation, and forced labor represented the daily life of these deportees.

According to Romanian government reports, of the 331,000 Ukrainian Jews counted during the census of 1939, at least 150,000 and perhaps over 200,000 were still alive in Transnistria after the retreat of the Red Army, including up to 90,000 in the county of Odessa. The local Jews were also identified for purposes of imprisonment in ghettos and camps. For example, on September 3, 1941, the prefect of the county of Balta gave “all kikes” three days to move to the ghetto, which consisted of only four streets. He imposed forced labor on all Jews between the ages of fourteen and sixty and ordered them to wear yellow badges.

In early October 1941, Ion Antonescu ordered the plunder and deportation of the local Jews as well as some of the Romanian Jews to the Bug. The gendarmes plundered each convey and raped the women and girls. Gangs of Ukrainians attacked the Jewish convoys, as well—killing, looting, and sometimes even stripping hundreds of Jews bare and leaving them to freeze to death. The convoy commanders were not responsible for the Jews’ lives, only their transfer. Ukrainian volunteers (later

called the Ukrainian police) accompanied the convoys, exhibiting even greater cruelty than the gendarmes. Unfamiliar with the area, the gendarmes relied on these volunteers, assigning them partial escort and guard duties. The transfer of the Jews toward the Bug, in convoys of thousands, continued apace throughout October, November, and December 1941 in total disarray. Thousands of Jews were left in towns or villages that had not been slated to house ghettos or temporary camps. On November 9, the inspector general of the gendarmerie reported to the Conducator that the first stage of the deportations from Bessarabia and Bukovina was over: 108,002 Jews had been relocated to three areas near the Bug: 47,545 in the north, in Mitki, Peciora, and Rogozna; 30,981 in the center, in Obodovka and Balanovka; and 29,476 in Bobric, Krivoie-Ozero, and Bogdanovka.

From the end of December 1941 until May 1942, tens of thousands of Romanian and local Jews were murdered in the county of Golta near the Bug, which was the site of the three largest extermination camps—Bogdanovka, Domanovka, and Akmechetka as well as a dozen smaller camps. About 10,000 local Jews, 30,000 from Bessarabia (particularly the Chisinau ghetto), and 65,000-70,000 from Odessa and the counties in southern Transnistria were imprisoned in these camps. Lt. Col. Modest Isopescu, the prefect of Golta, estimated that 52,000 Jews lived in Bogdanovka and about 20,000 in Domanovka. Some crowded into stables (of which there were no more than fifty), pigsties, and barracks, while others stayed outside, spread over three kilometers along the west bank of the Bug. The silos were full of bodies, and both the living and dead were packed into the stables and barracks in the deadly cold of winter.

Antonescu permitted the slaughter of the more than 70,000 surviving Jews at Bogdanovka and then at Domanovka. In the December 16 cabinet session, Alexianu informed him that 85,000 Jews carried typhus and explained that if they were not disinfected, they would infect everyone. Antonescu's recommendation was brief: "Let them die." Also fearing the typhus epidemic, the Nazi authorities across the Bug clearly wanted the Romanians to solve the "Jewish problem" and encouraged executions. Thus, Ukrainian policemen brought from Golta County, assisted by local gendarmes, shot about 48,000 Jews at Bogdanovka. Then a team of 200 young Jews, who had been selected for the task (most of whom would eventually be shot, as well), immediately burned the bodies. At Domanovka, there were about 20,000 Jews from Odessa and the vicinity. Between January 10 and March 18, 1942, local Ukrainian police and the Romanian gendarmes killed 18,000 of them. Akmechetka was actually a large pig farm on the Bug chosen in early March 1942 to accommodate Jews who could not work or serve any other function, including the elderly and children. The main purpose of the camp was extermination via isolation. Food was extremely scarce, but starvation was not the only killer in Akmechetka. Most prisoners became infected with typhoid fever, dysentery, tetanus and malaria. No medical treatment was provided. Of the approximately 4,000 Jews initially sent to the camp, only several hundred were still alive in May 1942.

Romanian troops entered Odessa on October 16, 1941. From October 18, 1941, to mid-March 1942, the Romanian military in Odessa, aided by gendarmes and police, murdered at least 25,000 Jews and deported over 35,000. On the evening of October 22, the center and right wings of the Romanian military general headquarters exploded, killing sixteen Romanian officers (including the city's military commander, General Ion Glogojanu), four German naval officers, forty-six other members of the Romanian military, and several civilians. Following Antonescu's order, which demanded "immediate retaliatory action, including the liquidation of 18,000 Jews in the ghettos and the hanging in the town squares of at least 100 Jews for every regimental sector," the Jews were rounded up and brought to the execution sites by the Romanian army, gendarmerie, and police. Some 22,000 Jews of all ages were packed into nine warehouses in Dalnic, a suburb of Odessa, an operation that continued past nightfall on October 23. The Jews were machine gunned, burned alive, or blown up. Almost all of the survivors were deported. Huge columns of Jewish deportees were sent on foot toward Berezovka and Bogdanovka. At the beginning of 1942, 35,000 Jews were deported to Berezovka and Veselinovo by train under vary harsh conditions. In both Veselinovo and Berezovka, Romanian gendarmes re-directed them to improvised camps in ethnic-German villages in the Berezovka area.

Transnistria contained the largest concentration of Volksdeutsche, or ethnic Germans, in the Ukraine with more than thirty German villages whose populations exceeded 1,000 each. The status of the German communities in Transnistria was negotiated in Bucharest and Odessa. In the end, the Romanian government recognized the autonomy of the Volksdeutsche who lived in the German villages of Transnistria, in the area near the Bug. As of early May 1942, 28,000 Odessa Jews transported to the German villages in Transnistria by the Romanian gendarmerie had been exterminated by the Selbstschutz, ethnic Germans' killing units organized by the SS. Antonescu was informed about these massacres: in May 1942 the Army Headquarters asked the Conducator whether the German policemen were allowed to shoot thousands of Jews in the county of Berezovka and burn their corpses. Antonescu responded: "it is not the Army's job to worry about this matter." In another example of cooperation the Romanian authorities turned over thousands of local and Romanian Jews to the Germans across Bug to build roads. Most of these Jews were shot.

Except for 17,000 Jews considered "useful" to the national economy or possessing special privileges, the Antonescu regime agreed during the summer of 1942 to the deportation of the entire Jewish minority of Romania—292,149 people, according to a May 1942 census—to the Belzec death camp. In late September 1942, Mihai Antonescu met with Hitler, Ribbentrop, and German army commanders in Vinnitsa to ask Hitler for the return of Northern Transylvania and the completion of equipping the Romanian divisions with arms. All of his requests were rejected, except for a personal promise from Hitler that guaranteed the borders of Romania. Mihai Antonescu was asked by Ribbentrop

to honor the commitment he had given in writing to Richter, Eichmann's emissary in Romania—to turn over the Jews of Romania to Germany. The plan's suspension resulted not from some latent humanity but from the realization that German and Romanian interests no longer coincided: the Romanian army was in a difficult position at Stalingrad, and Hitler did not intend to return Northern Transylvania to Romania.

In addition to the Jews of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Moldavia as well as the local Jews of Transnistria, Romanian Jews living abroad also suffered as a result of Antonescu's policies. According to international convention, Romanian consulates were expected to protect Romanian citizens abroad, regardless of their "nationality." In May 1941 this protection was withdrawn from the Jews whose citizenship had been "revised" and from those Jews born in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina (then held by the USSR); in the summer of 1942 Romania backtracked and once again treated Jews born in Bessarabia and Bukovina as its citizens. The German Foreign Office asserted several times during the summer of 1942 that Ion Antonescu "had agreed with Ambassador von Killinger that Romanian citizens of Jewish ancestry in Germany and the occupied territories should be treated in the same manner as German Jews. The direct impact of the approval was the deportation of nearly 1,600 Romanian citizens of Jewish ancestry living in Germany and Austria; of an unknown number from occupied Bohemia and Moravia, Poland, and Holland; and of 3,000 more from France. Most perished in concentration camps. The Romanian government policy concerning the protection of the Romanian Jews abroad changed at the end of spring 1943. Romania started to protect the Romanian Jews living abroad. It is estimated that more than 4,000 Romanian Jews in France survived as a result of such diplomatic interventions.

Another facet of the Holocaust in Romania was slave labor. In total, 84,042 Jews, aged eighteen to fifty, were registered to supply free labor. Some were ordered to work in their own towns, while others had to work in labor camps on construction sites and in the fields under military supervision. Living and work conditions in these camps were horrendous; medical assistance was scarce, and hygiene precarious. The sick and the crippled were sometimes forced to work, and since the "mobilization" was done in haste and with little bureaucratic organization, many workers had to wear their summer clothes until December 1941, when labor camps were temporarily closed. In some camps, Jews had to buy their own tools and pay for their own food. Many became very sick or crippled and dozens, maybe hundreds, perished. In exchange for an official ransom, Jews declared "useful" to the economy were exempted from forced labor and allowed to have jobs. This was symptomatic of a culture of bribery in the Romanian administrative and military systems, which contrasted violently with the tough stance of the regime.

**Statistical Data.** In 1930, 756,930 Jews lived in Greater Romania. They comprised 4.2 percent of the country's eighteen million inhabitants. By 1940 slightly fewer than 800,000 Jews lived in Romania according to the director-general of the Central Institute of Statistics of Romania. By the end of August in

1941, the Romanian gendarmerie counted 55,887 Jews left in Bessarabia. However, there were other Jews not included in the count.

A report of the commission of investigation on the “irregularities” of the Chisinau ghetto from December 1941 confirms the number of Jews counted in Bessarabia (55,867 Jews, not including the Hotin district) and also mentions 25,000 other Jews “who died a natural death, escaped, or were shot.” The total number of Jews found there, then, amounted to roughly 80,000. By the end of July 1941, before the official surrender of Transnistria to the Romanian administration, Romanian soldiers and gendarmes concentrated tens of thousands of Jews in northern Bessarabia and began forcing them to leave Bessarabia by crossing the Dniester River, shooting hundreds of them and throwing their bodies into the river. Up to 32,000 Jews were forced to cross the Dniester by late July/early August 1941. This figure is derived from various reports and orders the gendarmes were given to prevent the return of these Jews to Bessarabia. Of the roughly 32,000, a mere 12,600 escaped; they were subsequently pushed back to Bessarabia from Ukraine via Cosauti and interned in the Vertujeni camp. At least 8,000 and up to 20,000 Jews were killed on the Ukrainian side of the Dniester by German and Romanian soldiers. Thus 32,000 Jews must be added to the roughly 80,000 found in Bessarabia by the Romanian army. This amounts to 112,000 Jews living in Bessarabia at the time of its occupation. But this figure is incomplete. In Ukraine, as of August 16, 1941, the German army had captured at least 11,000 Jews trying to flee to Russia. Therefore, at the beginning of the Romanian occupation of Bessarabia, there were at least 122,000 Jews. According to an April 9, 1942, report by the governor of Bukovina, 103,172 Jews lived there before the deportations, and there were 11,923 Jews living in Dorohoi. In total, there were 170,962 Jews living in Bukovina and Bessarabia at the beginning of deportations and after the implementation of the order to cleanse the land.

The exact number of Jews killed in the transit camps of Bessarabia and Bukovina and during the deportations to Transnistria from the beginning of July to the end of August 1941 remains unknown, as does the number of Jews who managed to escape to the Soviet Union. What is known from government documents is that most Jews from villages and towns in southern Bukovina and Bessarabia were murdered by Romanian army units and a significant part of the local population. Likewise, it is known that Einsatzgruppe D killed thousands of Jews in Cernauti and Bessarabia. The only figures about the number of Jews murdered are those mentioned in Romanian documents: up to 25,000 in Bessarabia and up to 20,000 during the “hasty deportations.” Additionally, the rescuer Traian Popovici refers to roughly 15,000 Jews murdered in the villages and towns of Northern Bukovina. More than 45,000 and probably closer to 60,000 Jews were killed in Bessarabia and Bukovina.

There were 147,712 Jews deported in 1941, according to the reports of the governors of Bukovina and Bessarabia to the Ministry for the Administration of Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria (CBBT). Out of these, 91,845 were from Bukovina (including the Hotin and Dorohoi regions) and 55,867 were

from Bessarabia. It is possible that the real number was higher. The December 15, 1941, report of the Gen. C.Z. Vasiliu, inspector-general of the gendarmerie, indicated that 108,002 Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina were deported to three counties (*judete*) in eastern Transnistria along the Bug River: 47,545 were interned in Tulcin; 30,981 in Balta; and 29,476 in Golta. On December 24, 1941, the SSI reported to Antonescu that in western Transnistria there were 56,000 Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina and a small number of Jews in other districts. These two reports suggest that in December 1941 there were at least 164,000 Romanian Jews in Transnistria. To this figure must be added 6,737 Jews deported in 1942—4,290 from Bukovina, 231 from Bessarabia, and 2,216 from the Regat and southern Transylvania. After this deportation, only 17,159 Jews were left in Bukovina (not including the Dorohoi region), of which 16,794 lived in Cernauti. Together with the Jews in Dorohoi they formed a Jewish population of 19,475 people. In all, the total number of Jewish deportees from Bessarabia, Bukovina, Dorohoi and the Regat was between 154,449 (147,712 plus 6,737) and 170,737 people (164,000 plus 6,737).

On November 15, 1943, an official report sent to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Romanian government indicated that 49,927 Jews were alive in Transnistria, of which 6,425 were originally from the Regat. Therefore, between 104,522 and 120,810 Romanian citizens of Jewish descent died in Transnistria up to November 15, 1943.

In addition to Romanian Jews deported to Transnistria, according to the 1939 Soviet census there were 331,000 local Jews already there, of which 200,961 resided in Odessa. The Romanian occupation authorities found between 150,000 and 200,000 Jews in Transnistria. According to Romanian and Soviet sources, up to 25,000 Jews were shot, hanged, or burned alive in Odessa. Soviet authorities reported that they had exhumed 22,000 bodies in Dalnic alone. Additionally, there were Jews shot in the streets and elsewhere who could be added to this number. According to the prefect of Golta, approximately 10,000 local Jews were killed in Golta County at the beginning of November 1941 before the establishment of Bogdanovka camp.

In January and February 1942, between 33,000 and 35,000 Jews were deported by train from Odessa to Berezovka, and the SS executed 28,000 of them. Thousands of Jews (maybe around 30,000) from the city and county of Odessa were marched to Bogdanovka in late 1941. There were 32,433 Jews “evacuated from Transnistria” who were probably deported to Golta and liquidated there.

According to German documentation, the testimonies of the survivors and the Romanian trial records 75,000 Jews, most of them locals, were murdered in Bogdanovka, Domanovka, and Akmechetka in late 1941 and early 1942. In September 1942, the secretary general of the Transnistrian government acknowledged that 65,000 local Jews had “disappeared” (code for killed) from the Odessa district. In addition, according to a Romanian report 14,500 local Jews from Transnistria were forced across the Bug River, where they were killed by the Germans. Soviet authorities estimated that 150,038 Jews were

murdered in the counties of Goltă and Berezovka. On November 1, 1943, Third Army Headquarters recorded 70,770 Jews living in Transnistria, of which 20,029 were local Jews. Based on these numbers, between 115,000 and 180,000 local Jews were murdered or perished in Transnistria. At the end of the Romanian occupation, only 20,000 local Jews were left in Transnistria. At least 15,000 Jews from the Regat perished during the Holocaust.

Thus, the total number of Romanian and Ukrainian Jew which perished in territories under Romanian administration is between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews.

### **The Exclusion of Jews from Romanian Society under Antonescu: Antisemitic Legislation, Romanianization, and Expropriation**

The anti-Jewish legislation and administrative measures taken by the Antonescu regimes—with and without the National Legionary movement—are characteristic of an extremist, totalitarian policy toward a minority ethnic group. The Romanianization policies clearly demonstrated the ethnic restructuring of Romanian society to the exclusive advantage of ethnic Romanians. The emphasis on “blood” arguments betrays a structurally racist regime, and the emergency laws and portrayal of Jews as internal enemies laid the foundation for the large-scale repression of the Jewish minority and the legitimization of this repression as an outright war. Taking into consideration the particular weight given to anti-Jewish legislation, it is obvious that the so-called Jewish issue was one of the main preoccupations of the Marshal and his circle. The Antonescu regime used racial and discriminatory methods against the Jews, which led to the legal and political segregation of Jews from the rest of the population; Jews were placed outside of the legal provisions that ordinarily guarantee the safety of a citizen in daily life in a modern state.

“Integral nationalism,” or the process of ethnic homogenization, was the foundation of the Romanianization program adopted by Antonescu. The anti-Jewish legislation was the main instrument for conducting the process of Romanianization. According to Mihai Antonescu, the enforcement of this legislation “contributed to the shedding of the foreign plague from Romanian ownership structures and cracked down on Jewish domination in Romanian economic life.” Outlined by the Marshal as early as September 1940, Romanianization was presented as a large-scale “national-social reform,” which would outlast Antonescu’s removal of the Legion from government. In order to avoid an economic collapse, Antonescu envisioned Romanianization as a gradual, staged process, in contrast to the Iron Guard’s brutal, corrupt approach.

The first law to frame the new legal status of Jews in Romania was signed on August 8, 1940, by King Carol II, Ion Gigurtu, president of the Council of Ministers, and I.V. Gruia, minister of Justice and

law professor at the University of Bucharest. This decree legally distinguished between “Romanians by blood” or “blood Romanians” (*romani de sange*) and “Romanian citizens.” Emphasizing the significance of “blood” and “race” to the nation and state was a basic principle of the Nazi worldview. On the basis of these general considerations, the law regulated the legal status of Jews in Romania with regard to their participation in the spiritual, political, and economic life. It did not attempt to deprive all Jews of citizenship, since in the new context Romanian citizenship was irrelevant. The August 8, 1940, law placed Jews into three categories, based on the date when they obtained their Romanian citizenship, and on their military personnel status. This law also prohibited Jews in the first and the third categories (Jews belonging to the second category were Independence War veterans and their relatives) from practicing a number of professions and from owning certain types of property. The law defined Jews by merging the dual criteria of religion and ancestry: a person was considered to be a Jew if he or she practiced Judaism or was born to parents of the Judaic faith—even if the same person had converted to Christianity or was an atheist. One could be considered Christian only if his or her parents had converted prior to the birth of the child.

Although hostile to the Royal Dictatorship, Antonescu’s regimes did not abrogate this 1940 law. On the contrary, they used its principles as the ideological foundation for their anti-Jewish laws, though Antonescu did substantially modify the definition of a Jew. For example, the new regime considered a person to be Jewish if he or she had only one Jewish parent, irrespective of whether that parent had converted to Christianity before the child’s birth, since “the mystery of baptism could not change the destiny of Jewish blood.” Jews were not punished for what they did, but because they were Jews. Jewishness itself was the mark of inferiority and possessing it was criminalized. The aim of the government was to defend “Romanian blood” from “Jewish blood.” In order to do so, the Antonescu regimes prohibited marriage between “Romanians by blood” and those whom it defined as “Jews,” and prohibited Jews from converting to Christianity.

The Romanianization process began with the expropriation of rural Jewish property. What distinguished the Antonescu legislation on rural property (the decree-laws of October 4, 1940, November 12, 1940, and May 4, 1941) from the August 8, 1940, Gigurtu law was that the later laws allowed Jewish landowners to sell their property to blood Romanians, with the Romanian state having priority as a buyer in case of multiple offers. These laws prohibited Jews from acquiring or owning all forms of rural property on Romanian territory. Together with the deportation of Jews living in the countryside to cities, the expropriation of Jewish rural property ensured the complete Romanianization of Romanian villages. As a result of their enforcement, the Romanian state became the owner of 40,035 hectares of land, 47,455 hectares of forests, and 323 cereal mills and breweries, as well as other industrial equipment.

The Antonescu regime adopted a special law on September 3, 1941, establishing the nationalization of Jewish property in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina “without any notice or any other formalities” with regard to Jewish property situated on territories controlled by the Romanian army after Romania’s entry into the war on June 22, 1941. In this way, the Romanian state became the owner of 27,091 hectares of arable land. The property of the Jewish deportees to Transnistria was declared abandoned property by law and given to the National Center for Romanianization (CNR), a specialized institution directly subordinated to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, which served to centralize all Romanianization activities and bureaucratically structure the supervision of expropriation, administration, and liquidation of the expropriated property.

The Antonescu regime did not pass a comprehensive law for the expropriation of Jewish industrial and trade capital for the Old Regat and southern Transylvania because the Romanianization of trade and industry could not have been accomplished overnight. The strategists of Romanianization saw the process as gradual, involving the preparation of “the Romanian element” for slots in the economy that would soon be vacated by Jews and the building of the capital necessary for the takeover, and only then the replacement of the Jews. In order to accomplish this, the government drafted an inventory of Jewish trade and industrial property and created a control mechanism over the stock and fixed capital of Jewish companies. Then, by Decree-law no. 3361 (October 5, 1940), the government established Romanianization commissioners to regulate the economy, and this marked the beginning of total government control over Jewish property. Most of these Romanianization commissioners were Legionnaires, and the system did become abusive, characterized by blackmail and theft. The Legionnaires occupied numerous Jewish enterprises at gunpoint and forced the owners to sign for “transfer of ownership.” Official statistical data covering Romanian territory (except Bucharest) showed that Jewish property worth one billion lei was sold for 216 million lei, of which only 52 million was actually paid. On top of this, the Legionnaire robberies caused damages to Jewish property amounting to 380 million lei.

As a consequence, the Romanianization commissioners were replaced with civil servants from the Ministry of National Economy on January 18, 1941. After the removal of the Legionnaires from power in January 1941, the property taken from the Jews was transferred to the Chamber of Commerce as part of the process of Romanianization instead of being restituted to its owners. The Legionnaires who could prove that they had acquired Jewish property in accordance with the laws of the time remained the lawful owners of that property.

Decree-law no. 51 (January 20, 1942) instituted government control over corporate boards. Special controllers supervised the Romanianization of capital, the labor supply, and distribution at the company level. Each Jewish company was thus affected. The law of March 3, 1941, was aimed at the expropriation of Jewish capital and required the registration of stock in the owner’s name, which

facilitated the nationalization of stock owned by Jews. One of the main aims of the Antonescu government was to suppress the development of Jewish and foreign capital (with the exception of German and Italian capital) and to enhance the capital endowment of ethnic Romanians. Because of the many restrictive measures in force, most Jewish companies (15,987 out of 20,140) were shut down by their owners or ex officio by the Chamber of Commerce between September 6, 1940, and June 1, 1943. Hundreds of Jewish businesses were sold to Romanian owners between December 1941 and July 1942. In general, the sales were disadvantageous to Jews, who had to sell thriving businesses at ruinous prices.

Jewish real estate in cities was nationalized by law on March 28, 1941. The declared objective of this decree-law was the consolidation of an ethnic Romanian middle class. In contrast to the nationalization of Jewish rural property, which allowed no exceptions, this law exempted several categories of Jews: Jews naturalized through individual acts of Parliament until August 15, 1916; decorated Jewish war veterans; war orphans who had been baptized Christians twenty years before, if married to ethnic Romanians; Jews baptized as Christians for over thirty years; and the descendants of the preceding categories. These exemptions were to be granted on an individual basis by the Council of Ministers. Jews to whom the law was applicable were forced to transfer property ownership to the CNR. The property had to be free of mortgage and any other financial obligations. In return, the CNR was to provide reimbursement with a three percent interest rate; but the payment of this reimbursement was postponed until the end of the war.

As a consequence of the enforcement of this law, 75,385 apartments assessed at fifty billion lei were nationalized by December 1943. Between July 14, 1942, and August 23, 1944, the Antonescu regime expropriated 1,042 Jewish community buildings, including temples, synagogues, houses of prayer, schools, hospitals and clinics, orphanages, cemeteries, ritual bathhouses, administrative buildings, and rabbis' residences. These complex tasks required an adequate institutional framework, which was provided by the cooperation between the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Interior. In addition, the government created special institutions, such as the Division for Romanianization, Colonization, and Inventory and the National Romanianization Center. The CNR was a repressive institution that approached the Jewish population with a police mentality. It used the services of paid informers and projected discretionary power with regard to Jewish properties. The CNR made high profits for the government (about 2 billion lei a year) from renting out the nationalized Jewish property or liquidating it through sale. The total value of such property (including extorted property, which was subsequently sanctioned by the judiciary and the executive) was roughly equal to 100 billion lei.

The exclusion of Jews from various types of jobs began in 1937 with the inauguration of the Goga government; however, the process gained a powerful momentum during the Antonescu regimes,

when Jews were excluded from all fields of work. Independent artists were the first to be affected by the legalized discrimination. On September 8, 1940, the Ministry of Religions issued Resolution no. 42181, which stipulated that all state and private theaters and opera houses were obliged to dismiss all Jewish actors and singers. A subsequent decree allowed Jewish actors and singers to be hired by private Jewish theaters. The new laws then began to target the other professions. For example, Jews were forbidden to practice as pharmacists and lawyers. One of the most severe laws against Jewish labor was Decree-law no. 3825 (November 15, 1940), which required all companies to fire their Jewish employees, with only a few exceptions, by December 31, 1941. According to a June 13, 1943, Department of Labor report on the Romanianization of the labor force, the number of Jewish employees dropped from 28,225 on November 16, 1940, to a mere 6,506 on March 1, 1943.

Jewish physicians were also forbidden from practicing unless they were treating Jewish patients, from publishing research in professional reviews, and from holding membership in research institutions. All Jewish physicians who could still practice had to wear a badge and carry a stamp identifying them as Jewish. Moreover, non-Jewish doctors with Jewish spouses were also prohibited from practicing. In addition, if sick, Jews could not be received in a Romanian hospital or treated by Romanian physicians. On February 2, 1942, the association of Romanian engineers decided to withdraw work permits for Jewish engineers. The same fate later befell Jewish architects as well as Jewish members of unions and other professional associations. Craftsmen and apprentices were also excluded from the labor market and were forbidden from performing any other skilled job. A number of restrictions were imposed on the freedoms of Jewish merchants. Books written by Jewish writers and records containing music written by Jewish composers were banned in public libraries and bookstores.

Decree-law no. 3438 of October 11, 1940, excluded Jewish students, teachers, and administrators from all levels of the education system. No Jewish student was allowed to attend Romanian schools unless he or she was either a Christian convert and direct heir of a decorated, disabled, or dead veteran of the war of independence; a disabled or decorated veteran of the 1916-1918 war; or a descendant of a disabled or decorated veteran of the 1916-1918 war and had converted to Christianity by August 9, 1940. Even these students were expelled a few weeks later from public schools. Under pressure from the representative of the Holy See in Bucharest, in February 1941 Antonescu allowed Jewish students who had converted to Christianity to attend classes at confessional schools (mostly Catholic). He also allowed Christian students who had only one Jewish parent to attend non-Jewish private schools. At the same time, however, he decreed that ethnic origin would be noted on graduation papers, and Jewish graduates would be subject to the statutory provisions applicable to Jews. A parallel Jewish education system was created only to be disrupted ultimately by the requisition and subsequent nationalization of some Jewish

school buildings and by the legal obligation of all Jewish students over the age of fifteen to join work detachments.

Although Jews could still vote during the Royal Dictatorship, they were deprived of this right under Antonescu. In December 1940, Antonescu passed a law exempting all Jews from military service and pre-military training obligations in exchange for exemption fees, work, or both for all Jewish men between the ages of eighteen and fifty (there were many cases when these limits were abused). Using the pretext that the Jews did not have to risk their lives in combat, the government asked Jews to make contributions in money and goods that went far beyond their resources. Those who were deemed physically or psychologically unfit for military service were the ones to pay the exemption fees. The Army High Command assigned work details to all Jews drafted to the labor detachments. These workers were subject to the rigors of the military code and wore their own civilian clothes as well as a yellow band marked with the name of their recruiting center on their left sleeve. In August 1942, the free work performed by the Jews was labeled “compulsory” or “forced” labor (*munca obligatorie*). On July 23, 1942, Resolution no. 1305 of the Ministry of National Defense mandated that Jews holding a university degree were obliged to work ninety days a year for the government. Jewish forced laborers—47,345 Jewish men, women, and teenagers—were employed for a variety of infrastructure projects in the case of the men, such as laying railway tracks and roads, and were used for clerical work and other tasks in the case of the women. Punishments for disobedience ranged from beatings to deportation to the death penalty. The wages for this work were either minimal or completely unpaid, and the Jewish communities had to provide work clothes, tools, healthcare, and food.

The Romanian government created a Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, a division of the Council of Ministers Division. The Antonescu regime issued a body of legislative measures that created a regulatory environment for the Jews that was typical of a state of emergency—an environment that limited their liberties and threatened their lives. Thus, on May 6, 1941, all people having at least one Jewish parent were asked to give up any radios. By August 5, 1941, claiming that he was addressing the concerns of military commanders, Mihai Antonescu ordered all Jews in Romania to don the yellow Star of David. But, on September 9, as a result of Wilhelm Filderman’s plea, the Marshal decided to abrogate that order. Despite Antonescu’s about-face on this matter, in Transnistria Jews had to wear the star for the rest of the war; moreover, in some Moldavian cities and in Cernauti, the abrogation did not take full effect. A government order, issued on July 27, 1941, cancelled all travel authorizations granted to Jews. Between June 27, 1941, and December 31, 1943, the government issued over twenty internal orders specifying the conditions in which Jews could obtain travel authorizations from the Ministry of Interior. Students and teachers were allowed to travel to school and return home. A limited number of authorizations were issued in cases of official summons, illness, and in even fewer cases, for business.

Jews who traveled without authorization risked deportation. Also, on March 16, 1942, drivers' licenses issued to the Jews were withdrawn. Finally the right of the Jews to buy supplies was severely limited.

According to Decree-law no. 552 of March 2, 1943, Jews sentenced to at least three months of prison or six months of camp internment were to be deported to Transnistria together with their families. In case of Jews sentenced for crimes that posed a threat to national security, their punishment was to be doubled. Furthermore, according to a law of May 26, 1944, Jews who entered Romania illegally were to be sentenced to death. This law was aimed at Hungarian and Northern Transylvanian Jews fleeing the deportations there, which began on March 19, 1944. It must be pointed out, however, that this law was not enforced.

### **The Life of the Jewish Community under Antonescu and Its Response to the Holocaust in Romania**

An entire institutional network for religious services, community culture, education, and social assistance was confronted with addressing the material, moral, social and intellectual needs of Jews during the regimes of Ion Antonescu. Between 1940 and 1941, Wilhelm Filderman, head of the Federation of Jewish Communities (*Federatia Uniunilor de Comunitati Evreiesti*; FUCE) played the leading role. Although his activities had to focus on solving everyday problems, his efforts were not merely administrative. Filderman adopted tactics such as petitions and audiences with the prominent figures in Romanian political and clerical life who had influence in governmental circles and had agreed to intervene on behalf of Jews. Between September 1940 and December 16, 1941, the Federation attempted to address problems arising from antisemitic measures by sending petitions to Antonescu and other officials. Filderman's pleas were direct and cited statistical, historical, and political arguments that reflected the negative effects of the measures on Romania and not merely on the survival of the Jewish community. He also demonstrated that the antisemitic measures in Romania were frequently harsher than in the other countries of the Axis.

After the National Legionary State adopted its first antisemitic measures, the FUCE considered the Legionary movement to pose the greatest threat to the Jewish population and to Romania, in general. In this context, the FUCE attempted to make personal contact with the leader of the state. On September 11, 1940, the Federation issued the first protest memorandum against the Ministry of Religions' decision to suppress the synagogues and forbid cultural-religious activities, which Filderman personally delivered to the Conducator on September 17. Antonescu replied with empty promises that the Jews would not suffer politically or economically. But despite the apparent futility, the FUCE nevertheless continued sending memoranda to the government in which it presented data and facts on the abuses and violent actions of the Legionnaires against the Jews.

After the exclusion of Legionnaires from government and the reorganization of the Antonescu cabinet, the Jewish population was confronted with new forms of antisemitic policies. Under these circumstances, the leadership of FUCE implored the government to reconstitute assets taken by Legionnaires, to interrupt the illegal closure of Jewish firms, and to slow down the pace of Romanianization. Furthermore, they requested that the government modify the laws on expropriation of urban assets, discontinue ghettoization, remove offensive language from official documents, and end the slandering of Jews as saboteurs. In addition, they implored the Romanian government to recognize that the policy of dismissing Jews from their jobs would hurt the overall economy, and thus urged the government to restore Jewish craftsmen' and apprentices' right to work.

In terms of the Iasi pogrom, FUCE leaders confined their efforts to helping survivors of the death trains who had been deported to Calarasi-Ialomita and Podu Iloaiei. After the bloody events in Iasi, the FUCE leadership released an official announcement to the Jews asking them to show maximum social discipline and obedience to the rule of law. They were told to black out the lights, not to listen to or spread rumors, not to discuss military and political matters, not to dispose of or waste food, and to respect the army. Filderman, along with his colleagues, carried out a steadfast struggle against the wearing of the yellow star. On September 6, in a memorandum to Nicodim, the Patriarch of Romania, Filderman and Chief Rabbi Safran demanded the protection of the Jews in the name of religion and human rights. On September 8, Filderman obtained an audience with Marshal Antonescu. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the yellow star, and the Conducator ultimately yielded to Filderman's request.

In light of the news coming from Bessarabia and Bukovina, Filderman wrote two letters (October 9 and 11, 1941) beseeching Marshal Antonescu to stop the deportations, which in essence sentenced people to death only because they were Jews. On October 19, Filderman sent another protest letter to Ion Antonescu. The Conducator did not agree to review his decision regarding the deportations and instead accused the Jews, especially those from the Bessarabia and Bukovina, of causing the "terrifying suffering of the Romanian people in 1940." Several days later, on October 26, all major newspapers carried Marshal Antonescu's response to Filderman's letters. The Conducator reproached Filderman for being an accused person who had become a prosecutor defending Jews who had committed "hate-filled actions against the tolerant and hospitable Romanian people."

Undaunted, Filderman carried on his struggle. On October 25 he sent a reply to Marshal Antonescu in which he reaffirmed his support for the merciless punishment of persons found guilty and focused his objection on the unfairness of innocents being sent to their deaths. He reinforced his argument that Jews could not be identified with Bolshevism, just as the Romanian people should not be conflated with the Iron Guard. On November 3, after referring to examples of Jewish devotion to Romania, Filderman stressed that Jews had participated in the wars for the retrieval of Romanian territory and that

Jews had never acted against the state or the interests of the Romanian people. FUCE's militance angered Romanian authorities, and the German advisor for Jewish affairs, Gustav Richter. As a consequence, the FUCE was dissolved on December 16, 1941.

After the dissolution of FUCE, the Jewish Central (*Centrala Evreilor din Romania*) became the only organization authorized to represent the Jewish community's interests and to organize community life. Marshal Antonescu personally approved the political and organizational framework of the Jewish Central, and it was placed by law under the control of Radu Lecca. Local Jewish communities, like all the other Jewish institutions, conducted their activities under its control. The leadership of the Jewish Central repeatedly asked for obedience, evoking the specter of harsh punishments. The first official task assigned to the Jewish Central was to organize the census of those considered to be "of Jewish blood." This followed the German model, which typically assigned such tasks to the Judenrat. The census was considered necessary in order to give an accurate assessment of the number of Jews—a step necessary for the bureaucratic organization of deportations, forced labor camps, and physical extermination. The results of the census were to be deposited in the Archive of the Jewish Central and made available to Gustav Richter to help him organize the anticipated deportation of Jews from the Old Regat and southern Transylvania. Another of the Jewish Central's core tasks was to extort money from the Jewish population, a process in which Radu Lecca played a decisive role.

Although marginalized, Filderman remained at the forefront of rescue efforts. Thus, he was the Jewish leader who led the fight against the resumption of deportations to Transnistria in 1942, and he also took steps against the Nazi-requested deportation of the Jews from southern Transylvania and Banat to Nazi extermination camps. His rescue efforts were reinforced by the activism of local Jewish leaders from Transylvania and Banat, and the pressure put on the Antonescu regime by the representatives of the Jewish community contributed to the government's decision to postpone the mass deportations of Romanian Jews.

In spring 1943 the government decided to impose a new exceptional tax-in-kind worth four billion lei on the Jews. Radu Lecca sent the decision to the Jewish Central on May 11, 1943. Gingold, the head of the Jewish Central, summoned Filderman and other Jewish leaders for an advisory meeting. Filderman opposed the payment and protested it. Antonescu found the protest "insolent," and had Filderman deported to Transnistria at the end of May 1943. After protests from key Romanian political figures, such as King Michael, Queen Mother Elena, and NPP leader Iuliu Maniu, Filderman was finally set free after three months.

A chronology of meetings that Filderman had with different ministers and other officials in the spring and summer of 1944 elucidates some of the vital problems of the Jewish community in this final stage of confrontation with the Antonescu regime's antisemitic policies. Filderman pleaded against the

decision to evacuate the Jews belonging to “exempted categories” from the Romanianized houses and discussed the necessity to assure the safety of Jews in different areas as the front was growing closer. He requested that Jews be allowed to leave cities with a high concentration of German troops and asked for clarification about the government plans for the ghettoization of Jews from Moldavia. He also protested against the decision to form work detachments in northern Moldavia.

Both FUCE and the Jewish Central provided social assistance during these times of state-organized oppression. The Autonomous Commission of Assistance (CAA; established in 1941) played an important role. From the beginning, the CAA benefited from the subvention paid by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. In January 1943, the first delegation of the CAA and the Social Assistance Department of the Jewish Central went to Transnistria. The Jewish community worked to supply healthcare for Jewish work detachments since no government subsidy was offered at any time.

On February 25, 1944, Filderman visited the Ministry of Interior and asked once again for the repatriation of all deportees, presenting the issue as a matter of life and death. Partial repatriation began in the second half of December 1943. On December 20, the 6,053 inhabitants of Dorohoi who survived deportation were sent back to their hometown. On March 6, 1944, 1,846 of the over 5,000 orphans were repatriated. General repatriation was ordered by Antonescu in March 1944, yet the decision came too late to organize the repatriation of the last group of deportees, which happened to be the most numerous. Only the following categories of deportees were repatriated by train: the inhabitants of Dorohoi, orphan children, the 500 political prisoners from the Vapniarka camp, and former internees in Grossulovo. Between March 17 and March 30, 1944, the CAA and delegates from the Jewish Central’s Department for Assistance, together with the Romanian authorities, also organized the repatriation of 2,538 people from different camps and ghettos in Transnistria.

Given the sheer concentration of Jewish intellectual elites in this city, Jewish cultural life there was exceptionally intense relative to what happened outside Bucharest, where synagogues, schools, and Jewish intellectuals lost their traditional cultural functions, with Jewish schools remaining the last bulwark against complete cultural ghettoization.

### **The Deportation of the Roma and Their Treatment in Transnistria**

The 1930 census recorded 262,501 people who declared themselves to be of Gypsy descent (1.5 percent of Romania’s population). Most of these resided on the outskirts of communities, yet during the economic transformations of the epoch, such as the land reform of 1920, many rose to the same social status as Romanian peasants. Moreover, the social and economic development of many Roma led to the emergence of a new type of Roma elite (artists, traders, and intellectuals) who became involved in community affairs and formed Roma associations. Interwar Romanian nationalism, in general, was not

accompanied by anti-Roma manifestations, and the Romanization policies promoted by the 1938 Goga government and the Royal Dictatorship did not pertain to them. Although the February 1938 Constitution distinguished between “Romanians by blood” and “Romanian citizens” to the detriment of the latter, this distinction was enforced against Jews and other ethnic groups, but not the Roma.

During the 1930s, however, the Roma became the target of some Romanian proponents of eugenics. Drawing on the ideas of Robert Ritter, the intellectual mastermind of the destruction of the Roma in Nazi Germany, these Romanian researchers considered the Roma a plague. In supporting their opinion, they racialized the Roma and argued that the Roma were socially peripheral paupers with high criminality rates who were a menace to the “racial purity” of Romanians. They even went so far as to propose sterilization of the Roma.

After coming to power, the Iron Guard considered adopting a racial policy toward Roma, yet this never came to pass while the Legion was in power. Even though the Roma had never before been an issue in the Romanian social sciences, some researchers began to approach what they called “the Gypsy problem” during the war. One such study, published in 1944, proposed either their concentration in an isolated area of Romania, their deportation to Transnistria, or their sterilization. Political pressures and the increase in xenophobic, racist attitudes, may explain this new interest. Despite their marginal status, the racist opinions expressed in Romanian society during the 1930s and 1940s did play a certain role in the preparations for Antonescu’s policies toward Jews and Roma.

The deportation of Roma to Transnistria—from its idea to its implementation—was altogether the work of the Antonescu government. The deportation of the Roma to Transnistria was Antonescu’s personal decision, as he himself would later admit during his trial in 1946. It is worth noting that none of the orders concerning the Roma bore Antonescu’s signature and none were published—not in the Official Gazette or anywhere else. All were made verbally by Antonescu to his ministers and carried out by the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie. That Antonescu closely monitored their enforcement suggests that Romania’s wartime policy toward the Roma was his creation.

A “census” of Roma conducted by the gendarmerie and police all over the country on May 25, 1942, was ordered by Marshal Antonescu in order to find Roma who fit into certain categories. Along with their families, nomadic Roma and those sedentary Roma with criminal records, recidivists, or those with no means of subsistence and without a definite occupation were registered. Out of a population of 208,700, 40,909 individuals were registered on these lists: 9,471 nomadic Roma and 31,438 sedentary Roma. With only few exceptions, the roughly 25,000 Romanian Roma “evacuated” (deported) to Transnistria were included on the lists set up by the gendarmerie and police at the end of May.

The deportations began on June 1, 1942, with the nomadic Roma. That day, the gendarmes began to concentrate them in the capital cities of the counties and then to send them to Transnistria. The

nomadic Roma traveled on foot or with wagons from one precinct to the other, making their trip several weeks long. The operation officially ended on August 15, 1942. Until October 2, 1942, a total of 11,441 nomadic Roma were deported to Transnistria (2,352 men, 2,375 women, and 6,714 children).

In terms of the sedentary Roma, the authorities first undertook to sort them. Those selected for the initial deportation were Roma considered to be “dangerous and undesirable” along with their families—a total of 12,497 individuals. The remaining 18,941 were to be deported later. The deportation of sedentary Roma did not take place until September. It lasted from September 12 to September 20, 1942, used nine special trains, and began in different towns in the country.

During that month, 13,176 sedentary Roma were deported to Transnistria. A rumor had been circulated among the Roma that once they arrived in Transnistria, they would be granted land. The deportation operation led to many abuses by the gendarmes and policemen who conducted the operation. These deportations caused turmoil among soldiers of Gypsy origin who were on the front line at the time of the deportations. At the same time, Roma were forced from their homes without even their most necessary personal and household belongings and were not given time to sell their possessions. Thus, the heads of local gendarmerie and police stations would often buy the Roma’s belongings and livestock at extremely low prices. The houses and all other goods belonging to the deported Roma were taken over by the National Center for Romanianization.

The last deportations took place in December 1943, when a transport arrived in Transnistria with fifty-seven Roma from Pitesti and from the county of Arges. The total number of Roma deported to Transnistria from June 1942 to December 1943 reached slightly over 25,000. In early October 1942, after both major deportations, there were 24,686 Roma in Transnistria: 11,441 were nomadic, 13,176 were sedentary, and another 69 were deported after being released from prison. This number later increased by a few hundred with the additional deportations of some who had escaped the major operations, had been released from prison, or had become “undesirable.”

The Roma were settled at the border or inside villages located in eastern Transnistria on the bank of the Bug in the counties of Golta, Otchakov, Berezovka, and Balta, while sedentary Roma were almost all settled in Otchakov County. Certain zones of the villages where the Roma were deported were reserved for the Roma unless the local population was totally relocated.

The situation of the Roma in Transnistria was extremely difficult at first. They were given few possibilities of work or means to live. Living conditions in Transnistria were very harsh. The Roma were not provided with enough food and were unable to support themselves. The food rations established by the government were not observed, and sometimes none would be distributed for weeks. The Roma were also not provided with firewood, which prevented them from preparing food or warming themselves. Clothing was another major problem, since the deported Roma had not been allowed to take any clothes

or personal belongings with them. The deportees lacked the most elementary things, including even pots for preparing their food. Medical assistance was almost nonexistent, and they lacked medicine. Those who were fortunate enough to have gold, Romanian currency, or other belongings of value managed to buy food from local people.

Until spring 1943 the deportees' situation was dire from every perspective. Many thousands of Roma died. In fact, almost all deaths among the Romanian Roma deported to Transnistria occurred during the winter of 1943/1944. A report of the Landau district pretura to the prefecture of the Berezovka county regarding the exanthematic typhus epidemic that broke out in the middle of December 1942 in the Roma camps stated that due to typhus, the number of Roma located in Landau decreased from around 7,500 to approximately 1,800–2,400. The situation in Landau was an exception, but the number of deceased was high everywhere. In a November 1943 report, the legion of gendarmes stated that the Roma interned in the Golta labor camp were faced with starvation.

The confiscation of their horses and wagons, which served as both "mobile homes" and means to earn an income, affected the nomadic Roma very harshly. Gheorghe Alexianu, governor of Transnistria, issued an order to this respect on July 29, 1942. Under these circumstances, many deported Roma died in Transnistria of hunger, cold, or disease. There is no document indicating that the Romanian civil or military authorities in Transnistria organized executions of Roma. Nevertheless, there were instances when gendarmes shot Roma, as in Trihati (Otchakov County) where, according to a May 1943 report, gendarmes shot the Roma who had come there from neighboring villages in search of work.

The exact number of the Roma who died in Transnistria is not known. On March 14, 1944, when Romanian citizens—regardless of origin—were to be evacuated from Transnistria, the General Gendarmes Sub-Inspectorate Odessa reported that it had on its territory 59,916 Jews and 12,083 Roma. The last number represented the Roma who had survived the deportation. To this number must be added the number of Roma who escaped from Transnistria before the above-mentioned date. These include Roma who were repatriated at different times for various reasons as well as those who escaped Transnistria illegally without being caught and returned. There were approximately 2,000 Roma who fit into these categories, which raises the number of the survivors to approximately 14,000. This means that out of the over 25,000 deported Roma, approximately 11,000 died and 14,000 survived. Those who survived deportation returned to the country in spring 1944, at the same time as the army and Romanian occupation authorities that withdrew because of the Soviet offensive.

With the ousting of the Antonescu government on August 23, 1944, and the abrogation of racist legislation, the regime's Roma policy was brought to an end. On September 13, 1944, the State Under-Secretariat for the Police issued an order that all Roma who had returned from Transnistria were to be "left to their occupations, while measures are to be taken to entice them into various works."

Since the deportation was limited to only part of the Roma, their situation may seem to be parallel to that of the Jewish population. Only Jews from Bessarabia, Bukovina and from Dorohoi County were deported; the other Romanian Jews—with only a few exceptions—were not. Nevertheless, during the war, the Romanian state led a policy which aimed at all Jews; the antisemitic legislation and Romanianization policies affected, albeit in different ways, all segments of the Jewish population. From 1940–1944, the entire Jewish population was subject to heavy discrimination. It was not so with the Roma population. During those years there was no measure taken in Romania against all Roma—that is, against the entire population registered on the census as Roma or identified as such by the authorities or the local population.

The deportation of the Roma did not enjoy the support of the Romanian population, and protests came from all quarters. Some protests even came from the political and cultural elite, including C.I.C. Bratianu, the leader of the National Liberal Party, and leaders of the National Peasant Party as well as composer George Enescu. The management of several companies, such as the state-run Romanian Railway Company, also defended their Roma employees out of fear that deportations would extend to new categories of Roma. Most documents indicate popular opposition to the deportation of Roma from all social classes, whereas few documents show support for the measure. Protest was usually expressed in the form of letters or memoranda sent by individuals or entire communities to such public authorities as the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Ion Antonescu personally, the queen mother, the Ministry of Interior, and the Great Chief of Staff. These efforts aimed either to stop deportations from a certain village or town or to secure the return of deportees to their homes, and most were made in fall 1942, after the deportation of the “dangerous” sedentary Roma. These objections to the deportation of the Roma, however, never concerned the nomadic Roma, whose deportation seems to have been considered justifiable by the Romanian majority.

By mid-1944, the “Gypsy issue” no longer figured on the public agenda. The postwar trials of war criminals, however, temporarily brought back the fate of the Roma during the war to public discussion, though the Roma remained a fairly marginal topic. When the first group of war criminals was tried in 1945, only one indictment document mentions the Roma deportations, and even then the offenses concerned only the confiscation of Roma wagons and horses. The remainder of the indictment was dedicated exclusively to the murders of Jews. The situation was similar when Ion Antonescu and his main collaborators were tried in 1946. While charges were formally brought against Antonescu for the deportation of the Roma, the prosecutor did not dwell on the details. Thus, during Antonescu’s trial, the plight of the Roma was mentioned only four times: in the indictment, in the formal reading of the charges, and in statements taken from Antonescu and General Vasiliu. The indictment refers to 26,000 deported Roma, while General Vasiliu acknowledged only 24,000.

## **The Role of Ion Antonescu in the Planning and Implementation of Antisemitic and Anti-Roma Policies of the Romanian State**

Ion Antonescu's responsibility for the death of the Jews of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria is beyond debate. And yet, the survival of the Jews from Walachia, Moldavia and southern Transylvania was due to his decision in fall 1942 to postpone indefinitely the deportation of Romanian Jews to Poland. But, in general, Ion Antonescu was dominated by his loathing of Jews and Judaism. For Ion Antonescu, the main enemy of his country was the Jew. On September 6, 1941, in a letter to Mihai Antonescu, he wrote, "Everybody should understand that this is not a struggle with the Slavs but one with the Jews. It is a fight to the death. Either we will win and the world will purify itself or they will win and we will become their slaves... The war, in general, and the fight for Odessa, especially, have proven that Satan is the Jew."

Ion Antonescu was directly involved in the major repressive acts of his regime against the Jews. Unlike in Hitler's case, there is a wealth of documentary evidence proving this direct involvement. In early October 1941, for example, Col. Gheorghe Petrescu of the Supreme General Staff and Gendarmerie General Ion Topor initiated the deportation of the Jews from Bukovina on Antonescu's personal order. Petrescu declared in 1945 that they had received their orders from Radu Dinulescu of Section Two (Sectia II) of the Supreme General Staff; this order—no. 6651 of October 4, 1941—also cited Marshal Antonescu's decision that all Jews in Bukovina were to be deported to Transnistria within ten days. Ion Antonescu stated on October 6, 1941, at a meeting of the Council of Ministers: "I have decided to evacuate all of [the Jews] forever from these regions. I still have about 10,000 Jews in Bessarabia who will be sent beyond the Dniester within several days...." On November 14 in another meeting of the Council of Ministers, Ion Antonescu declared: "I have enough difficulties with those Jidani [Kikes] that I sent to the Bug. How many died on their way is known only by me." The Conducator also made sure to enquire about the severity of repressive measures against the Jews. For example, on November 13, 1941, while questioning Alexianu about the anti-Jewish campaign in Odessa, Antonescu reiterated his orders: "I said that for every dead Romanian, 200 Jews [should die] and for every Romanian wounded 100 Jews [should] die."

Frustrated with the lagging pace of solving the "Jewish question," and noting that even Nazi Germany was slow, Antonescu urged his lieutenants to hasten Romania's efforts: "Put them in the catacombs, put them in the Black Sea. I don't want to hear anything. It does not matter if 100 or 1,000 die, [for all I care] they can all die." This order resulted in the deportation of the surviving Jews of Odessa to Berezovka and Golta.

In Antonescu's view, Germany had always been Romania's ally, while "the Jew from London," and "the British, the Americans, and the Jews who had dictated their terms for peace after the previous war," were Romania's outside enemies. Its internal enemies were "communists...Jidani, Hungarians, and reds," who waited for the first signs of anarchy "to ignite trouble...to strike the final blow to our nation." The Conducator's attitude toward the Jews alternated between violent hatred and moments of feigned patriarchal generosity. During fall 1941, for example, Antonescu claimed before the Council of Ministers that he was "fighting to cleanse Bessarabia and Bukovina of Jidani and Slavs."

Ion Antonescu was well aware of the mass murders committed by the SS in Transnistria. Moreover, Ion Antonescu was also directly responsible for, or complicit in, even the pettiest decisions on the persecution of the Jews. The Romanian dictator ordered the National Bank of Romania to "exchange"—i.e., confiscate—money and jewelry belonging to Jews about to be deported. It was he who signed the April 1942 order (462/CBBT), to deport the remaining 425 Jews of Bessarabia to Transnistria. And it was Antonescu's decision to carry out the second deportation of Jews from Bukovina, formally enacted on May 28, 1942. Documents originating from the military office of Ion Antonescu show that in 1943 high-ranking members of his administration frequently informed Antonescu about the fate of Jewish and Roma deportees in Transnistria.

During autumn 1942, Ion Antonescu made the crucial decision to postpone the implementation of the Romanian-German plan to deport all the Jews from the Old Kingdom and southern Transylvania to Belzec. This planned deportation was never carried out, and consequently, at least 292,000 Romanian Jews survived the war. The Conducator was also directly responsible for both the death and the survival of the Romanian Jews who lived in German-occupied Europe. As early as November 1941, von Killinger told the *Auswärtiges Amt* (the German Foreign Office), that Antonescu had approved the Reich's intention to deport Romanian Jews under German jurisdiction to eastern ghettos together with German Jews; the Romanian government "had stated no interest in bringing Romanian Jews back to Romania." As a direct result of this decision, 1,600 Romanian Jews from Germany and Austria, 3,000 from France, and an unknown number from Poland, Bohemia-Moravia, and Holland perished in German concentration camps. During spring 1943 the Romanian government reversed its decision, and over roughly 4,000 Romanian Jews living in France survived the war. Ion Antonescu even approved the repatriation of some of these Jews.

At his trial, Marshal Antonescu accepted responsibility for mistakes and distortions of his orders by subordinates, though not for the violent crimes and plundering some had perpetrated. While acknowledging that "bloody repression" had occurred under the aegis of Romania during the war, Ion Antonescu falsely declared that there had been no massacres under his authority: "I passed many repressive laws, [but] we did not execute a single Jew....I gave orders for reprisals, not for perpetrating

massacres.” Questioned after the war, Ion Antonescu confessed that the original 1942 decision to deport the Roma had also been his.

At the beginning of the war, Antonescu—a harsh and often violent antisemite—believed that he would be able to resolve once and for all “the Jewish question” and that of the other minorities (Ukrainians, in particular). But a comparison to Hitler, whom he admired and who admired him, shows him in a different light. Until September 1941, Antonescu received Filderman, the leader of the Jewish community, which would have been inconceivable in Germany; Hitler would never have entertained a direct or indirect dialogue with the leader of the German Jewish community. At the end of 1942 and in close connection with the reversals on the Eastern Front, Antonescu tolerated—encouraged, even—contacts with the Allies through neutral countries (in Lisbon, Stockholm, Ankara, and Cairo), which suggests that he had a more realistic assessment of the overall chances of winning the war. After the end of 1942, he imagined, like many other Romanian politicians, that the Romanian Jews could be used as bargaining chips in order to improve Romania’s image in the United States and England.

But this does not mean that the decision not to deport the Jews from southern Transylvania, Moldavia, and Walachia to Nazi camps in occupied Poland was strictly opportunistic. In all likelihood, various appeals—including those from Archbishop Balan, the Romanian royal family, and from the diplomatic corps—played a significant role. Nonetheless, after Stalingrad, Antonescu did grow more concerned about Romania’s image abroad. Reports from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which asserted that Romanian Jews under Nazi occupation were treated worse than Hungarian Jews, annoyed Antonescu.

Even though he shared many ideas with the Legionnaires, Ion Antonescu was not an adventurer in the economic arena. Politically, he placed himself between Goga and Codreanu: he nurtured an obsession for a Romania purged of the minorities that represented a “danger” to the state, especially in the territories reattached to Romania after the First World War. Antonescu’s antisemitism was economic, political, social, and sometimes religious, but it did not share the mystical aspects of Legionary antisemitism. His hatred was not that of a hoodlum armed with a truncheon, but that of a bureaucrat pretending to resolve a problem by law in a systematic manner.

Ion Antonescu was responsible not only for the devastation of Romanian Jews and Roma, but also for many of the tragic losses endured by the Romanian nation during World War II. As an Axis state and committed ally of Nazi Germany, Romania closely coordinated military matters with the Germans. For example, in June 1941 Hitler appointed General Eugen von Schobert of the German Eleventh Army to command the Southern Flank on the Eastern Front. However, although von Schobert was in command, Hitler recognized Antonescu’s importance and mandated that the Conducator counter-sign all of von Schobert’s orders.

While Antonescu's war in the East has frequently been construed merely as an attempt to regain Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina or as leverage to persuade Hitler to return Northern Transylvania to Romania, Antonescu had higher aspirations "in which—not feeling at all inferior to Hitler and Mussolini—he imagined a Dacian empire from the Balkans to the Dnieper. [Moreover], his collaboration with the military plans of the Axis was not limited to the offensive against the Soviet Union." Ion Antonescu declared war on the United States on December 16, 1941. He was also at war with Great Britain. Furthermore, he allowed German divisions to pass through Romania in their advance to attack Greece, and he permitted Germany to use Romanian territory as a launching pad for its attacks against Yugoslavia.

As Antonescu himself declared in writing, he was at war with the Jews. By implementing the systematic deportation of the Jewish populations from within Romania and occupied Ukraine, Ion Antonescu and his lieutenants became the architects of untold suffering for hundreds of thousands of innocent victims, and the death of at least a quarter of a million of them. Thus, in addition to waging war against a traditional, military enemy, from 1941 to 1944 Antonescu also targeted civilians—with the persecution ranging from plunder to murder. Ion Antonescu and his accomplices do not bear sole responsibility for this tragedy, however; in addition to the Nazi regime, a contemporary Romanian historian has noted, "part of the Romanian political class is [also] responsible for his rise to power, due to its weakness or selfishness."

In extreme nationalist circles today, an attempt is underway to restore Antonescu to a place of honor in Romanian history as a great patriot. But whether he loved his country is irrelevant: Antonescu was a war criminal in the purest definition of the phrase. His leadership involved the Romanian government in crimes against humanity unrivaled in Romania's sometimes glorious, sometimes cruel history; perhaps more ironically, this leader's war against a defenseless and innocent civilian population was only part of the broader folly of involving the country in a conflict that promised only illusory gains, but actually wrought very definite, catastrophic consequences.

### **The Holocaust in Northern Transylvania**

Under the terms of the Vienna Award of August 30, 1940, Transylvania, then a part of Greater Romania, was divided. The northern part of the region, which came to be known as Northern Transylvania, was allotted to Hungary. This part of the region, which was annexed by Hungary in September 1940, encompassed an area of 43,591 square kilometers with a total population of about 2.5 million. Of the approximately 200,000 Jews of Transylvania, about 164,000 lived in the eleven counties ceded to Hungary. These Jews were overwhelmingly Orthodox, with many of them followers of various Hasidic sects. This was especially true in Maramures and Satu Mare counties.

Following the formal annexation of Northern Transylvania, the Jews were subjected to the anti-Jewish measures already in effect in Hungary. These laws not only affected their livelihood, driving most of them to poverty, but also deprived them of many of their basic civic rights and civil liberties. Particularly hard hit were the Jewish males of military age who were recruited into forced labor service units. Following Hungary's declaration of war against the Soviet Union on June 27, 1941, many of these units were deployed along the frontlines in the Ukraine, where many thousands of labor servicemen were massacred or died of starvation or disease. A similar fate befell many other labor service companies that were deployed in Serbia and elsewhere. An indeterminate number of Jews who could not prove their citizenship to the satisfaction of the authorities were rounded up and taken to near Kamenets Podolsk, in the German-occupied part of the Soviet Union, where they were among the 18,000 Jews murdered toward the end of August 1941.

The situation of the Jews of Northern Transylvania, like that of Hungarian Jewry as a whole, took a turn for the worse after the German occupation of Hungary on March 19, 1944. The occupation, undertaken primarily to prevent Hungary from extricating itself from the Axis Alliance, provided an opportunity for the Nazis and their Hungarian accomplices to bring about the Final Solution of the Jewish question in Hungary.

For a variety of ideologically defined strategic and military reasons, not the least of which was the rapid advance of the Red Army, the perpetrators decided to implement the Final Solution at lightning speed. Although small in number, the Nazi commando led by Adolf Eichmann was able to carry out its murderous objectives largely as a result of the enthusiastic support it received from the newly-established Hungarian government. With Miklós Horthy as head of state, the constitutionally appointed Döme Sztójay government placed the instruments of state power—the gendarmerie, police, and civil service—at the disposal of the Nazis and their Hungarian accomplices.

The Final Solution program in Hungary was carried out in two distinct phases. During the first phase, lasting from the end of March to May 15, the Jews were isolated, marked, expropriated, and concentrated into ghettos. The processes of destruction were carried out on a geographic basis, taking into consideration Hungary's division into ten gendarmerie districts. The territory of Northern Transylvania, with the exception of Maramures County, encompassed Gendarmerie Districts IX and X. Maramures County constituted part of Gendarmerie District VIII. The ten gendarmerie districts, in turn, were grouped into six anti-Jewish operational zones. Gendarmerie District VIII, which encompassed the regions with the greatest concentration of Jews, including Carpatho-Ruthenia, northeastern Hungary, and Maramures County, constituted Zone I. The two gendarmerie districts in Northern Transylvania were identified as Zone II. Since Zones I and II were in the eastern part of the country and had the greatest concentration of Jews, the perpetrators decided to initiate their anti-Jewish drive there. Toward this end, they adopted two

measures – both ex post facto: they identified the areas as military operational zones and began the roundup of the Jews in Zone I on April 16, 1944.

The Jews living in Zone II, that is Northern Transylvania, were rounded up beginning on May 3, with the active involvement of the county and local civilian and military officials. The Jews of the villages and smaller towns were first taken to their local synagogue or community buildings, and then transferred to the major ghetto centers, most of which were hastily established in the county seats. The largest among these were those of Oradea, Satu Mare, Sighetu Marmatiei, and Cluj. Some of the ghetto centers were located in the Jewish sector of the particular city; others in brickyards; and still others under the open sky. During the roundup and relocation process, the Jews were repeatedly mistreated and robbed of all their possessions.

The second phase of the Final Solution program began on May 15 and ended on July 9, 1944, after the deportation to Auschwitz of close to 438,000 Jews, making all of Hungary (with the notable exception of Budapest) *judenrein*. Of these, close to 132,000 were Jews who had been deported in forty-five freight trains from the ghetto entrainment centers in Northern Transylvania. There are no reliable data on the number of survivors. Estimates range from 9 to 11 percent. As a result of the Holocaust, the Jewish communities of the villages and small towns of Northern Transylvania ceased to exist. A dwindling number of Jews continue to live in some of the larger cities.

Most of the perpetrators involved in the anti-Jewish operations fled with the retreating German and Hungarian armies. A considerable number of the local civilian and military officials were apprehended and tried by a people's tribunal in Cluj in 1946. Most of the 185 defendants in that war crimes trial case were tried *in absentia*. Among these were the top civilian and military officials involved in the Final Solution. Although the sentences were harsh—many, especially among those tried in absentia, were condemned to death or life imprisonment—none was executed and none served longer than a few years. Most of the escapees found haven in the West, where they were embraced as champions in the struggle against Communism. Those imprisoned in Romania were given amnesty in the early 1950s as “re-educated and fully rehabilitated,” and encouraged to join the campaign for the building of Communism.

### **Solidarity and Rescue**

Despite the Antonescu regime's antisemitic propaganda, Romanian society of the war years did not become a fanatical society. The outcome of this propaganda was instead a kind of neutralization of public reaction, a kind of de-sensitization of the majority of the population toward whatever was happening to the Jews. The reactions of compassion and revolt were accompanied by passive acceptance of killings and even active participation in antisemitic policies.

However, the study of interwar Romanian intellectual life shows that Romania did indeed have a democratic tradition and that many public figures, such as democratic intellectuals (with left wing affiliations or not), writers, and even some politicians, opposed the antisemitism of the 1930s. Highly competent and influential in the intellectual debate at the beginning of the 1930s, these people lost ground after 1935 and after 1937. After the suspension of democratic journals, they were effectively silenced. When Jews were excluded from professional associations and antisemitic legislation was passed and enforced by the Goga government in December 1937, their critical voices were practically silent. There were numerous intellectuals who adopted antisemitic attitudes because they passively identified with the most influential representatives of past and contemporary Romanian nationalism. Furthermore, the events of 1940 (the loss of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviets and then of Northern Transylvania to Hungary) made the issue of the discrimination against the Jews a topic of secondary importance in Romanian intellectual milieus.

A certain “awakening” of the public opinion was evident with respect to the deportation of Regat Jews planned in the Romanian-Nazi deal of summer 1942. Bucharest intellectuals made personal protests to stop this plan from being implemented. Also, beginning in fall 1942 the planned deportation of Regat Jews encountered the resistance of a number of opposition politicians from Romania’s main parties as well as from the Romanian Orthodox Church, which allegedly protested in this regard — including an intervention by the Metropolitan of Transylvania, Nicolae Balan — although the leadership of the Church had been traditionally hostile to the Jewish community. A representative of the Romanian royal house made similar efforts; the pleas of Queen Mother Elena were remarkable from this point of view. Other examples include the critiques of racial discrimination and the deportations made by Prince Barbu Stirbey and National Peasant Party ex-members of parliament, Nicusor Graur and Ioan Hudita. During the second half of the war, there was a noticeably higher frequency of rescue efforts made by Romanian diplomats posted in various European countries under German occupation in favor of Jews with Romanian citizenship who found themselves there.

Among the documented cases of rescue are those related to the Bucharest and Iasi pogroms. Of particular importance are the actions of Iasi pharmacist D. Beceanu and those of Viorica Agarici, chairwoman of the Romanian subsidiary of the Red Cross, who initiated and organized the administration of first aid to the survivors of the infamous death trains. Also exemplary during the Iasi massacre were the efforts of a cereal mill manager, Grigore Profir, who defied the death threats of German soldiers and Romanian gendarmes and stuck to his resolution to hide dozens of Iasi Jews.

Unlike the Nazi-controlled areas, where massacres were systematic and the ideological training of the perpetrators ensured a disciplined and merciless enforcement of the Final Solution, in Romanian-controlled areas, notably Bessarabia and Bukovina, there was a generalized state of disorder. Bestial

torture and murder and compassion and rescue were at times equally possible options for local commanders. Contradictory orders led to great confusion and left room for more freedom of action by commanders, with consequences that were equally contradictory. The whimsical disposition of a sadistic officer or NCOs and privates could have catastrophic consequences for thousands of Jews placed under their authority; or in rare cases, it could lead to the rescue of some Jews—even by camp commanders. Sabin Motora, commander of the Vapniarka camp in Transnistria, for example, rescued dozens of Jews on his own in a display of great courage and humanity. Another form of protest was to resign in objection to the inhuman living conditions in the camps and the continuation of atrocities. Colonel Alexandru Constantinescu, the first commander of the Vertujeni camp, quit his appointment over the situation of the detainees under his command.

Given the circumstances outlined above, the number of Romanian “Righteous among Nations” is rather small. However, it is important to point out that in Romania, as in other countries, there were actually many more people who could meet Yad Vashem’s criteria to be named “Righteous among Nations.” The Romanian rescuers recognized by Yad Vashem were of different ages and came from widely diverse social and educational backgrounds: peasants, workers, pharmacists, lawyers, teachers, army officers, gendarmes, and diplomats. Recently, an Orthodox priest was awarded the Yad Vashem title: Father Petre Gheorghe, who helped the Jewish deportees in Transnistria. Although survivors have cited the efforts of many other priests, their cases have not yet gotten to compete for the “Righteous among Nations” award. Queen Mother Elena, however, who with firm moral conviction condemned the planned deportation of the Jews, was awarded the title.

Most rescuers (twenty-eight) came from Northern Transylvania, and twelve were ethnic Hungarians. The greater frequency of rescue attempts in this region can be explained by the improving situation of Romanian Jews near the end of the war, in sharp contrast to the ever-worsening situation in Northern Transylvania. Once the Antonescu regime changed its policy toward the Jews, Romanian territory became a place of refuge for Jews of Northern Transylvanian or Hungary, who managed to cross over into Romania.

Of the Romanian “Righteous among Nations,” Dr. Traian Popovici (1892-1946), the mayor of Cernauti, stands out as unique. Popovici defied the orders of Antonescu, fiercely opposed the ghettoization and the subsequent deportation of Cernauti Jews, and worked to rescue thousands of Jews from deportation and death. Popovici, who believed that remaining passive meant the acceptance of and complicity in an abominable crime, instead chose to act on basis of moral duty.

## **Trials of the War Criminals**

The trial of the leaders of the Antonescu regime took place in May 1946 and resulted in the execution of Ion and Mihai Antonescu and two of their closest associates as well as several life sentences or long-term imprisonments. In fact, this was the beginning and the end of the major postwar Romanian trials, which were initiated on the commitments of the Romanian government in the armistice agreement, signed in Moscow on September 12, 1944. The Romanian side was obliged to arrest war criminals, bring them to justice, and to dissolve pro-Nazi and fascist organizations as well as preventing their re-emergence.

After the coup that deposed Ion Antonescu in August 1944, the Romanian political system made fast moves towards “democratization,” which soon became a rapid thrust to Sovietization and communization. The first rather clear definition of war criminals came on January 20, 1945, when war criminals were defined as those who treated POWs contrary to international law; ordered and perpetrated acts of cruelty or liquidations in war zones; ordered or initiated the creation of ghettos, forced labor, and internment camps; carried out deportations for racial and political reasons; ordered or carried out collective or individual repression, relocation and deportation of persons for extermination; and/or perpetuated the use of forced labor for the purpose of extermination.

With the establishment of the Groza government in March 1945, itself a result of the communist thrust to power, the communization of Romania intensified and with it the pace of trials against various categories of war criminals. These trials especially targeted those who carried out crimes in Soviet territories occupied by the Romanians, an indication that Soviet advisors were in some way mostly behind these legal steps. The Jewish aspect in these trials can be seen as a by-product of presenting these crimes.

By May 1946 and the beginning of the trial of Antonescu, Romania still had a democratic and liberal press, albeit under heavy communist attack, but it was not overly interested in the crimes committed against the Jews. The communists and the propaganda of the left concentrated strong attacks on the fascist regime—not particularly because of what they had done to the Jews, but because those who collaborated with the regime were by 1946 considered enemies of Romania’s “democratization.” Thus, on the eve of the trial, the political motives and interests at the time were often more important than bringing to justice those guilty of crimes against humanity. Moreover, the need of the new regime to use some of the less-important fascists, as was also the case in Hungary, allowed the new authorities to focus on the top echelons of the former regime and blurred the identity of the perpetrators. Thus, even though the evidence was already there—such as Carp’s Black Book—even if not complete, the rage of the court was directed against the leaders of the previous regime, largely ignoring the practical implementation of the regime’s barbaric anti-Jewish policies.

The trials of four groups of accused, which took place between May 14 and July 14, 1945, included those in charge of the administrations of the camps between the Dniester and Bug. A large body of evidence was presented on the atrocities in the camps, the Iasi pogrom of June 1941, and the Odessa massacres of October 1941. Yet, it seems that the overall picture that emerged—not only through the documents at the trials, but also as they filtered through the censorship to the media—was only partial, and the tragedy of the Jews did not receive the full attention that it deserved.

The “people’s court” was criticized as its composition did not allow a priori the holding of a just trial. The six “judges of the people” were indeed lacking judicial background; but this should not mean that important issues—in this case, the tragedy of the Jews—could not figure in their full detail in the proceedings of the court. The nature of the court should not have served as a pretext for the irrelevance of the indictment.

The major trial of the Antonescu lot in May 1946 was the sixteenth group to be indicted and tried. The previous trials that had taken place since 1945 were held as the power struggle intensified, but had not yet reached that “crescendo” that characterized the situation by May 1946. While it is evident that the “full horror...was not fully known at the time of the trial”—and this is usually the case in trials taking place soon after events, when a tragedy of such a magnitude is presented—it is important to note that because the Holocaust was not the main issue being addressed, the Romanian version of the Final Solution emerged piece by piece, and not as a comprehensive process. Thus, the Antonescu trial, which was intended to be the “trial of all war crimes trials” in Romania, did not sum up and present the overall picture; rather, it attempted to extract, and succeeded in doing so, the culpability of the regime.

The details of the Jewish tragedy at the Antonescu trial were often presented in a general way. As Antonescu assumed responsibility for his regime’s crimes, all those who willingly became the regime’s executioners were allowed to enter the gates of the new society about to be built. Only a small minority of those guilty would still be pursued and brought to justice. The Antonescu trial also became the opening salvo for further political arrests and trials in 1947 and beyond, especially of Maniu, Bratianu, Mihalache and others. These trials proved that it was not the fate of the Jews that motivated them, but rather political needs. While political pressures were very evident in the trials of the major criminals, a series of trials of former fascists (journalists, intellectuals, and members of the gendarmerie) provided much evidence on the xenophobia, racism, and antisemitism of the Antonescu regime as well as the behavior of numerous members of the military and gendarmerie. In these trials, the primary motivation was not the need to eliminate the top echelons of the Antonescu regime, as that had already been accomplished. The evidence of their behavior clearly indicated the magnitude of crimes and acts of barbarism and inhumanity committed against Jews.

The Romanian war crimes trials provide only a partial understanding of the true dimensions of the Holocaust in Romania. The trials in Romania, as compared to other postwar trials, shows them to have been short, swift, and aggressive, but missing the full scope of the Jewish tragedy. The first wave of trials, which included the top echelon of the wartime leadership, focused more on those aspects that reflected political motives and pressures applied by the Communists who were backed by the Soviet Union. For example, the fate of the Jews during the war took up about one tenth of the indictment against Antonescu (some 12 pages out of 123), and this symbolizes the role and place of the Holocaust in the trials. In spite of these reservations, all attempts to de-legitimize the trial and eventually rehabilitate Antonescu and his regime and to use the trial material to prove that its proceedings were illegal should be rejected. The postwar trials should be seen as an important basis for the further research on the Holocaust in Romania. The documents, most of them available to researchers for the past few years, present terrible evidence on the fate of Romanian Jewry and those Jews who were under Romanian jurisdiction. The evidence and the documentation presented in the courts at the time did not intend to minimize the magnitude of the tragedy or to distort the complete picture, but the trials did shift attention and focus from the ways and means by which the Antonescu regime implemented the solution to the “Jewish question” to the overall culpability of the regime, in which the Jewish tragedy did not play a primary role.

### **The Distortion, Negation, and Minimization of the Holocaust in Postwar Romania**

Based on the authoritative definition of the Holocaust provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Romania fits into the category of countries characterized by a *state-organized* participation in the genocide against Jews and Roma during World War II. Romania was among *those allies and collaborators of Nazi Germany* that had a *systematic plan for the persecution and annihilation* of the Jewish and Roma population living on territories under their direct control.

The concept of “*distortion*” designates attempts to alter historical reality for political and propagandistic purposes. Although its use is not strictly confined to the communist era, “distortion” is generally employed in reference to that period, when historiography was under political censorship.

“*Negationism*” is defined as the denial that the Holocaust took place and/or the denial of the participation of significant numbers of members of one’s own nation in its perpetration. The use of the terms negationism or “Holocaust denial” rather than the more commonly-encountered “revisionism” stems from the fact that many among those who falsify, distort, and relativize the reality of the Holocaust label themselves “revisionists” in order to gain respectability. A distinction is made among three forms of negationism: integral, deflective, and selective.

*Integral* or outright denial rejects the very existence of the Holocaust. In Romania, just as in other former communist countries, integral denial is a wholesale Western “import” with no traces of local originality whatsoever.

*Deflective* negationism channels guilt for perpetration in several directions: it blames the Germans, marginal elements in society, and even the Jews themselves for the perpetration of the crimes. In the case where the Jews are the target of deflection, further distinctions are possible, depending on the main argument being used: (1) the deicidal argument, according to which the Holocaust was the price paid by the Jews for having killed Jesus Christ, (2) the conspiratorial argument, according to which Hitler himself was brought to power by the Jews, (3) the defensive argument, according to which Jews forced Hitler to resort to legitimate measures of self-defense, (4) the reactive argument, according to which the disloyalty manifested by Jews toward the host-country triggered a backlash against them, and finally, (5) the indicting argument, which charges that the Jews planned and perpetrated the Holocaust themselves. The proponents of selective negationism deny the existence of the Holocaust in their own country’s specific case. In other words, selective negationism acknowledges that the Holocaust occurred elsewhere, but denies any participation of one’s compatriots in its perpetration. If one were to look for a specific Romanian note, it would most likely be found in this particular form of negationism.

A related and yet separate category is that of *comparative trivialization*. This category is complex, but it basically refers to the abusive use of comparisons with the aim of minimizing the Holocaust, of banalizing its atrocities, or qualifying the memory of this tragedy. There are several categories of comparative trivialization: (1) the *competitive comparison*, which holds that atrocities worse or at least equal to the Holocaust have been committed, and that consequently, the Holocaust does not warrant special status; in the Romanian case, for example, reference is made to atrocities committed against Romanians by Nazis, Hungarians, or Jews, and even to atrocities committed against communists by Antonescu and/or others during the Second World War; (2) the *banalizing comparison* which “normalizes” the Holocaust by assimilating it to cyclic violent events, such as war, that regularly occur in history or presents it as a regrettable, yet unsurprising outcome of war; (3) the *parochial comparison* in which the situation of the Jews in Romania is depicted as having been better than their situation in Nazi Germany or in states with similar historical circumstances; (4) the *deflective comparison*, which considers fascism and the Holocaust to be an emulative reaction to communism; in negationist logic, this version often proceeds to assimilate communism with the Jews and to conclude that the Holocaust was provoked by them; and (5) the *transactional comparison*, which conditions the acknowledgement of fascist crimes on the recognition of other atrocities in history. Often, the Holocaust is trivialized in the comparison with the Gulag. One recurrent form of this type of trivialization, described by Alan S. Rosenbaum and Vladimir Tismaneanu as “competitive martyrology,” emphasizes the genocidal precedence of

communism, taking as evidence the number of victims, and contests the specificity of Holocaust and the special attention paid to it. Another sort of comparative trivialization in this category refers to a “monopoly on suffering” exerted by Jews and ventures that communism is not properly remembered because of this “monopoly.” Finally, the Jews are frequently accused of being guilty for the emergence of communism, and this type of accusation retroactively justifies or “explains” the Holocaust.

During the communist regime in Romania, as in the other Central and East European countries, the Holocaust was distorted or simply ignored, in spite of the antifascist rhetoric in the official propaganda. At the end of the war and in its immediate aftermath, the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) was internally divided over how to address recent Romanian history. Two main opposing trends could be noted. The first approach was advocated by Lucretiu Patrascanu, who spoke of “state antisemitism” and of a “massive, systematic and methodical extermination of the Jewish population” in Antonescu’s Romania. Patrascanu thus implicitly supported acknowledging Romania’s responsibility in the Holocaust. His approach was never heeded.

It was the alternative approach of coping with the country’s recent past that would be canonized. Its normative model was provided by the famous *History of the Romanian People’s Republic*, an obligatory textbook whose editor-in-chief was Mihail Roller. Roller’s textbook presented Romanian fascism as embodying “monopoly capital,” lacking popular support, and being strictly controlled by Nazi Germany. In contrast to Patrascanu, Roller’s *History* replaced Jews and Roma with communists and Romanians as the main victims of fascism and ignored antisemitism as a defining trait of Antonescu’s dictatorship. This approach came to prevail in all subsequent history textbooks as well as in official communist histories on the interwar period and on the Second World War.

In the 1960s, the official discourse and historiography signaled a return to nationalist themes as a result of the efforts of RCP leaders to distance Romania from the USSR and to mobilize elite and popular support for the party. However, while Rollerism was condemned in the late 1950s and while the historical discourse would be re-nationalized in the 1960s, the approach to the Holocaust remained unchanged, though fascism underwent a reinterpretation. Roller’s textbook was criticized for proclaiming too radical a break with precommunist historiography. These transformations are seen best during the rule of Nicolae Ceausescu (1965-1989), when the communist regime embraced a local version of national-communism, which combined extreme nationalism and neo-Stalinism.

Romanian historians in the 1970s and particularly in the early 1980s introduced a qualitative separation of the two phases in the fascist dictatorship, the first dominated by the Legionary Movement (1940-1941) and the second by Ion Antonescu (1941-1944), with a severe bias against the former. The Legionnaires are depicted through the use of adjectives such as “hooligans,” “terrorists,” and “traitors,” which evoke marginality and unrepresentativeness. By contrast, Antonescu appears as less bloodthirsty

and irresponsible. While the deeds of Legionnaires are depicted as if committed out of a gratuitous propensity to kill, the crimes committed during Antonescu's dictatorship are placed in the context of the state of emergency, thereby suggesting that the Romanian dictator had limited freedom of action and that his decisions were motivated by the war as well as domestic and international circumstances where he acted as object rather than subject. Antisemitism is hardly presented as an ingredient of fascism, and the dimensions of the Jewish tragedy are minimized. Ethnic Romanians and communists are depicted as the main victims of Nazi-type policies, and the authors stress the "radical" qualitative differences between Nazi Germany and Antonescu's Romania, the latter appearing as incomparably more moderate than Hitler's Germany.

This explains the significant terminological shift that occurred in the 1970s, which turned Antonescu's "fascist dictatorship" into a "military-fascist" one. In the late 1980s, the linguistic construct "military-fascist dictatorship" was in turn sidelined, as it suggested an involvement of the army in politics. Antonescu's regime would henceforth be labeled as either a "totalitarian regime" or a "personal dictatorship." Scrupulously avoided in the historiography of that era are conceptual constructs such as "Holocaust," "Final Solution," or "genocide." As a consequence, in the late 1970s and far more pronounced in the 1980s, efforts to rehabilitate Marshal Antonescu as a patriot began. These efforts were conducted partly by proxy from abroad, and the magnate Iosif Constantin Dragan played a particular role. Communist Romanian historiography, for different reasons and at different times, strove to minimize the scope of atrocities committed against Jews on Romanian territory or in territories administered by the Romanian government and to deny Romanian participation in the Holocaust. Most postcommunist Romanian negationism has roots in communist-era historical research on the Holocaust. The victimization of Romanians, the fact that they were depicted as being among the victims of Nazism, deflection of responsibility, minimization of the scope of atrocities, self-flattering exceptionalism presenting Romania as a haven for Jews, the rehabilitation of Antonescu, as well as many other manifestations were to reproduce themselves in various forms in postcommunist negationism.

In postcommunist Romania, Holocaust denial has been a diffuse phenomenon, which has manifested itself in politics, academia, and the mass media. The Greater Romania Party (GRP) and its affiliated publications have yielded the most consistent "database" of negationist statements and actions during the past fifteen years of transition. Also, historians and nationalist activists educated by the communist regime maintained some solidarity and preserved or developed the negationist and pro-Antonescu discourse. In addition, numerous other individuals, groups, and publications make use of negationist themes for different reasons. The following taxonomy is constructed proceeding from the type of argument employed, in line with the conceptual framework discussed above.

**Integral Negationism.** Ten years before his 2004 “conversion to philosemitism,” GRP leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor wrote that he had recently “learned that English and American scholars are contesting the Holocaust itself, providing documentation and logical arguments proving that the Germans could not gas six million Jews, this being technically and physically impossible.” The Holocaust, he added, was nothing but “a Zionist scheme aimed at squeezing out from Germany about 100 billion Deutschmarks and to terrorize for more than 40 years all those who do not acquiesce to the Jewish yoke.” In Romania, no other author embraced more eagerly and more fully the negationist argument than Radu Theodoru. According to him, the importance of the revisionist approach resides in its capacity to “analyze the entire Nuremberg trial and evidence; it was a trial of revenge staged by winners against losers.” Theodoru’s own characterization of the Nuremberg trials was: “a trial organized by Zionist Nazism against German Zionism, more specifically a trial staged by Judaic Nazism against Aryan Nazism. Nothing but a scuffle among racists.”

**Deflective Negationism.** This category of Holocaust denial is widespread, both in statements made by politicians after the demise of communism and in history books. As early as 1990, former National Liberal Party (NLP) chairman Radu Campeanu called for Antonescu’s rehabilitation, describing the Marshal as “a great Romanian.” In support of his appeal, Campeanu shifted the blame for the atrocities committed during the Holocaust onto Germany and Hungary. He claimed that during the war Romania had basically been a Nazi-occupied country. Nonetheless, he said, nowhere else in the Nazi sphere of influence had there been fewer crimes against Jews than in Romania.

Historians such as Maria Covaci and Mircea Musat, who became prominent during the Ceausescu period, after 1990 reiterated their deflective interpretation of recent history. Post-1990 Romanian negationists can be counted among those who (like elsewhere in East-Central Europe) attempt to place the blame for the Holocaust on the Jews themselves.

Conspiracy theories, which are widespread in Romania, can also be forms of deflective negationism. In the eyes of Theodoru, Hitler was nothing but a puppet in Jewish hands to scare Jews into running to Palestine, while in the respectable Writers’ Union weekly, *Romania literara*, writer Ion Buduca was claiming in April 1998 that antisemitism was a Zionist ploy to advance the purpose of Jewish emigration. As early as 1993, *Europa* editor-in-chief Ilie Neacsu (who would eventually become a PRM [Party of Greater Romania] parliamentarian), wrote: “Hitler did not butcher Jews from the Valley of Jordan, but from his own courtyard in Berlin where, after World War I, the descendants of Judas had become masters over the German economy, culture, and politics.”

While some negationists are ready to admit that repressive measures were applied against Jews “out of necessity,” they go out of the way to emphasize that these were little other than punitive responses to the lack of loyalty displayed by Jews toward Romania. The main argument rests on the large-scale

support that the Jews allegedly gave to Soviet occupation forces in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in 1940 and on the alleged Jewish participation not only in humiliating or torturing the retreating Romanian army, but in the physical liquidation of Romanian military personnel. Viewed from this perspective, the June 1940 Dorohoi and Galati pogroms, the pogrom in Iasi, the atrocities committed in Transnistria (whenever they are acknowledged, even in minimalist terms) can all be explained in terms of self-defense and/or spontaneous revenge on the Jews for their deeds in 1940. This argument has several variations. In some, Jewish guilt is total, while in others it is only partial, though amplified by what the argument's proponents call the "complex" and "tense" circumstances specific to the war. Typical of the first version is the work of Alex Mihai Stoenescu. In his book, *Armata, maresalul si evreii* (The Army, the Marshal, and the Jews), rather than pointing out the planned nature of the atrocities, Stoenescu argues that the death of thousands of civilians in the Death Trains were the outcome of negligence and not the consequence of deliberate action. He concludes that this was not the first time in history that "hundreds or even thousands of innocents" have paid for the deeds of "a handful of [Jewish communist] culprits."

The reactive explanation was prominently displayed in a 1995 volume by historian Gheorghe Buzatu as a sequel to a tome on the Second World War's "secret history" published in the last years of Communist rule. By then, Buzatu's views on the Holocaust had already acquired notoriety. They were succinctly expressed by the title of a booklet Buzatu published with the Iron Guardist publishing house Majadahonda. Rather than being a perpetrator of the Holocaust, argued Buzatu, Romania had been its victim. Moreover, he asserted, Romania had suffered its own Holocaust at the hand of the Jews, and the year 1940 marked its beginning.

The last form of deflective negation—and by far the most insulting to the memory—casts the Jews as perpetrators of the Holocaust. In an "open letter" written in February 1997 to the late president of the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities (FRJC), Dr. Cajal, Ion Coja, a Bucharest University philology professor, claimed that the January 1941 Bucharest pogrom had never taken place. Coja claimed that while Jews may have died during the January uprising against Antonescu, nobody had ever proven that the Iron Guard committed these or other crimes, including the assassination of Nicolae Iorga. In September 2003, Coja concluded that the Jewish victims of the Bucharest pogrom had been liquidated by their own co-religionists (dressed in the green shirts of the Legionnaires) who were communists serving the Soviet interest: to compromise the Iron Guard and end its partnership with Antonescu.

**Selective Negationism.** This discourse, like deflective negationism, stems from a self-exonerating nationalist strategy. Its more prominent representatives are, again, Buzatu and Coja. Throughout the 1990s, Buzatu, who edited or prefaced a number of volumes presenting the Iron Guard and its leader in a favorable light, was still willing to admit that the Guard had indulged in crimes but presented them as a Romanian national reaction to the rise of Bolshevism and its crimes, with which Jews

allegedly had been prominently associated. More recently, however, he has fully embraced Coja's selective negationism. In Bucharest in July 2001, Buzatu and Coja organized a symposium whose title, "Has there been a Holocaust in Romania?" was telling in itself. At the conclusion of this conference, Coja established the League for the Struggle against Anti-Romanianism and appointed himself chairman.

As illustrated by the implementation of governmental Emergency Ordinance no. 31 of March 13, 2002, selective negationism is sometimes encountered not only among extremist intellectuals or politicians, but also among state officials. The ordinance bans the activity of fascist-like organizations and the display of racist and xenophobic symbols as well as the cult of personalities found guilty in court of "crimes against peace and humanity," which includes Antonescu. The ordinance also prohibits the erection in public space (with the exception of museums or research institutions as part of research activities) of statues or plaques commemorating such people or naming streets or squares after them. Finally, Ordinance 31/2002 prohibits publicly denying the Holocaust and its consequences.

The fate of this ordinance remains uncertain. After it was submitted for approval to Parliament, MPs proposed various amendments that, if adopted, would dilute its effects. The main amendment, proposed by Senator Gheorghe Buzatu, defines the Holocaust as the "the systematic massive extermination of the Jewish population in Europe, organized by the Nazi authorities during the Second World War." In other words, by definition there was no Holocaust in Romania since the extermination of Jews there was not "organized by the Nazi authorities," but by Romanian authorities themselves. The amendment thus fits hand-in-glove into Buzatu's and his supporters' selective negationist conceptual framework, according to which the Holocaust was perpetrated elsewhere. If Parliament approves the ordinance under this formulation, the legislation becomes irrelevant. It should also be mentioned that the Wiesel Commission itself was set up as a consequence of a long controversy with international echoes, which was provoked by a June 2003 governmental communiqué that asserted no Holocaust had taken place "within Romania's borders."

Romanian expatriates have played a crucial role in reproducing and spreading negationist arguments both before and after 1989. It should be emphasized, however, that the "exile" community is not a compact and homogenous group whose main distinctive feature, as it were, would be found in negationism. The exile community has produced not only negationism-prone personalities, but also intellectuals whose contribution to revealing the true dimension of the crimes of the Legionnaires and Antonescu's regime has been remarkable.

Although the advocates of integral negationism were peripheral to the Romanian diaspora, they played a crucial role in linking domestic supporters of Romanian nationalist-communism with the networks of the exiled Romanian extreme-right, whose elementary texts they managed to popularize within the country.

Integral negationism was also “imported” from the West with the help of exiled Iron Guard members. For a while, the main publication embracing Legionary positions was the Timisoara-based *Gazeta de vest. Gazeta de vest*—as well as the Gordian publishing house, which specialized in Iron Guard literature and its dissemination—was financed by Iron Guardist Zaharia Marineasa. While *Gazeta de vest* and the rival Codreanu-wing *Miscarea* have since ceased publication, the Legionary monthly *Puncte cardinale* continues to appear regularly. In the meantime, two more Iron Guardist monthlies, *Permanente* and *Obiectiv legionar*, are being printed in Bucharest. The importance of these publications must not be exaggerated, but neither should their local and international influence be ignored. Noua Dreapta (the New Right), for example, is an extremist group established in 1994 that regularly issues the magazine *Maiastra* as well as an Internet publication also called *Noua Dreapta*. Even by extreme-right standards, the anti-Roma racism displayed by the Noua Dreapta group is shrill.

As mentioned above, comparative trivialization is a category apart from, yet nonetheless related to, negationism. To its conceptual scope, several additional clarifications must be made. First, the comparative methodology has been, and remains a basic instrument in historical studies and is naturally a legitimate methodology in the study of the Holocaust, as well. As early as the 1950s, and with increasing frequency over the past twenty years, numerous studies were published comparing the Holocaust with other genocidal phenomena—the communist atrocities in Ukraine and other parts of the former USSR and Asia, the Armenian Genocide perpetrated at the order of the Turkish authorities during World War I, as well as more recent genocides. On the other hand, postwar historiography has paradigmatically treated the Holocaust as an essentially unique phenomenon. There is by-and-large a consensus among important historians on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, although the criteria for this uniqueness are not the same for every scholar. Most of these historians agree that the specific difference between the Holocaust and other genocides rests in the “intended totality” of the Final Solution, which aimed at all Jews wherever they lived and made no exceptions (e.g., through collaboration or conversion of the “enemy” into a “New Man,” which was possible in the case of Communist repressions).

The intellectual and political profile of those who engage in comparative trivialization is highly diversified: negationists and extremists alongside personalities whose profile is democratic and whose reputation is otherwise excellent. The transactional comparison is often intertwined with deflection: indulging in semantic abuse, the negationists employ “Holocaust” as a linguistic construct to call for recognizing “the Holocaust against the Romanian people” perpetrated by the Jews or the “Red Holocaust” inflicted by them on mankind.

Three influential personalities of the Romanian exile recurrently use comparative trivialization formulations in essays and books published in Romania: Paul Goma, Monica Lovinescu, and Dorin Tudoran. One of the few anti-Communist dissidents forced into exile in the late 1970s, Goma has

produced several tracts in which he demands that the “Red Holocaust” perpetrated on the Romanian people with a significant Jewish contribution be acknowledged. The leitmotif of his well-publicized latest book, *The Red Week*, is rendered by the following quote: “The Red Holocaust, planned by them, *too*, began for us, Romanians, *one year earlier than theirs: [it started] on June 28, 1940*, and it is not over even today.” Goma unequivocally and repeatedly acknowledges Romanian responsibility and even a “collective guilt” for what he calls “the abominable pogrom in Iasi,” as well as for the deportations to Transnistria, yet he argues that “the truth forbidden for half a century” is that those atrocities were committed out of an urge to avenge, in circumstances specific to wartime, the earlier murders committed by the Jews. The book illustrates a discourse typical of comparative trivialization endeavors, but at the same time it evolves into a synthesis of negationism and antisemitism that can hardly be found elsewhere in a postcommunist Romanian-language opus.

The “monopoly on suffering” theme became even more prominent in Romania and in the Romanian diaspora after the publication of Stephane Courtois’ *Black Book of Communism*. Thus, in the second half of the 1990s, two Romanian exiles, Dorin Tudoran (a former courageous anticommunist dissident who lives in the United States) and Monica Lovinescu (who has lived in Paris since the immediate aftermath of the war) began applying to Romania the critique that Stephane Courtois and J.F. Revel aim at the refusal of the Western political and intellectual Left to condemn and critically explore communism with the same energy with which the Left denounces fascism.

Romania is just beginning to confront its own past and assume responsibility for it. Unavoidably, ambiguities persist at this stage, but there are indications that political and intellectual elites are somewhat more inclined to start coping with the country’s darker periods in its past than was the case a few years ago. The establishment of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania is proof in itself of a movement in that direction.

While in historiography selective negationism remains an important trait, a number of historians approach the Holocaust with professionalism and honesty. Serban Papacostea, for example, stands out for having reacted very early against attempts to rehabilitate Antonescu. Lucian Boia undertook a deconstruction of the myths of the Legion and Antonescu and stereotypes about Jews. The first Romanian historian to have dedicated an entire chapter to the fate of Romanian Jewry during the period of the Holocaust was Dinu C. Giurescu in *Romania in the Second World War*, published in 1999.

Moreover, specialized institutes for research on the history of the Holocaust have been established. Among them, special mention should be made of the Center for the Study of Jewish History in Romania, which acts under the aegis of the FJCR and has pioneered research on the Holocaust since 1990. Thus far, this institute has published five volumes of documents on this topic. Several research institutes that function within the Romanian Academy have organized scientific colloquia, and

remarkably, the Center for History and Military Theory Research (formerly a bastion of pro-Antonescu negationist historians) has been turned into a respectable research institution. Universities in Cluj, Bucharest, and Craiova have set up institutes or research centers specializing in Jewish history, and publications specializing in Jewish history and the Holocaust have come into being, as well. Professional journals edited at research institutes with established scholarly traditions have also started to open their pages to articles dealing with the tragedy of Jews and Roma during World War II. School textbooks are undergoing a process of revision and improvement, though much remains to be done in this respect and inaccuracies still abound. Publishing houses are translating a relatively large number of books on Jewish history, yet it must be mentioned that the bulk of these volumes are still put out by the FJCR publishing house, Hasefer. A young generation of historians, not yet very visible and largely concentrating for now on publishing studies on narrow topics, is gradually beginning to make its presence felt and to demonstrate that it is capable of tackling the Holocaust period from new perspectives.

Until now there has been only limited willingness to understand the history of the Jews of Romania as an integral part of Romanian history. Hopefully, acceptance of the Commission's report and recommendations will constitute a decisive step in the critical reassessment of Romania's past.