

ASSOCIATION OF THE ROMANIAN JEWS  
VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

# HOLOCAUST:

## SURVIVORS RESPOND

LIVIU BERIS – SURVIVOR OF TRANSNISTRIA

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# Contents

1. Liviu Beris – Survivor of Transnistria .....	3
2. What is your opinion about the so-called Holocaust in Romania? .....	4
3. What was worst: The CAUSE (the red week – summer of 1940) or the EFFECT? The truth about June 28 – July 3, 1940! (Please do not avoid the answer.) .....	12
4. What can you tell us about the “red year”? How and why did the Jews become the main executioners of the Soviet communist regime? .....	20
5. What do you think about the red Holocaust? .....	21
6. Isn't it true that Marshal Antonescu contributed, through the measures he ordered, to averting a Holocaust on the territory of Romania? .....	22
7. For me, Marshal Antonescu is a hero who fought for the freedom of the eastern Romanian territories, a great patriot who fought for the good of Romania. His attitude toward the Jews cannot eclipse his merits, cannot erase him from history. Why do you oppose the acknowledgement of these merits? .....	24
8. Do the Romanian people bear any blame for the fate of the Jews during the Holocaust? .....	31
9. What motivates the hatred of others (and not only Romanians) against Jews, and where does this hatred stem from; how did it endure over time, eventually culminating with the extermination policy? .....	33

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## Liviu Beris – Survivor of Transnistria

### **Of the time when Beasts ruled... ...and yet about Man**

I am a survivor of the deportations in Transnistria.

Of all the 1800 Jews deported in August 1941 from Herta, the place where I was born and grew up, only 25% returned. The others died of hunger, cold, typhus and typhoid fever, of the wickedness of their fellow-men and of the bullet.

The totalitarianism of the Antonescu government was shortly followed by the Communist totalitarianism after the end of the war.

Transnistria, the deportations of Jews, the pogroms – facts that are part of history – were not even mentioned by “History”. The following principle was applied: That which is not known and not publicized does not exist.

The implosion and eventual disappearance of the communist system enabled the onset of studies and access to archives, the revealing of certain documents and the rehabilitation of the historical truth. An important part was played by the testimonies obtained from survivors of this inferno and from non-Jewish witnesses of the respective events. These brought and continue to bring information about the atmosphere of those days, about the inter-human relationships, about the reactions of the various parties involved, about life and death situations which non-testimonial documents, dry by their very nature, could not adequately describe.

I am among those who, as a survivor, bears a double burden:

1. To preserve the memory of the innocent victims – discarded along the sides of the roads, buried in common graves, burned alive in warehouses that were set on fire, their ashes scattered and dispersed by the winds.

2. To expose these facts to the public just the way they happened, so that the generations of today and tomorrow may prevent tragedies of the kind that afflicted our generation.

That is why I have chosen to respond, as best I could, to the invitations to speak about the Holocaust in the territories under Romanian authority during the war – in front of students, teachers of History and Social Science, as well as in front of certain civic organizations.

To facilitate the understanding of various aspects, I have requested that the questions or comments from the audience be submitted in writing, with the signature being optional. This circumvents potential reservations or misgivings, and also avoids the formalism that can ensue when dealing with such complex and sensitive issues.

I will now proceed to address some of the questions submitted.

## **What is your opinion about the so-called Holocaust in Romania?**

...That is was not a so-called, but a real Holocaust of the Jews located in the territories under Antonescu's government during the Second World War, estimating over 270,000 casualties. And this is not just my opinion, it is a fact.

For the first time in history the Nazi Reich and its allies conceived, planned and systematically implemented, at state level, the extermination of an entire nation. And one of the Ten Commandments - **thou shalt not kill** – was transformed into its contrary, through orders of participation in a “criminal public service”. Being born a Jew was sufficient reason for one to be condemned to death.

The documents found in the archives prove this statement. Here are some extracts that highlight the “ethnic cleansing program’ and some of the actions of Antonescu's government.

***July 17<sup>th</sup> 1941***

***The meeting of the Council of Ministers<sup>1</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> A.S.R.I. : file 40010/11, page 36 from Lya Benjamin – *The Jewish Problem in the stenograms of the Council of Ministries*, Hasefer publishing house, Bucharest 1996(of which we will refer as : LB-Stenograms)

**Prof. Mihai Antonescu, state minister:**

*[...] We must cleanse the population. That's why Basarabia and Bucovina shall remind us of the Titus policy regarding certain populations of ethnic origin – and I can assure you that not only concerning Jews – [...] we will be applying a policy of total and violent removal of foreign elements.[...]*

## **July 8<sup>th</sup> 1941                      The meeting of the Council of Ministers<sup>1</sup>**

**Prof. Mihai Antonescu, vice-president of the Council of Ministers:**

*[...]With the risk of being misunderstood by some traditionalists that may still be among you, I stand for the forced migration of the entire Jewish element from Basarabia and Bucovina, which must be cast beyond our borders.[...]*

*I do not care if history will remember us as barbarians. [...]*

*[...] So I must ask you to be implacable. The philosophical kindness of man has no place here.*

*[...]If need be, fire the machineguns. [...]*

*I formally assume the responsibility and declare that there is no law. [...]*

*No law whatsoever. [...] Therefore no formalities, and full freedom. [...]*

## **October 6<sup>th</sup> 1941                      The Meeting of the Supply Council<sup>2</sup>**

**[...] Marshal Ion Antonescu, state leader:**

*[...] Regarding the Jews, I have reached the decision to definitively and totally remove them from these regions. This action is in progress. I still have approximately 40.000 Jews in Basarabia, which will be deported over the Dniester, and should circumstances allow it, beyond the Ural mountains. [...]*

*[...] So the Jewish issue is a matter that can be resolved for Basarabia in a few weeks and will be resolved for Bucovina as well. So, Mister Governor of Bucovina, you must be prepared for this measure.*

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<sup>1</sup> A.S.B. Fund P.C.M. – cabinet, file 475-1941, pages 103-128 from L.B. – Stenograms.

<sup>2</sup> A.S.B. Fund P.C.M. - Cabinet, file 484/1941, pages 9, 16 from L.B. - Stenograms

**Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> 1941**                      ***The Meeting of the Council of Ministers***<sup>1</sup>

*[...]Marshal Ion Antonescu, state leader: Iasi is very crowded.*

*Engineer C.Busila, Minister of Public Works: Have the kikes have left?*

*Marshal Ion Antonescu, state leader: For now, the kikes have not left Iasi. I have enough problems with those that I sent over the Bug River. I only know how many died under way.*

Relative to the ” reprisals” in Odessa

**Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> 1941**                      ***The meeting of the Council of Ministers  
with the governors of Basarabia, Bucovina  
and Transnistria***<sup>2</sup>

*Marshal Ion Antonescu, state leader: [...]*

*I ordered 200 Jews to be shot for each dead man and 100  
Jews to be shot for each wounded. Was this done?*

*Prof. Gh Alexianu, governor of Transnistria:*

*They were shot and hanged on the streets of Odessa. [...]*

*Marshal Ion Antonescu, state leader:*

*You must do so, for I answer to the country and to history. [...]*

**December 16<sup>th</sup> 1941**                      ***The meeting of the Council of Ministers  
with the governors of the free provinces***

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<sup>1</sup> A.S.B. Fund P.C.M. – Cabinet, file 477/1941, pages 61, 62, and 63,64,65,66,120,122,135 from L.B. – Stenograms

<sup>2</sup> A.S.B. Fund P.C.M. – Cabinet, file 477/1941, pages 10,11,52,53 from L.B. – Stenograms

**[...]Marshal Ion Antonescu, state leader:**

*I must ask you to immediately remove all the kikes from Odessa. Take them out of the city. [...]*

**Marshal Ion Antonescu [...]:**

*The Germans want to send all the Jews from Europe to Russia and place them in a certain region. But there is still time until the execution. What shall we do with them during this time? Wait for a decision from Berlin? [...]*

*Drive them in the catacombs, drive them in the Black Sea, just get them out of Odessa. I don't want to hear anything. I don't care if one hundred die, or one thousand, or if they all die. [...]*

Instigating the population to pogroms against Jews.

**Lt. Col. Al Ionescu, head of the second bureau (section II) of the Army Headquarters reports:<sup>1</sup>**

*In view of executing your telephone order received on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1941:*

*I have the honor to present the following plan: [...]*

*Implementation has already started as of the 9<sup>th</sup> of July.*

*The mission of these teams is to create an unfavorable atmosphere for the „Judaic” elements in the villages, thus making the population wanting to remove these elements herself by whatever means are warranted under the circumstances. By the time the Romanian troops arrive, the atmosphere must already be created and action already taken.*

And here we have a report<sup>2</sup> which shows the efficiency of one of the exterminations methods used by the Romanian authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.N Archives – 4<sup>th</sup> Army Collection, (from 11<sup>th</sup> of June 1941) Copy in USHMM, RG 25003, Role 7810144 from “The Holocaust and Romania”, The Institute of Political and Defense Studies publishing house, 2002 page 226.

<sup>2</sup> The International Committee for the Studying of the Holocaust in Romania, “Final Rapport”, Polirom Publishing House, 2005, pages 127 – Published by J.Ancel in “Holocaust and Romania” document 34b, page 283.

**November 13<sup>th</sup>, Golta 1941**

*Towards the Government in Transnistria*

*Tiraspol*

*I have the honor to report:*

*Upon taking over the district I have discovered several Jewish colonies, consisting of Jews gathered from the nearby villages, and mostly of those sent over the Dniester.*

*In the Gvozdavca county from the Liubashevca sector – a Romanian county – there were about 15,000, and in Krivoje Ozero and Bogdanovka about 1,500 each.*

*Typhus has ravaged the colonies in the Gvozdavca county and around 8,000 have died, including those who died of hunger.*

*[...] The ones from Krivoje Ozero were sent to Bogdanovka, where they were housed in the pig stables of the sovhoz<sup>1</sup>.*

*Prior to the arrival of the kike transport from Gvozdavca, about 9,000 kikes were sent from Odessa, so together with the ones already there today there are 11,000 kikes living in the stables of the sovhoz, which wouldn't even accommodate 7,000 pigs..*

*Today the mayor and the head of Sovhoz came to me, desperate because they were told that another 40.000 Jews were coming from Odessa.*

*As the sovhoz cannot receive them all, and those on the outside are killing those in the stables to take their place, and the police gendarmes can barely keep up with the supervision of the burials, and the water of the Bug is being used as drinking water, we're bound to have an epidemic in the entire region real soon.*

*They don't have the strength to work, and from the 300 brought to Golta for infrastructure improvements almost 200 have died, and other 50 are dying despite being relatively well cared for.*

*Most of them have tuberculosis, or suffer from dysentery and typhus.*

*To avoid an epidemic, we insistently request that you issue urgent orders to prevent further kike transports to our region.*

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<sup>1</sup> The term "sovhoz" describes a state farm in the former Soviet Union. (After the revolution in October 1917, a number of farms previously owned by feudal lords became state property under the new Soviet regime).



*I'm hoping to send the existing ones over the Bug, so soon they will enjoy completely clean air. I ask however that no more kike convoys be sent to infest this region.*

*Prefect*

*Lt. Col. Isopescu*

For a more detailed account, here are several extracts from the testimony of a survivor of the “kingdom of death” led by the prefect Isopescu. Skipping over the details of her forced migration from one camp to another, I will present a few aspects from the experiences of Liebe Havas Burihovici in the ghetto of Ismail and the camps of Domanovka and Bogdanovka in the Golta-Transnistria district.

**Extracts from the testimony of Mrs. Liebe Havas Burihovici, survivor of the deportations in Transnistria**

*[...] On June 21 [...] over the course of a few hours the army and the soviet administration had left Ismail.*

*[...] At dawn, beasts in uniforms broke down our front door and ordered us to pack a bare minimum of things in a few minutes. They assembled us in a convoy and took us to the antechamber of death: THE GHETTO!*

*[...] We were mistreated from the very first night, woken up countless times for inspection, pushed, shoved, and stepped on by their boots. They started spotting the new born babies. They made us form a circle (in all my years of deportation I have started to grasp the significance of our placement in a circle) and they played football in the middle with the little victim. Parts of what used to be their fun object were splattered on them, on us, they did not seem to mind the drops of blood on their faces, hands and uniforms. At certain hours, they came drunk, took young women from the group and raped them in front of us and their family.*

*[...] At dawn, with a brutality that had become reflex, they beat us up[...] ordered us to take what few possessions we had and drove us toward the outskirts of town.*

*[...] They ordered us to gather in formation. The road ahead of us, leading to an unknown destination, was paved with bodies, which outlined our path. [...] Those who staggered were shot.*

*[...] We walked almost continuously, we rarely stopped to take cover in dilapidated barns without roofs, just bare walls surrounding rotting bodies, the smell of which was asphyxiating.[...] I can't say how long it took us to reach the extermination camp called Domanovka. The camp consisted of burned houses, destroyed by the soviets before they evacuated. [...]*

*We were actually sleeping under the open sky, in the midst of the Russian winter at -40° Celsius. Piles of bodies everywhere, typhus victims everywhere, lice swarming around, scabies was commonplace, festering wounds crawling with maggots, typhoid fever. **The typhus spared no one.** [...] When someone died, the lice that covered him would instantly invade the neighboring body that was still warm. Myself, I had lice the size of bedbugs in each pore. Nothing would stop them from devouring one's flesh. I suffered from typhus, and as nourishment I had plenty of frozen droppings (**this story isn't fiction**). [...]*

*I had arrived in this camp during the mass executions. Without reprieve, day and night, wagons arrived where people were thrown one over the other so that more could fit in, and taken to places where, using their last ounces of strength, they were made to dig their own graves. Then they had to strip naked and stand facing the pit, after which the guns started firing, killing or merely wounding them. Be as it might, dead or still alive, their bodies were tossed into the pit.*

*The next step consisted of sprinkling some oil, setting everything on fire and covering it with just a few shovels of dirt. The fried flesh made us hungry. When all motion ceased, dogs came and tore off chunks of what just a short while ago was a human being, rather than a food item. **Hard to believe**, the ones among us who could still crawl toward the pit did the same thing. **A sort of cannibalism was being practiced.** It was too great a challenge to resist the smell of burning flesh, be it even HUMAN flesh.*

*[...] the transportation by wagons to the common pit was inefficient. [...] the executioners started showing up among us, arms in hand, and putting an end to our torment by shooting us on the spot, as many of us as they could.*

*I somehow recall it was January when my mother, who was sitting on the ground next to me, herself sick of typhus, was shot. I haven't seen any of us mourn our dead, everyone was waiting his turn. We couldn't even imagine that some will survive. [...]*

*I was young and wanted to live.[...] Subconsciously I started to realize when danger was near, when they were coming to shoot us. To escape, I would start crawling [...] and I would hid among the piles of bodies.*

*[...] Isopescu Modest was the prefect of Golta, and the second in command was Aristide Padure. Both were to be dreaded, but even more cruel was the chief of State Security, whose name unfortunately I cannot remember.[...]*

*During a triage performed by Padure and the chief of Security, [...] I ended up in the lot sent to the famous extermination camp at Bogdanovka.*

*[...] The Bogdanovka camp was situated on a hill, the former soviet regime was using it as a pig farm and it occupied a huge space. I think none of the deportees was ever able to cross it from one side to another: the camp was not guarded, but the effort to reach the top of the hill was enough.[...] When they got there, they would collapse anywhere possible, and what else could there be except corpses? Stiff corpses in various positions and other piles of corpses that had just recently taken their last breath. They were utterly naked, every bit of clothing that once covered them now served the living. Here too, same as in Domanovka, typhus was claiming lives without exception, it was an active collaborator of our exterminators. Another aggressive enemy we had were rats, which were the size of adult cats. Most deportees were powerless to defend themselves and the rats, implacable, were chewing various parts of their bodies. This had become their food source. During my exodus, in the many stables where I stopped, I saw rats that feasted on the bodies of living people who only moaned, unable to muster the strength to scream. No food rations, however small, were allocated to the deportees in Bogdanovka, and the famine was yielding results. Bogdanovka was surrounded by common graves where the victims of the shootings were placed, along with some who were not yet dead, but shortly found their harrowing end over there. [...]*

The witness proceeds to describe the events she went through and how she managed to be among the few hundred survivors from the tens of thousands who died in the “kingdom” of prefect Isopescu.

The dead have no voice, they cannot tell us how hell was brought on earth by certain ”humans”. The survivors, however, have this duty. Especially now, when the number of those who deny the existence of the Holocaust is on the rise, when they are becoming more and more aggressive, as if, by their denial, they are trying to kill the victims a second time.

I have referenced just a few of the numerous documents containing the decisions of the authorities which led to the Romanian Holocaust.

To avoid any possible confusion, I have to point out that the term “Romanian Holocaust” refers to the extermination of Jews in the territories under the authority of the Antonescu government during the respective period, regardless whether these regions (North of Bucovina, Basarabia and Transnistria) are currently part of Romania or part of other states. To offer a term of comparison: The German authorities are obviously responsible for the mass exterminations in the camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, although these were situated on Polish territory.

Of course the Holocaust in Romania had certain distinctive features:

- The extermination were conceived, organized and carried out by a sovereign country.
- The extermination consisted not only of systematic killing procedures, but also of deportations in conditions that lead to extermination.
- The Romanian policy regarding the “Jewish issue” was independent of the German policy, i.e., Ion Antonescu acted of his own will, favored of course by the historical context of Nazi influence and domination over most of Europe.
- The fact that marshal Antonescu, upon realizing that the war was almost lost, decided to stop the policy of extermination, to stop the deportations from the south of Transylvania and The Old Kingdom and even start the repatriation of deportees from Transnistria, proves that indeed he was acting independently.

In other words the Holocaust in the territories under Romanian authority started *when ordered* and unfolded until the moment it *was ordered* to stop.

**What was worst? The CAUSE (the red week – summer of 1940) or the EFFECT? The truth about June 28 – July 3, 1940!**

(Please do not avoid the answer)

As you can see I did not avoid it. It has been attempted to justify the extermination of Jews by depicting it as a “retaliatory action” of the military (during the liberation of Basarabia and Northern Bucovina in 1941) for the hostile attitude of the Jews towards the Romanian army, as the latter was

retreating from these territories in the summer of 1941 (28<sup>th</sup> of June – 3<sup>rd</sup> of July).

To clarify the report between the two elements in question, I will transpose them at individual level: One man steps on another man's foot (the CAUSE), and the latter pulls a knife and stabs the former through the heart (the EFFECT). He took his revenge! Which act do you think is worse?

The above illustrates the report between “the hostile attitude of the *Jews*” (note the indiscriminate generalization) from June 28 – July 3, 1940 and the acts of “military revenge”.

The gravity of these acts lies in the fact that they were carried out by an army, which represents a state and therefore has the obligation to respect an enemy who surrenders, regardless of any confrontation that may have occurred previously. But even more grave is the fact that the army, in this case, acted *upon command*, following orders from their commander-in-chief (see the extracts from the previous Holocaust question).

To shoot and kill indiscriminately unarmed, defenseless civilians without a trial, just because they were born from “certain” parents – what could be more heinous?

For those who did not live through these events, however, certain specifications are required.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1940, the Soviet Union gave Romania an ultimatum, requesting Romania's withdrawal from the regions of Basarabia and Northern Bucovina, which were to be annexed to the Soviet Union. Here are a few points of reference about the political situation in Europe at the time:

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1939, Nazi Germany signs a non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union – known as the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, by the names of the foreign affair ministers of the two countries – through which they divide their influence spheres in Europe.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1939, Nazi Germany invades Poland. In response, France and England declare war to Germany. The Second World War starts. The Soviet Union remains neutral, as a result of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact.

In a few weeks, the Polish army is defeated, Warsaw and the greater part of Poland is occupied by the Germans. The Soviet troupes occupy the east side of Poland, stopping at a pre-determined boundary line. It was obvious, especially to politicians, that these actions were based on a preexistent secret treaty between the two countries.

This was followed by “mutual assistance” treaties between the Soviet Union - on one hand - and Estonia (September 28, 1939), Latvia (October 5, 1939) and Lithuania (October 11, 1939) - on the other hand, followed by the occupation of these countries.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1940, Molotov raised the problem of Basarabia, “the annexation of which to Romania was never recognized by the Soviet Union”.

The above-mentioned facts indicate a clear Soviet threat to Romania, obvious even to the uninitiated.

The secret clauses of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact are known today. They address the distribution of interest zones between Germany and the Soviet Union, among which the surrender of certain Romanian territories to the Soviet Union. This was in fact the “CAUSE”. All that which followed were “EFFECTS”.

These were the circumstances under which Romania received the Soviet ultimatum on June 26, 1940.

The political leaders of Romania at that time, along with King Carol II, considered it impossible to win a military confrontation with the Soviet Union. They therefore accepted (after hesitations and debates that decisively influenced the events that followed) the conditions imposed by the Soviets, namely the surrender of the respective territories.

The surface of these territories measured 50,762 km<sup>2</sup> (of which Basarabia took up 44,500 km<sup>2</sup> and Northern Bucovina 6,262 km<sup>2</sup>.)<sup>1</sup>

The population of these territories was 3,776,000 people among which: 53.43% Romanians, 15.30% Ukrainians, 10.34% Russians, 7.27% Jews, 4.91% Bulgarians, 3.31% Germans and 5.12% others.<sup>2</sup>

The indecision of the Romanian leaders between the moment they received the ultimatum and the moment they accepted it, the severe Russian pressure under which the retreat of Romanian troops started (i.e., evacuation terms that were impossible to respect), the fact that the Soviet tanks overtook the retreating Romanian troops and instituted so-called “control points” in their path, and the serious consequences determined by this situation (incidents and collisions resulting in human casualties, arrests of Romanian officers which were humiliated in front of their own troupes, confiscations of military equipment, defections on the part of Romanian military personnel native to the surrendered territories, a poor organization of the retreat, and as a “last drop”, the hostile attitude of certain elements in the local population)

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<sup>1</sup> International Committee for the Holocaust Study in Romania, “Final Report”, Polirom Publishing house, 2005, page 74.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, page 74.

– all this rendered the Romanian retreat from Basarabia and Northern Bucovina a total failure, with hard-felt consequences for the Romanian army and the entire nation. [Please note: Subsequently, the “drop” and especially the “Jews” would come to bear the entire blame for these unfortunate events.]

The losses reported by the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Army at the end of the retreat were as follows : 233 officers, 26 sub-officers and 48,629 soldiers (of which 5 officers, 6 sub-officers and 42 soldiers were reported dead).<sup>1</sup>

The testimonies of refugees describing horrific scenes during the retreat, as well as the documents (telegrams, reports) transmitted by the military units, keep mentioning the word “Jews”. The collective accusations begin. The press of the time presents and amplifies them. Real and fictional facts are being mixed together, lies and rumors spread with lightning speed.

Here are just a few extracts from the archive documents <sup>2</sup>:

“In the Ungheni-Iasi county, 20 Soviet tanks arrived. Upon their arrival, the communists in the city, mostly Jewish, started to manifest hostility toward Romania, engaging in acts of violence against the army. There were shootings, dead and wounded.”

“The Jewish population from the Ungheni Village was very hostile, attacking the soldiers who in return used their weapons.”

“ Part of the Soviet tanks – most of which did not respect the occupation order – overtook and started attacking our troops while they were retreating, using the tanks as a means of transporting weapons to arm the Ukrainian population. Once armed, these started attacking our convoys, killing and robbing isolated soldiers that were passing by.[...]”

“ All villages were flying red flags, especially the Jews.”

“ The Jewish communist gangs in Chisinau robbed the defenseless refugees”<sup>3</sup>

“In Chisinau a gang of Jewish communists tried to kill the theology students. These escaped due to the intervention of a troop of gendarmes who fired their weapons.”

“[...] the lawyer Michael Flexor from Soroca, leading the Jewish gangs, occupied the police and city hall, and searched these buildings. The

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<sup>1</sup> International Committee for the Holocaust Study in Romania, “Final Report”, Polirom Publishing house, 2005, page 78.

<sup>2</sup> Alex Mihai Stoenecu : “ The Army, The Marshal and The Jews ( RAO publishing house, Intern. Publish. Co. Bucharest, 1998), page 80

<sup>3</sup> Idem, Page 82.

same man assassinated the lawyer Murafa and Eustatie Gabriel in front of the statue of General Poetas . At the prefect's office, the school-master Gh. Lupascu, ex prefect and deputy, spoke in support of the Soviet troops [...]. Also Petre Sfecla, president of the F.R.N. in Soroaca and schoolmasters Snop Alexandru and Cutubar Ion waved the red flag as the Soviet troops were approaching. [...] The service officials from the Lipnic station greeted the Soviet troupes with red flags. [...]"<sup>1</sup>

"In Cernauti, such elements shot the priest of the Catholic Church and a few guards from the penitentiary. [...]"<sup>2</sup>

"At the instructions of the Soviet troops, a minority of the military from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Romanian army deserted with the gear and ammunition. Afterwards they were organized in armed gangs and acted against their former units."<sup>3</sup>

" At Bolgrad, the communists were roaming the streets, wearing as a distinctive sign the Jewish star with 6 corners and a red ribbon."<sup>4</sup>

## MY OWN EXPERIENCE

As I said before, I was born in Herta and thus at the age of 12 and a half years I lived through some of these events. Herta was part of the old Dorohoi district, situated 15 km south of the old border with Austria-Hungary – i.e., 15 km south of Bucovina. The population consisted of Romanians and Jews.

On the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1940, we woke up with the Soviet tanks on the town's main street even though Herta was never really part of Bucovina. Everybody thought that they made an error and were going to retreat. A rumor spread that Lieutenant Boros was killed by a Soviet military and, while trying to defend his commanding officer, a Romanian Jewish soldier was also killed, whose name was Iancu Solomon. Their bodies were transported to Dorohoi and buried there.

No other incidents or fighting took place in Herta. The Soviet troops did not retreat and occupied the region for over a year. People were summoned in front of City Hall to listen to speeches regarding the good fortune that had befallen us. There were no robberies or any other mischief whatsoever.

And now, here's how the event is described in a scientific communiqué from the year 2000: "Indeed, numerous incidents took place at the Herta point in the Dorohoi district, due to the Soviet troops exceeding the boundary line. A Romanian lieutenant and corporal were shot by Jews

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<sup>1</sup> Idem, page 92

<sup>2</sup> Idem, page 93

<sup>3</sup> Idem page 93-94.

<sup>4</sup> Idem page 96



from the Herta village and the commander of the town's cavalry gave the order to shoot, casualties being registered on both sides, including among the Jews".<sup>1</sup>

The statement that "Jews from the Herta village shot a Romanian lieutenant and corporal" (the corporal probably being Iancu Solomon) is obviously false and requires no further comments. Moreover, had there been other deaths among the military, their names would have been mentioned in the official records of the time. Finally, as an eye witness of those events, I can confirm there were no other Jewish victims in the Herta village at that time.

However, "inadvertencies" can be found in other documents as well.

Thus, Vladimir Murafa – reportedly shot in front of General Poetas's statue in Soroca – resurfaces alive and unharmed, being listed among the participants to a requiem at the Antim monastery in the fall of 1940.<sup>2</sup>

The catholic priest (Georg Goebel) is listed in a monograph published by the Association of Germans from Bucovina, which indicates he was repatriated in the fall of 1940 to the Reich, where he died in 1955.<sup>3</sup>

The Archpriest from Nisiporeni, Ion Drajschi and Gheorghe Fotescu, priest from Tighina, were not murdered by Jews, being quoted in the press as participants to certain memorials and religious services in Bucharest, in the fall of 1940.

Referring to the 6 corner star on the arm badge, we must point out the adversity of the communists toward the Zionist Jews (who wanted to create a Jewish state) thus the confusion with the 5 corner star is very likely.

However, the question persists: Did the Jews participate in anti-Romanian manifestations in Basarabia and Northern Bucovina during the retreat in the fall of 1940?

A scientific analysis of the available data shows that *some Jews* did indeed participate in these manifestations, along with members of other ethnic groups. The generalization reflects the underlying bias, regardless of the population it refers to.

But what could possibly justify the unfriendly or even hostile attitude of an important segment of the region's population toward the Romanian authorities?

In reference to this subject, here is an extract from a letter written by Iuliu Maniu to Marshal Antonescu, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1941:

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<sup>1</sup> Cornel Grad: Limes 3-4/2000, page 9, document from the State Archives, Buzau Police, file 15/1940, v.f. 151

<sup>2</sup> Mihai Pelin, "Legend and Truth", page 87, Edart Publishing House, Bucharest 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Mihai Pelin, "Legend and Truth", page 109, Edart Publishing House, Bucharest 1994.

“[...] The two provinces were flooded by officials from the kingdom<sup>1</sup>, who didn't know the people. They tyrannized the population and caused much dissatisfaction. Of course, there were some nice people among them, but the bad ones compromised the good. They were the ones that gave the kingdom a bad name, and for the past two decades the provinces have grown apart instead of integrating harmoniously with the country. [...].”<sup>2</sup>

Alex Mihai Stoenescu points out: ”the desire for objectivity obliges me to state that among those “missing” (constituting the great losses of the retreat in 1940), a high number of defectors were discovered in 1941.”<sup>3</sup>

Is there any connection between Maniu's analysis and the statements of Alex Mihai Stoenescu? I think there is.

As far as the Jews are concerned, the situation was compounded by the “legalized” anti-Semitism instituted by the Goga-Cuza government (29<sup>th</sup> of December 1937 – 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1938) and continued under the royal dictatorship of Carol the II.. This is also the reason why some young Jews fell prey to communist influences. The dream of existing and cohabiting as equals with all others – as preached by “communist internationalism” – cost many of them dearly. Unfortunately the majority of Jews paid the same price, without ever having had the chance to dream.

The retreat and evacuation plans from May 1940, with the code names of “Mircea” and “Tudor” – supposedly secret plans which were however common knowledge – the Jews in the evacuated regions were prohibited from seeking refuge in other parts of Romania. What should the Jews have done? Cheer the fact that they were forbidden to choose? Anyway, this explains why there were so few Jews among the refugees.

The significant echo of these events among the Romanian population and army, the instillation of hostility and even hatred toward the entire Jewish population, shifted the accent away from the army's lack of training and equipment, as well as from the political errors of those in charge in the summer of 1940, proving how efficient the manipulation of masses can be.

The ongoing attempts to depict these “actions” as “acts of revenge”, despite definitive proof that they occurred in response to orders targeting the “purification” and “ethnic cleansing” of the terrain, are attempts to justify war crimes committed by an army against unarmed civilians.

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<sup>1</sup> Refers Romania, which at the time was a kingdom

<sup>2</sup> Gh. Buzau, Iasi B.A.I. 1990, page 265.

<sup>3</sup> Alex Mihai Stoenescu: “The Army, The Marshal and The Jews”, RAO Publishing House Intern. Publish. Bucharest, 1998, page 115.

Here are some extracts presented by Alex Mihai Stoenescu regarding the “actions” of a military unit.<sup>1</sup>

From the report of *Hunters Regiment nr. 6* – 20 July 1941:

- “At Sculeni, when the regiment was in position, there was constant signaling from the village to the Russians, and the result was that all our operations were hindered by the Russian artillery. Moreover, we had officers, sub-officers and soldiers who, rather than dying on the battle field, were shot in the back by the Jews, from houses or barns in the village. To solve this situation, I ordered Captain Stihi Ioan, our intelligence agent, to arrest and execute all the Jews from Sculeni.”
- “When the First Battalion of this regiment arrived at Gura Cainari, a group of 50-60 Jews were captured on the west side of the village. Lead by the villagers, we discovered guns and grenades of Russian origin in the possession of these Jews, for which reason I ordered their immediate execution.”
- “In the Marculesti village, while Captain Otel’s company was advancing, it was surrounded by the Russian army and by approximately 300 armed Jewish civilians, and suffered serious losses including the loss of Captain Otel Vasile, who was wounded and captured by the Jews, and who’s situation is currently unknown. When the Marculesti village was conquered, we captured a group of 400 Jews, men and women, among which 80 wounded, which proves that they fought against us as civilians. And this time I have ordered their execution in mass.”

I myself, as a child, witnessed events of this sort.

In Herta, after the entry of the Romanian troops in 1941, 132 civilians were executed indiscriminately. I don’t know what’s written in the report of the regiment that passed through Herta, but I was shocked reading some of the extracts from A. M. Stoenescu. Accusing civilians of arming themselves against a victorious army while the opposing army is hurriedly retreating, and reporting each time the successful liquidation of these civilians through orders of “mass execution” – what a performance in the art of reporting to one’s superior: “Mission accomplished”! “The revenge plan”, “the cleansing of the field” has been executed.

This was followed by the deportation of the Jews from Southern Bucovina and Dorohoi District, territories that were never under Soviet occupation.

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<sup>1</sup> Alex Mihai Stoenescu: “The Army, The Marshal and The Jews”, RAO Publishing House, Intern. Publish. Co. Bucharest, 1998, pages 291-292

In the euphoria of the first successes, the scope of the ethnic purification started to widen. And, as attested in the documents of the time, if the course of the war hadn't changed, the "purification" would have continued.

The real CAUSE for the surrender of the eastern Romanian territories was the pact signed between Germany and the Soviet Union, whereby the latter became the "GREAT GERMAN ALLY". The "EFFECT" is known: the mass exterminations of the Jews. And it's sad that today, various opinion-makers paint a false image of the situation during those times.

## **What can you tell us about the "red year"? How and why did the Jews become the main executioners of the Soviet communist regime?**

I know quite a lot about the "red year" especially since I spent that year in Herta, under Soviet occupation and I believe the information you have is erroneous.

"The Jews", generalization showing how vigorously the stereotypes and prejudices are engrained – were not the main "executioners of the Soviet regime" in the "red year". They suffered the nefarious consequences of the communist totalitarianism just like the rest of the population. Some of their main sources of sustenance – private trading and small workshops – were annihilated. But the influence of a population can be better expressed by their numbers in the lead segment of public affairs.

In his work, Alex Mihai Stoerescu points out that "[...] of all the communist leaders of Basarabia in 1940-1941, 505 were Romanian and only 69 were Jewish." In the first Soviet (Parliament) of the Moldavian Republic, formed in Basarabia after its separation from Romania, were "elected" 443 Romanians, 212 Russians, 96 Ukrainians and only 14 Jews.<sup>1</sup>

However, according to the available data, the percent of Jews deported to Siberia was 32.62% of the deportee total (compared to 7.27% Jews in the respective population).<sup>2</sup>

More relevant yet than these numbers is Marshal Antonescu's statement in the meeting of the Council of Ministers on November 16, 1943: "When we arrived there we found ourselves facing countless complaints that over 40,000 evil-doers from this provinces had become more

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<sup>1</sup>Alex Mihai Stoerescu: "The Army, The Marshal and The Jews", RAO Publishing House, Intern. Publish. Co. Bucharest, 1998, page 115.

<sup>2</sup> International Committee for the Holocaust Studies in Romania, "Final Report", Ed. Polirom, 2005, page 105.

*Russian than the Russians during the Soviet occupation, persecuting the Romanian population. The Romanian population demanded their punishment. I was faced with this problem and if the sentence would have been death, I would have created another 50,000 or 100,000 casualties. So I didn't want to punish them and I applied clemency, just as I did with the Legionnaires.”<sup>1</sup>*

This is how the myth about “the Jews being the executioners of the regime in the red year” looks in reality.

## **What do you think about the red Holocaust?**

In my opinion there was no such thing as the red Holocaust.

There were the “crimes of Communism or the “Communist Gulag” but not a Holocaust – red or communist – for the simple fact that the word Holocaust (no adjectives) refers to the extermination of Jews, conceived and implemented by Nazi Germany and her allies, representing the ultimate achievement of right wing totalitarianism.

Having Jewish parents or relatives was enough to get you condemned to death.

The communist totalitarianism can “boast” similar, but not identical “achievements”, which led to the death of millions of people.

However, the criteria applied were different, being based on social status (exploiter, bourgeois, kulak etc.) or political status (counter-revolutionary, enemy of the people). Communist totalitarianism even reached the point of excluding from humanity whomever it wanted, whenever it wanted and however it wanted, regardless of ethnic origin. The party, which was synonymous to the state, ruled by terror. All those considered to be a “threat” to the realization of the “new social order” were eliminated. The prisons and work camps were filled, while torture and horrendous detention conditions caused many to never return home to their families. The communist utopia, once in power, turned into a deadly utopia.

As a survivor of the Holocaust, as one who knows what it means to be condemned by a totalitarian state, I hold deep respect for the memory of the innocent victims of communist crimes and for the survivors of this nightmare.

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<sup>1</sup> Mihai Pelin, “Legend and Truth”, Edart Publishing House, Bucharest 1994, page 123.

Are there any differences between the two big homicides of the XX century? Of course there are – be it only the fact that at least theoretically (but also concretely) the potential victim of communism could avoid its tragic fate by accepting or at least pretending to accept the policy of the party, while the Jewish victims of Nazism had no such option.

But none of these homicides, none of these crimes against humanity, are “in competition” with each other or eliminating each other. They must be studied in order to understand the consequences of various types of totalitarianism. Their names can only be specific, just as the events they refer to, each terrifying in its own way.

### **Isn't it true that Marshal Ion Antonescu contributed, through the measures he ordered, to averting a Holocaust on the territory of Romania?**

- Referring to his “contribution”: Marshal Antonescu did not “contribute”, he decided, he gave the orders and those orders were carried out. Once in power, he assumed the position of “State Leader” (the equivalent of the German word Führer), which endowed him with unlimited power. His word was law.
- Referring to the report between Holocaust and territory: the famous Nazi mass extermination camps were located not in Germany, but on Polish territory. Nevertheless, the Holocaust of the European Jews, brought and exterminated in these camps, was a “German Holocaust” because it was carried out under German authority. Similarly, the extermination of the Jews in the territories under Romanian authority is a “Romanian Holocaust”, regardless if it took place in territories that were and still are Romanian (Southern Bucovina and the former Dorohoi district), territories that were but no longer are Romanian (Basarabia and Northern Bucovina), or territories that were not Romanian but were under Romanian authority during the war (Transnistria – the territory located between the rivers Dniester and Bug).

- The responsibility of Marshal Antonescu and his government for the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Jews under Romanian authority is very clear and was presented in the answer regarding “The Holocaust”.
- With regards to averting a Holocaust on Romanian territory: Marshal Antonescu initially approved the deportation of the Jews from Banat, Southern Transylvania and the Old Kingdom to the Nazi camps in Poland. Later, he revisited his decision and refused to implement these measures. He thereby saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews.
- How can we explain these two entirely opposite decisions, one of extermination and one of salvation? These decisions were taken at different moments in time. The extermination decision was taken in the first phase of the war, when the Marshal was certain of the invincibility of the Nazi Reich, considering himself an ally of the “Great Reich”. The decision to stop the Holocaust was taken at a moment when he envisioned the possibility of losing the war. Some extracts from the documents of the time support the above-mentioned:

***April 20<sup>th</sup> 1941***

***Meeting of the Council of Credit Adjustments<sup>1</sup>***

*[...]Marshal Antonescu, state leader: [...]*

*I am fighting to win this war, but it is possible that the democracies may win. And we know what democracy means: it means judeocracy [...]*

***November 17<sup>th</sup> 1943***

***Meeting of the Council of Ministers  
with the governors<sup>2</sup>***

*(on the agenda: repatriating the deported Jews from Transnistria)*

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<sup>1</sup> A.S.B Fund 103, microfilms, role 1-106, from L.B - Stenograms

<sup>2</sup> A.S.B. Fund P.C.M. – Cabinet, file 353/1943, files 385-387. 398-404, form L.B. – Stenograms.

*[...] Marshal Antonescu, state leader:*

*Therefore, regarding those at risk to be killed by Germans (the Jews from Transnistria – authors note), you must take all precautions and warn the Germans that I will tolerate no such thing, because in the end I will bear the blame for these horrible assassinations. And rather than let this happen, better get them out of there and bring them to this region (Bucovina – author’s note). [...]*

Even though these documents do not directly refer to the decision of denying the German requests for further deportations, they reflect the change in Marshal Antonescu’s position regarding the Jews.

The facts (and documents) confirm the high degree of independence of the Romanian policy in the Jewish matter, showing that Marshal Antonescu acted of his own free will, in the context of the Nazi domination in Europe.

In other words, when murders or measures that led to death were carried out, it happened “on command”, and when these actions were stopped, it also happened on “command”.

The same man, at two different moments in time, acted entirely differently. How should we regard him? Is he a murderer or is he a savior?

My answer is the following: To kill is a crime and always will be, not to kill is normal and therefore no special merit. What say you?

**For me, Marshal Antonescu is a hero who fought for the freedom of the eastern Romanian territories, a great patriot who fought for the good of Romania. His attitude towards the Jews cannot eclipse his merits, cannot erase him from history. Why do you oppose the acknowledgement of these merits?**

Opposing the acknowledgement of merits – especially historical merits – is indeed absurd. The question is whether the merits you speak of are real or just a myth. And here I am referring to the “merits” he earned as far as Romania and the Romanian people are concerned.

In a reply letter of Marshal Antonescu to the leader of the National Liberal Party, C.I.C. Bratianu, in March 1941, in which the Marshal rejects Bratianu’s “categorical recommendation not to engage the Romanian army



in military operations on the side of the Axis powers, regardless what promises these may extended”<sup>1</sup>, we find the following statement: “Good or bad, a policy can only be judged by its results”. And here I have to agree with Antonescu.

The result of his policy was a disaster for Romania. Engaging the country in war (against Bratianu’s advice), deploying the troops across the Dniester (against Maniu’s advice)<sup>2</sup>, the huge losses on the eastern front, the oil and other raw materials shipped to Germany for minimal prices (which oftentimes remained unpaid), followed by the soviet “occupation” and the war damage that had to be paid – this was the huge price Romania paid for the “merits” of Antonescu’s policy.

Here is an extract from a memorandum addressed to Hitler by the same Ion Antonescu regarding “Romania’s contribution to the war before the beginning of 1943”, which confirms these merits”.

Memorandum addressed by Marshal Ion Antonescu to Adolph Hitler during the visit on January 10-11, 1943

*[...] Trusting in the word of His Excellency, the Führer Adolph Hitler, in the diplomatic action and guidance given by Minister von Ribbentrop, the Romanian people have kept their word.*

*The losses of the Romanian people in this war are quite high: 286,000 (dead, missing, invalid and unfit for combat).*

*The number of those dismissed from the front: (wounded, etc) is 370,206 people, from which:*

- *12,750 officers dismissed from the front: out of these, 9118 are gone forever (dead, missing, unfit for duty)*
- *8,093 sub-officers dismissed from the front: out of these, 6,365 are gone forever (dead, missing, unfit for duty).*
- *349,636 troops, out of which 270,249 are gone forever (dead, missing, unfit for duty)*

*From 1941 to the present, Romania had 32 divisions employed in combat at all times, which represents its entire military potential.*

*Also, Romania supplied military equipment and resources for approximately 35-40 divisions, and lost the equivalent of military equipment for 25 divisions.*

*The graphs attached to this memorandum show the numeric losses and the grave situation of the Romanian army.*

*Meanwhile, Romania respected its financial agreements.*

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<sup>1</sup> Gh. Buzatu: Marshal Antonescu in the history of Romania, volume 1, Iasi, B.A.I. 1990, page 196-200.

<sup>2</sup> Idem page 260-267.

*Between 1940 and 1942, Romania provided to the Axis an export of 8,285,185 tons of oil, out of which 6,135,252 tons to Germany alone.*

*Its external trade today is almost exclusively with the Axis and mostly with Germany.*

*The graphs containing synoptic tables and a note regarding Romania's economic contribution – along with the notes sent previously and those deposited at the General Headquarters by the vice-president of the Council of Ministers on September 22, 1942 – show that Romania:*

*Not only is on the verge of depleting its oil reserves, due to an intensive production;*

*Not only financed this export for Germany, thereby incurring inflation;*

*But also suffered losses in excess of 35 billion lei due to the sale of oil at pre-war prices, even below the prices recommended by Oil-Pakt.*

*The royal government of Romania requests a detailed examination of this situation and the recognition of its economic sacrifice.*

*Also, although Romania had only committed to give 100 million lei per month for the military mission, it was obliged, due to repeated requests starting in the period preceding the war with Russia, to spend 35 billion lei toward financing the needs of the German army once it entered Romanian territory. And this without any formal agreement or guarantee – which is being discussed for the past two years.*

*The above facts have caused a state of serious inflation in Romania.*

*Finally, Romania has respected to the utmost its commitment of animal exports, cereals and other export items, the German-Romanian clearing account reaching today a credit in excess of 500 million Reich Marks (over 30 billion dollars) owed to Romania.*

*At the same time, the German exports to Romania decreased – and were transacted at high prices – although 87% of the external trade volume of Romania with Germany consists of oil which is fixed at pre-1940 prices, with insignificant increments as per Oil-Pakt.*

*Romania has received only raw materials, which were mostly utilized to produce weaponry that was sent to the front and lost.*

*Besides these war-related losses which exceed 250 billion lei, Romania lost over 35 billion lei from the execution of the Oil-Pakt, due to Germany's failure to respect the conditions regarding military equipment prices and delivery volume.*

*Although it had been convened that the military equipment delivered to Romania after January 1, 1942 and destined exclusively to the Russian front was to be charged to a separate account meant to be liquidated at the end of the war, with the Romanian debt being erased – in reality Romania was requested to guarantee the delivered equipment with treasury notes which eventually were converted to negotiable notes, and the plan for balancing the commercial budget now proposes introducing annuities for these loans, a breach of the previously convened terms regarding the military equipment credit.*

*Romania,*

*Continuing to intensify its production of oil in the sole interest of Germany and the war;*

*To sell oil at a discount price;*

*To finance the German military needs of approximately 6 billions per year, in addition to about 1.5 billion lei in newly formulated requests for aviation units;*

*And meanwhile continuing to only receive weaponry, very little merchandise, a scant amount of gold, foreign currency and participations, and – instead of goods which would facilitate the absorption of the market currency – only raw iron materials, is no doubt headed to a serious economical production crisis, and the inflation that occurred due to financing the German needs threatens to disrupt the entire apparatus of the state and its social order.*

*The attached graphs and economic/financial memorandum illustrate this danger.*

*Marshal Antonescu and the royal government of Romania firmly believe that this situation can be justly understood; that Romania deserves to receive aid, and that its loyal contribution and fulfilled commitment must invite the understanding of the Fuhrer and the support of the Great German Reich, through a serious examination of its economic and financial situation.<sup>1</sup>*

The question arises whether the marshal had any maneuvering room at the respective moment, whether he had any alternative to the policy he adopted. The documents of the time prove that he *did* have such an alternative, that he had been promised the return of the lost territories in the east without having to shed any Romanian blood, based solely on the oil and other raw materials necessary to the German war machine. The same documents also prove the unwillingness of the German High Command, in particular Goering and Hitler, to engage the Romanian army in the war against the Soviet Union. All one had to do was capitalize on this unwillingness. But to do so, one had to be a true statesman.

Here are some extracts that confirm the above-stated:

The war journal of general Franz Halder – referring to the Council Meeting at the German General Headquarters on March 17, 1941 in the presence of Adolph Hitler<sup>2</sup> – mentions the following:

*[...] From the Romanians we cannot expect anything.*

*[...] Antonescu grew his army instead of shrinking and improving it. The fate of the great German operative units cannot rely on the firmness of the great Romanian unities.*

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**162**

**NOTE**

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<sup>1</sup> V. Arimia, I. Ardeleanu, St. Lache (scientific coordinator Dr. Florin Constantiniu), “Antonescu –Hitler, letters and special meetings 1940-1944”, Cozia Publishing House 1991, volume 2, page 11,12,13.

<sup>2</sup> Franz Halder, “Memories of War”, Politic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972, page 139.

## REGARDING THE DIALOGUE

**from August 28, 1942 between D.M. Antonescu, vice-president of the Council, assisted by Governor Alexeanu and General Rottkirchen at the Council of Ministers**

*[...] at the meeting with Reich Marshal Göring in January 1941, we were told in categorical terms that the participation of the Romanian army in the war is not desired, being regarded as somewhat unprepared, and that the Romanian soldier would do best to stay home and function as an economic soldier in view of supplying the army.*

*We replied categorically that Romania refuses to receive any of her provinces, be it Bucovina or Basarabia, unless taken in battle and unless Romanian blood would flow to restore the honor of the People and forever cement our right to Bucovina and Basarabia. [...].*

*[...] When our troops reached the Dniester, and after glorious battles Bucovina and Basarabia reentered the national patrimony:*

*Marshal Antonescu contacted the Führer and assured him of Romania's loyalty and her intentions to continue the war to the complete annihilation of the dangerous enemy in the east.*

*There was no understanding at that time regarding Romania's participation in the war over the Dniester. No promises were made on either side, but trusting in the word of the Führer, we made a war of honor [...].*

*[...] In any case, Romania has made extraordinary sacrifices for this war, especially for its continuation.*

*It gave a huge quantity of oil, during the last months alone it gave 560.000 tons of oil.*

*At Germany's request, Romania gave away the fuel reserves of our aviation. Every last reserve, every resource we had, was given to Germany.*

*Today, Germany owes Romania a sum of 22 billion old lei. [...]<sup>1</sup>*

### ***The record of the discussion between the Führer and General Antonescu at Munich on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1941.***

**(Recorded by Paul Schmidt, Hitler's personal translator)**

*[...]As he (Antonescu) declared in previous visits, the Romanian people would be ready to march alongside the Axis to the death, having absolute trust in the sense of justice of the Führer. The Romanian people tied its history with that of Germany [...]. He knows that the most urgent task is to end the war and to do so requires a major undertaking in the east. He came here to make available to the Führer all of Romanian's auxiliary forces – military, political and social – required for the realization of this step.*

*Regarding the great event that is approaching, he (Antonescu) has reorganized his armed forces and developed his economical and financial resources. [...]*

*Contrary to the British custom, he (the Führer) was not planning to ask Antonescu for assistance.*

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Ancel: "Documents concerning the fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust", volume 9, The Beat Klarsfeld Foundation.

*[...] In response to a remark of the Führer, upon whether Romania was to join the war effort against Russia from the beginning or should remain neutral in hopes of a more sparing attitude of the Russians toward the Romanian territories, Antonescu replied that he himself wishes to fight from the first day. The Russians will bomb the oil refineries regardless whether Romania remained neutral, and “the Romanians would never forgive Antonescu for letting the army sit idle while German troops marched through the country against the Russians.”[...]*<sup>1</sup>

Convinced of the invincibility of Hitler’s Reich, Ion Antonescu implicated Romania in the world conflict, contrary to the advice he received (albeit he didn’t even ask for such advice), from experienced political people.

Even from a military point of view, the lucid analysis of the balance of powers was replaced with suppositions and the realistic odds with speculations. Here is an extract – from the minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers on September 5, 1941:

**September 5, 1941**

***The Meeting of the Council of Ministers  
with the governors***<sup>2</sup>

*[...] Marshal Ion Antonescu, state leader: Fellow ministers, due to circumstances you all know, my absence has been a long one. The war has lasted more than any of us expected, as far as our participation in this battle. This is because the Russians were much better prepared than we thought. [...]*

It follows that, barely 2½ months after the onset of the conflict, the strategist admits he miscalculated. But it was too late. Subsequently, the Romanian troops reached the bend of the river Don, Stalingrad and the Caucasus, and after the disaster at Stalingrad were accused by the Germans that the front was breached through their sector, causing the troops to be surrounded by the enemy. The humiliating treatment to which Romanian soldiers were subjected is depicted in a letter written by Ion Antonescu to Field Marshal von Manstein.

**The letter of Marshal Antonescu to Field Marshal von Manstein  
(Bucharest – December 9, 1942)**

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<sup>1</sup> V. Arimia, I. Ardeleanu, St. Lache (scientific coordinator Dr. Florin Constantiniu), “Antonescu – Hitler, letters and special meetings, 1940 -1944”, Cozia Publishing House 1991, volume 2, pages 93-107.

<sup>2</sup> A.S.B. Fund P.C.M. – Cabinet, file 476/1941, files 107-109, from L.B. – Stenograms.

*Field Marshal, Sir*

[...]

1. *Romania has offered almost the totality of her armed forces. [...] No one can ask from us more than we consent to give, considering that to this day there exists no convention between Germany and Romania, be it political or military.*

[...]

3. *The Romanian forces and second echelon were promised to the supreme command during the severe crisis traversed by the German army last winter, on the eastern front. We only asked in return that the Romanian units be equipped similar to the German ones and transported by train to the front. Promises were made, but not respected.*

- *the Romanian troops of the third army had to walk 500-600 km to reach the front line, while the German troops were brought by train to the railroad terminals. [...]*
- *the food, fortification materials, fuels, ammunition, materials for defense installations, etc. didn't even reach the promised number, not to mention the real needs. [...]*

[...]

5. *The success of the Russian offensive was therefore not due to the lack of efficiency of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Romanian armies, but to the carelessness of the Command of Army Group B, a wise selection by the Russians of the attack areas and the massive concentration of armed forces in uttermost secrecy.*

7. [...] *I was informed at the last minute that my soldiers who fought bravely are now being shot by your soldiers in the ambush at Stalingrad.*

[...] *I also received reports that the Romanian troops under German command are being mistreated. [...]*

8. [...] *I am also told that the German units are recklessly taking [...] horses from our troops and claiming them as their own, leaving our people on the road [...]; finally, I am being told that mister Holdt is treating our commanders with unacceptable brutality. [...]*<sup>1</sup>

This is why for us (and probably for many of those who survived the trials and humiliations on the eastern front) Marshal Ion Antonescu was a dictator who had a nefarious role in Romania's destiny. Like every other man, he was made of good and evil and his actions reflect this complexity of the character. He goes down in history, if only by the dramatic consequences of his actions paid for by an entire country in successive generations.

But those who fight to turn him into a "role model" are attributing him qualities which unfortunately he never had, and they forget (or want to forget) that in fighting for the establishment of such myth they are expressing their desire (conscious or unconscious) for dictatorship.

By the facts presented I have tried to synthesize the real "merits" of Marshal Ion Antonescu. Not only do we not oppose, but we consider it our

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<sup>1</sup> V. Arimia, I. Ardeleanu, St. Lache (scientific coordinator Dr. Florin Constantiniu), "Antonescu – Hitler, letters and special meetings, 1940 -1944", Cozia Publishing House 1991, volume 1, pages 199, 203, 204.

duty to the memory of the hundreds of thousands of victims – Romanians, Jews, Gypsies – to fight for the acknowledgement of those “merits”. The real merits, not the myths or legends.

## **Do the Romanian people bear any blame for the fate of the Jews during the Holocaust?**

Throughout a history of thousands of years the Jewish people have been the target of numerous collective accusations, such as deicide, ritual killings, poisoning fountains and spreading contagious diseases, to the point of being accused in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for simply “existing”.

The collective memory of the Jewish people, which has retained all these episodes, instinctively rejects the tendencies of collective accusation. The creation of the title “Righteous Among the Nations”, conferred by the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem to non-Jews that risked their own lives to save Jews during the Holocaust, demonstrates and accentuates the importance of individual responsibility for each action, be it good or evil.

An example in this sense is Traian Popovici, the ex-mayor of Cernauti who saved thousands of Jews.

We reproduce here a fragment from “Confession” (by Traian Popovici): “As far as I am concerned, the fact that I had the strength of resisting the current, of opposing it, of asserting my own will, of standing up to the powerful and being a true man, all this is not my merit. It’s the merit of all the generations of priests from which I descend and who taught me to love my fellow man, it’s the merit of all the teachers at Suceava high school, who raised me in the beautiful virtues of classicism and molded my soul in the glow of humanity, which tirelessly shapes man and distinguishes him from beast.”

Or “The call to save the Jews”, launched by the Greek-catholic bishop Iuliu Hossu on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1944, regarding the situation of the Jews in Northern Transylvania: “Our appeal goes out to you all, venerable brothers and beloved sons, to extend your help to the Jews. Not only in thought but also with your sacrifice, knowing there is no better deed we can do today than this Christian and brotherly gesture of help, out of warm human love. Our first priority at this time should be this act of assistance.”

Therefore, collectively accusing the Romanian people for the events that took place during the Holocaust would be nonsensical.

The responsibility is individual and belongs to Marshal Antonescu, his government, the civil and military authorities and those persons who answered “the call” and directly participated in the policy of extermination of the Jews during the Second World War.

Furthermore, collective accusations are nonsensical not only from a juridical standpoint, but also from a scientific standpoint. The variability inside each population can be readily perceived by anybody. Yet the fact that we’re different does not stop us from communicating with each other, from using our differences for reciprocal completion in various undertakings.

We live, love and contribute to shaping the next generation, which in turn will present a higher or lower degree of variability. We are – each population in part and humanity as a whole – a living embodiment of unity in diversity.

And this is because biological laws are statistical laws, in which the sequence of generations represents a continuous chain of extracting samples from samples, with the creation of each individual being equivalent to a single random sampling process. In other words, each one of us is the result of “selective choice” (by the parenting partners) and “random combination” (of the hereditary factors – the genes – passed on through the gametes).

This explains why from billions of people living on the face of the Earth, no one – not even brothers (except monozygotic twins) – are totally alike.

Each population contains people more or less tall, more or less beautiful, more or less intelligent – and the population average doesn’t tell us a lot about the individual. Thus, when interacting with an individual from a certain population, you are presented with the individuality of this person (qualities and defects) and not with the “labels”, i.e., the representations or prejudices linked with the respective population.

With each man coming into being, the world takes a chance. We are each unique. Inside each one of us, we can find that composite of power and frailty, impulses and goals, interests and ideals, vanity and modesty, black and white, and we are the result of this inner battle of opposing elements, a living representation of the unity of opposites. The outcome depends on what eventually surfaces and becomes manifest as a result of this inner struggle.

Man is not at the mercy of destiny, he also possesses free arbiter, in other words throughout the course of life he has the ability to choose.



The elements presented show that, even from a scientific standpoint, collective guilt does not exist. What clearly exists is the individual responsibility for each one of our actions.

**What motivates the hatred of others (and not only Romanians)  
against Jews, and where does this hatred stem from?  
How did it endure over time, eventually culminating  
with the extermination policy?**

The question refers to a particularly complex phenomenon and thus “the answer” implies several separate answers.

**a** – I shall start by quoting Ion Antonescu:

*April 16<sup>th</sup> 1941*

*Meeting of the Council of Ministers<sup>1</sup>*

*[...] General Ion Antonescu, state leader:*

*[...] we will have to kindle hatred in the Romanian people against the enemies of the nation. That's how I grew up, with hatred against Turks, Jews and Hungarians. This feeling of hatred against the country's enemies must be pushed to its ultimate limits. I will take this responsibility [...]*

Who “raised” and educated him, planting this seed of hatred which caught on and grew so strong in the future Marshal? Obviously the parents, grandparents, teachers and other “educators” did their part. But also the society he grew up in, the collective mentality of this society, constituted a major determinant factor, since it contributed to the “formation of the educators” and to the “development” and education of each previous generation. And going back through time along this thread, we reach the distant past in which the ancestors of all ethnicities were in the stage of “homo tribus”. The tribe and its people viewed the world as a battle field, and fought to keep their own territory in order to survive. Thus came into being the fear of the unknown, the fear of strangers, territorial marking and aggressiveness – all deeply rooted in tribal life.

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<sup>1</sup> A.S.B., Fund P.C.M. – Cabinet, file 474/1941, page 65, L.B. – Stenograms.

**b** – The various feelings – of hate, of love – are linked to life in society, to the relationships between people in the societal setting. This is simply due to the fact that, from a genetic standpoint, society is the cause and individuality the effect. For the formation of one (“the descendent”), two (“the parents”) are required. Thus different human populations come into being, and due to various degrees of reproductive isolation and socio-economical organization, differentiate from one another .

This led to the historical development of various nations, with various collective memories and mentalities, eventually forming specific cultures. And, just as the differences and complementarities between individuals in each population allow for the normal evolution and even survival of the respective population, the differences between populations and nations, the complementarity and communication avenues between them are the “norm” and allow for the evolution and even survival of humanity as a whole.

**c** – The Jews, one of the nations formed in ancient history, have come to embody an identity which survived the pre-Christian era. Deprived of their land as a result of the rebellions against the Roman Empire, scattered among other nations and progressing from the slave order to feudalism, from feudalism to capitalism, from capitalism to socialism (real or unreal, as it may be), the Jews traversed the space of Christianity and also that of Islamism, preserving their identity in each new ambience.

**d** – But, as they say, each touch leaves its blemish. As individuals interact with each other in society, each man confronts his fellow-man, each “I” confronts “the Other”. This can lead to possible conflicts (and there are so many!). Subsequently, feelings of frustration, envy and hate are spawned between individuals. At the same time, society is the means whereby the individual “finds” among his fellow-men what he himself lacks, and thus realizes himself.

The general need for “the other” becomes clear, to ensure the harmonious development of each individual. The more distinct, original and creative individualities in the composition of a society, the more viable the respective society and population. Differences are (or should be) a contribution and not a reason for enmity.

Problems of this type, analyzed at the level of populations or ethnicities, present the same aspects. The only difference is that at individual level, each one knows (or thinks he knows) who wronged him and directs his response (sentiments or action) at the respective person, whereas a crowd

usually does not know the precise origin of its suffering. And those in charge of the group (or exerting influence over it) will seek to direct the discontentment, the frustration of the crowd toward “others”. This happened in situations that ended in disasters, caused by actions of the respective leaders or by natural calamities such as epidemics (plague, cholera) or the loss of harvests due to adverse weather. As history shows, such cases were sometimes blamed on “witches”, but in the majority of cases they were blamed on “Jews”.

**e** – Why Jews? Because they came in handy and met all “requirements”. Regardless of the location, they were a minority group, set apart by their religion, garment, culture, practicing “niche” professions left vacant by the natives – in a word they were “the outsiders”, they were “the unknown”.

As we can see, factors generating prejudice (judgment before judging) were already in place. And how many prejudices haven’t been created and transmitted regarding this nation during their multi-millenary history?! Besides prejudice, we must also mention the inherent tensions, respectively the conflict germinating during each trade transaction (actual commerce, trading the product of craftsmen’ work, or even transactions of this type referring to the actual workforce).

In most cases, the contact between Jews and non-Jews was essentially limited to this: a meeting at the market place, at the village fair, at the small shop or workshop in town. Other than that, most would disregard all that was “different”. In particular, those who never succeeded on the social ladder would sometimes push prejudice to the point of finding comfort in the fact that “I’m a nobody, but at least I’m not a Jew”. Add to this the relative defenselessness of the minority group, and we come to understand why the Jews, by maintaining their identity, became a convenient target for the various frustrations of the majority population groups amidst which they lived through the course of time.

**f** – The Decalogue, offered in the Revelation at Mount Sinai, had and still has the mission to temper – not the surrounding nature – but the nature of man himself. At the same time, it is meant to forge the covenant whereby MAN may distinguish that which is allowed from that which is not – good from evil, humane from inhumane, moral behavior from lies, robbery, murder and wickedness.

Clear statements, a foundation for the courtesy of people everywhere: thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt respect your parents, thou

shalt believe in one God and one alone – or, synthesizing the essence of the mosaic religion in one sentence: “don’t do unto others that which you wouldn’t want done unto yourself”.

The reaction to this law? Hostility, first expressed in the Egyptian and then in the Greco-Roman world. The idolatry of Antiquity – a symbol of man’s enslavement by his own creation – manifested a categorical opposition toward “monotheism”, this “Jewish invention”, the belief in one God, transcendent and immanent, omnipresent yet nowhere materialized. This was compounded by the hostility generated by various simplistic, caricatural and false representations of “the other”, some of which have been perpetuated to this day.

A consequence of the irreconcilable opposition between monotheism and idolatry, pagan anti-Judaism created a series of myths among which the “infamous origin” (according to which Jews would be the descendents of lepers) or the “ritual killings” (when in fact Jews are prohibited by their religion to even consume animal blood).

The emergence of Christianity from Judaism and the conflict of doctrines that followed transformed pagan anti-Judaism into the Christian theological anti-Judaic discourse of ancient times, featuring representations such as “the Jews, refractory to the evangelical message”, “guilty of deicide”, “scattered through the world as divine punishment for killing Jesus”, myths that gained ground as Christianity spread, and especially when it became the official religion of the Roman Empire. From a historical standpoint, it should be pointed out that during the time of Jesus, when Israel belonged to the Roman Empire, about 70% of Jews lived outside Israel (in diasporas) and had no way of knowing Jesus. And as far as those in Israel are concerned, who was it that welcomed Jesus with praise upon his entrance in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? Were they not all Jews? And who were the first Christians, who were the first apostles that spread the word of Jesus? Were they not Jews? Collectively accusing an entire people of deicide, when 70% of them were not living in Israel at that time, when the rest of 30% were certainly not all living in Jerusalem in those days, and transmitting this representation for over 2000 years, this is truly a performance that shows the power of myths to transgress ages.

During the Middle Ages more calumnies appeared like “leister defilers”, “fountain poisoners” and “carriers of plague” – giving Erasmus of Rotterdam cause to affirm: “If the characteristic of a good Christian is to detest Jews, then we are all good Christians”.

In modern times some of these myths endured and other new ones were born: pseudo-scientific theories regarding the superiority of one race

and inferiority of others (the Jews, of course, placing last), the „Judeo-plutocracy”, „Judeo-Bolshevism”, or the Jewish conspiracy for world domination. How did all these emerge, and moreover, how did they spread so readily?

**g** – The emergence of certain groups from the native populations (oftentimes trained by the Jews themselves, initially as apprentices and later as employees or partners), which started engaging in the “niche” professions originally occupied by Jews (such as the distribution of goods and currency, certain crafts and “liberal professions”) led to a competition in which no means were spared to eliminate Jews from the market. In this competition, the theories promoting hatred against Jews, based on centuries of religious anti-Judaism, found a fertile terrain.

The racial theories developed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century alleged the existence of human races based on linguistic criteria. Even more – based on this theory, the myth of the Arian race was developed, a race supposedly superior to other human races. And who declared themselves Arian? Of course – the Germans, who are tall, blond, fair skinned and blue eyed. (Were they really all like that? Taking a look at the photographs of some Nazi leaders, such as Hitler, Himmler, Goebels, is sufficient to raise serious doubts in that regard). And according to the same theory, there was a Semitic race, which was inferior and included among others the Jews, speakers of a Semitic language, who had all defects imaginable. It would have sufficed to look at the diversity of Jewish faces from different parts of the world, to realize that the Jews are not a “race”. Based on the concept of “Semitic race”, Wilhelm Marr used the term “anti-Semitism” for the first time in 1879 to express hatred against Jews as a “race”. And if previously a Jew could renounce Judaism by being baptized, there was no way he could escape from the “Semitic race”. This is how racism developed. And from that point on, extermination based on racial criteria.

In the conditions of socio-economical crises, more and more members of society became subject to feelings of insecurity. When these expressed their fears triggered by the capitalist system, the Jew was presented to them as the capitalist exploiter (ignoring the fact that for every Jewish capitalist, there were hundreds of other impoverished Jews), and when they expressed their fears of communism, the Jew was presented as the intriguing communist (forgetting that for each Jewish communist there were thousands of other non-communist Jews).

This is the fertile terrain that spawned the myth of the “world-wide Jewish conspiracy”, and assured the success of the fake known as “The

Protocols of the Sion Elders”, which contributed to the dissemination of this myth.

**h** – The myth of the “world-wide Jewish conspiracy” presented in this book (as conceived by agents of the secret czarist police) takes the form of an international conference where an occult Jewish government devises a diabolical plot for world domination. Published in Russia as early as 1905, the book registered no success whatsoever.

After the victory of the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917, which caused the leading class in various country to feel threatened by such a perspective, the book was translated and published in almost all European countries and America, registering a huge success.

As far as the propaganda against bolshevism, the accusation that bolshevism is of Jewish origin assures complete “success”. Even though the mass of Jews did not participate in this revolution, the few Jews in the Bolshevik command sufficed to render all Jews “guilty”. Thus, the myth of “world domination” via “Judeo-bolshevism” achieved its goal.

When it was necessary, the other myth was also promptly produced – the myth of “Judeo-capitalism”, i.e., the attempt of the “great Jewish finance” to dominate the world.

Even though the falsehood of the “Protocols of the Sion Elders” was exposed as early as 1921 by the newspaper “The Times”, the fact that it was a double plagiarism (after a pamphlet written by a journalist – Maurice Joly – in 1864 against Napoleon III, and a German adventure novel from 1868 written by Herman Goedsche) did not curtail the success of the myth referring to the “world-wide Jewish conspiracy.” Along with racially based anti-Semitism, this myth contributed to the success of Nazism and to the extermination of millions of people simply because they were born Jews.

**i** – And what is the current situation? Anti-Semitism is once more on the rise, being used especially for political purposes. Many express surprise at the fact that anti-Semitism is possible in countries where no Jews are left. This surprise in itself reflects an erroneous judgment. It’s equivalent to affirming that, in fact, anti-Semitism is linked to Jews, that it’s a reaction to what Jews are doing or not doing, so that anti-Semitism would be somewhat understandable wherever Jews exist.

One of the reasons why anti-Semitism catches on so easily is that it’s an “ideology” which “explains it all” in a way accessible to everyone.

Starting from the idea that the Jews are the source of all evil, everything becomes explicable. The solution offered by anti-Semites was (and still is) simplistic, just as their ideology. Through the disappearance of Jews, all problems would be solved. But was it really that way? Let's take Poland, for instance, where as a result of the Holocaust, all Jews practically disappeared (there are about 5,000 left from over 3 millions previously). Even now, after the fall of communism, after debts of billions of dollars were forgiven by the Occidental countries, did poverty and the poor disappear from Poland? Did corruption and the corrupt, theft and thieves, drunkenness and drunkards disappear? Together with the Jews, have the eternal human vices (which sadly affect us, too) such as hatred, envy, aggressiveness, opportunism, indifference, greed for money and power and so many more, disappeared from Poland? A careful review of the country's situation demonstrates that Polish society is confronted with the same problems present in all societies (with or without Jews). But let us take a look at Japan, a country which never had any Jews. The same problems occur there as well, they also have their corrupt, their mafiosi – without any possibility of blaming the Jews. And even in Romania, where only about 7,000 Jews are left from over 750,000 present before the war, did Romanians become richer, does justice function better, did all the evil disappear after the departure of the Jews – as preached by anti-Semites?

Life infirmed the simplistic solution proposed to the complex problems of society. But do you think that anti-Semites became less anti-Semitic? Did political anti-Semitism reach the conclusion that problems had to be approached in an entirely different manner? Of course not...

Perhaps their way of thinking is better illustrated by a joke from the years 1938-1939, when Spain was affected by a fierce civil war between the left and right wing factions. As two French anti-Semites discuss the events, one expresses his outrage about the fact that Spaniards are killing each other, and right away he comes up with the cause: the Jews are to blame! Okay, okay, replies the other one, but in Spain there are no more Jews ever since they were expelled in 1492. To which the first one replies: "It's still their fault – had they been there, both sides would have fought them rather than fighting each other."

And, even if the communist danger is no longer there, new reasons for frustration constantly occur. The latest one is "globalization". During recent times, few concepts have fueled more controversies and hatred in the world than "globalization". Communication – increasingly faster and diverse – connects all corners of the world, turning everybody into neighbors (even if not "contemporaries"). And together with this, goods, services, people,

ideas, felonies, pollution and contagious diseases, good and evil are overflowing the national frontiers. Eroding the traditional concept of sovereignty, the above-mentioned situation has come to disrupt even public institutions created exclusively for local and national purposes. And as often is the case, prior to studying the causes, some look for a scapegoat.

Many “anti-globalists” regard the U.S.A. as “the headquarters” of the globalization movement. And what else do they discover? That the U.S.A. also has a “great Jewish finance”, which would rule the country and thereby attempt to rule the world. So there it is again, the “world-wide Jewish conspiracy”. The scapegoat has been found. A simple solution for highly complex problems, and especially, a solution readily accessible to the masses.

Even if among the leaders of the USA, elected by democratic vote, there are some who are Jewish, it is clear to anyone with a shred of common sense that the leaders of the USA are not all Jews. Furthermore, do the Jews in various leadership position represent the Jewish nation, or the American political group they belong to? However, “collective accusations” – especially those directed at the Jews – have proven so productive over time, that they are now being re-enacted on a different level.

Brigades of “nostalgics” for whom the future lies in the past, praise yesterday as opposed to the future – by definition uncertain and incomplete. In the world we live in, we are sometimes confronted with imbalances, attempts at synchronization that may lead to further imbalances, rapid shifts in the level of knowledge (with information often becoming obsolete very shortly after its delivery), in the level of education, of the relationships between workforce and workplace, and in general between individual and society. All of the above cause a sentiment of insecurity, easily exploitable by “nostalgics”. Which is exactly what they do. They forget to mention, however, that in a world where one of the greatest riches is knowledge, despite the fact that the global population doubled, lifespan – including that in the third world countries – increased by 42% in the last 50 years (from 1950-1955 to 2000-2005). At the same time, U.N. reports stressing the horrors of poverty in the contemporary world, show however that the increased lifespan did not cause an increase in poverty, that the proportion of people living in poverty dropped faster during the last 50 years than over the previous 500 years.

Many things change in this world. Jews do not have any “special merits” in that regard. But the reverse is just as true. Jews are not responsible for the imbalances that occur. In fact, anti-Semitism is similar to a disease affecting non-Jews, the pains of which are endured by Jews. Therefore,



“non-Jewish” doctors may have the best chances of curing this “malady”. And they can utilize the most dangerous weapon in the arsenal, i.e., they can resort to the truth. If only in self-defense, democrats should be opposing anti-Semitism. All too often we forget the following: That which starts out with hatred against Jews, may continue with the detestation of all that is different: thinking, faith, origin, attitude. Indeed, throughout history man has registered numerous victories over the nature surrounding him, but too few over his own nature. This is a “niche” that remains almost untouched. And much depends on it in the future.

**j** – When watching a game of soccer on TV, we may notice besides the regular spectators, the fan groups of the two teams. As a rule they sit together and support their favorite team, but at times they may engage in reciprocal invectives and foul language, and this verbal abuse sometimes escalates into a physical fight. The hostility between the two groups, once in place, is usually maintained beyond the duration of the game, it generates prejudice and aggressive behavior, proving that we are dealing with a lasting reaction. Moreover, this proves that negative stereotypes can be formed even in the absence of real differences between human groups.

The conflict is only partially resolved when we introduce into the equation an overriding common goal – for the sake of our example, a game of the national soccer team with the representative of another country. In other words, only when the situation of “us” versus “them” evolves into a new situation where both groups have merged into a joint super-group, becoming “ALL OF US”. And please note the fact that our example deals with prejudice and discrimination of *recent* origin, motivated only by the loyalty and support for a certain sports team, yet ultimately resulting in hostility versus one or more other sports teams. The problems becomes much more complex when it comes to prejudices and discrimination instituted over the course of millennia, like the ones referring to the Jews, which were succinctly addressed in this presentation. It is these prejudices, deeply rooted in the collective mentality of the native populations that explain (but do not justify) why anti-Semitism caught on (and still catches on) so easily.

Naturally, there are behavioral differences between certain populations or human groups. Inter-group conflicts and discrimination are to this day one of the major social struggles that affects humanity. Knowledge is one of the main remedies available. It can play the role of a vaccine in preventing a contagious disease. It can also enable the assimilation of the Helvetic spirit, of differences that unite rather than autonomies that exclude.

To turn this dream into reality, we as individuals, as members of various populations have to overcome our fear of confronting the dark side in ourselves, the envy, repressed desires, frustrations, susceptibilities, aggression and other negative aspects stigmatized by ourselves and which we tend to deflect toward the outside world. We create our enemies; our aversion for ourselves is directed toward them, they become our victims.

Overcoming this state of things involves identification, understanding, acceptance and reconciliation of the conflicting parts within us. A person that accepts himself or herself as a whole (good and bad included) does not cast shadows on the world. Once we have reached that stage, perhaps we will be able to see the individual in our interlocutor, rather than the “label” plastered on this forehead by prejudices against the group he belongs to.

Is such an approach possible, when dealing with problems so complex? Why not? After all, pessimism has never won a war in history. Moreover, it is said that old age starts when dreams disappear. And I am only 80 years old.

In this series of answers to your questions, I have actually spoken about “*my people, your neighbors*”. However, perhaps the best-suited ending in this regard would be to quote the monologue of Shylock from Shakespeare’s play “The Merchant of Venice” (3<sup>rd</sup> act, scene 1):

“I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?”

And might I add, have Jews not made their contribution, just like every other nation, to the current level of civilization and culture reached by mankind?