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THE TREATMENT OF THE JEWS OF BUKOVINA BY THE SOVIET AND ROMANIAN ADMINISTRATIONS IN 1940–1944

At the time of the 1930 Romanian census, approximately 92,400 Jews lived in Bukovina, comprising 10.8% of the total population of the province. The great majority of Bukovinian Jews (about 68,400, or 73.9%) resided in the cities, where they formed approximately 30% of the total urban population. Some 42,600 Jews lived in Cernăuți (Chernivtsi) alone, formed 37.9% of the city's population. Jews were thus by far the most heavily urbanized

Selected parts of the article were published in: Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). © 2009 Woodrow Wilson Center Press. Reprinted with permission of The Johns Hopkins University Press.

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ethnic group in Bukovina. At that time, only 26.7% of all residents of the province lived in the cities; among local Romanians and Ukrainians—the two most numerous ethnic groups throughout the region as a whole—the shares of urbanites were 19.8% and 13.4%, respectively. Among Germans—the second most economically-developed group—that share was 44.3%.¹

The Jews of Bukovina played an important role in the regional economy and tended to be concentrated in relatively modern occupations: they comprised about 35% of all industrial workers and more than 17% of workers in transport businesses, and managed more than 66% of credit extension operations. Jews owned a substantial part of the lumber industry, a pillar of the Bukovinian economy. They were also strongly represented among lawyers, doctors, and other educated professionals. A great majority of these people claimed Yiddish as their mother tongue, but many, especially the educated, preferred to use German in their everyday life and generally were seen as bearers of German culture.²

According to the 1930 census, an absolute majority of Bukovinian Jews—approximately 72,000—lived in the province's northern part, which under joint Soviet and German pressure was ceded by Romania to the Soviet Union in late June to early July 1941. That population included about 2,000 Jews from the Herța *plasă* (district) which had belonged to the historical province of Moldova, not Bukovina; Herța *plasă* together with northern Bukovina was occupied by the Soviets; it now forms the Gertsaevskiy raion of the Chernivtsi oblast' in Ukraine.³

The Jewish population of Bukovina and of Greater Romania as a whole came under intense antisemitic pressure in the second half of the 1930s, in conjunction with an exponential growth in the popularity of Romanian right-wing nationalist and antisemitic movements, as well as German Nazism's increasing appeal among Romanian youth. In particular, the two most influential

¹ For an analysis of Bukovinian demography in 1930 and 1940–41, see Romanian chief statistician Sabin Manuilă's October 31, 1941 report in the RGVA, 492/1/12, pp. 19–34, esp. annexes pp. 26ff.

² See DANIC PCM-CM, 397/1940, USHMM Archives, RG-25.012M, reel 1, p. 35; and Mariana Hausleitner, *Die Rumänisierung in der Bukowina: Die Durchsetzung des nationalstaatlichen Anspruchs Großrumäniens, 1918–1944* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2001), 40–49, 187–196.

³ DANIC PCM-CM, 397/1940, p. 30.

right-wing extremist parties—Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's Iron Guard (officially called the "All for the Nation" Party, also known as the Legionaries) and Alexandru C. Cuza's National Christian Party—made antisemitism the central plank of their propaganda. For a short period in November 1937 to February 1938 when the NCP headed a (minority) government, antisemitism was an integral part of the Romanian official ideology.⁴

Visceral right-wing nationalism and antisemitism were not confined to the parties of ethnic Romanians. With the growth of influence of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists among the ethnic Ukrainians of Bukovina, especially the younger generation, ethnic nationalism and antisemitism spread in this milieu as well.⁵ According to Romanian data, Ukrainians comprised about 28% of the total population in Bukovina as a whole, and slightly more than 50% in its northern part. According to Mariana Hausleitner, the Ukrainians of northern Bukovina were the most persecuted minority in Greater Romania during the bulk of the interwar period until late 1930s, when this "privilege" was conferred upon the Jews. As a result, Ukrainian support for Romanian left-wing and left-of-center parties steadily deteriorated while they increasingly linked their hopes for a better future

⁴ Of the substantial scholarly literature on Romanian antisemitic movements and parties, some of the most important publications include: Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Armin Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien: Soziale Bewegung und politisch Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum problem des internationalen Faschismus* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986); Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, translated from the Romanian by Charles Kormos (New York: Hebrew University of Jerusalem by Pergamon Press, 1991); Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci: Extrema dreapta românească* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației culturale române, 1995); Eugen Weber, "Romania," in *The European Right: A Historical Profile*, ed. Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965), 501–574; and Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României. Problema evreească*, vol. 1, part 1 (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 2001). On the National Christian Party government see Paul Shapiro, "Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania: National Christian Party in Power, December 1937 to February 1938," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 8, no. 1 (Spring 1974), 45–88. On antisemitic movements in Bukovina, see Mariana Hausleitner, *Die Rumänisierung in der Bukowina* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001), 207–215, 250–264.

⁵ Hausleitner, 232, 254, 266–275.

to the project for an independent Ukrainian state. This movement was especially powerful among the Ukrainians of neighboring Galicia. As historian John-Paul Himka has recently argued, by the late 1930s the Ukrainian nationalist movement in Galicia had undergone a pronounced radicalization, becoming increasingly exclusivist in accordance with the dominant trend of nationalism at the time in Central Europe: “The language became more violent, the ideology more violent, the political practice more violent. Many of the same impulses that drove the Iron Guard in Romania and Ustaše in Yugoslavia also drove interwar Galicia Ukrainian nationalism.”⁶

Romanian officials suspected all Jews of pro-Communist sympathies and considered them potential traitors to the Romanian state. Given the widespread antisemitism and official discrimination of minorities—particularly Jews—in all sections of society in Greater Romania, it is not surprising that some Bukovinian Jews leaned to the left, but to see them all as communists is absurd. In fact, the Communist Party of Romania was such a small and insignificant force (only about one thousand members for the whole country) that even if all its members were Jews (which they were not), they still would amount to only a negligible percentage of the Romanian Jewish minority.⁷

⁶ John-Paul Himka, *The Basic Identity Formation in Ukraine: A Typology*. The paper presented at the 37th national convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Salt Lake City, November 2005, p. 10. I thank Professor Himka for the permission to cite this paper. See also his “Ukrainian Collaboration in the Extermination of Jews During the Second World War: Sorting Out the Long-Term and Conjunctural Factors,” in *The Fate of the European Jews, 1939-1945: Continuity or Contingency?*, ed. Jonathan Frankel (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 170–189. On the strong antisemitic stream in the Ukrainian nationalist movement during World War II see Karel C. Berkhoff and Marco Carynnyk, “The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Its Attitude toward Germans and Jews: Iaroslav Stets’ko’s 1941 Zhyttepys,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 22, nos. 3–4 (December 1999), 149–184. On the same topic see also very persuasive analysis in Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 142–153; idem., *Sketches from a Civil War: A Polish Artist’s Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 75–77, 157–158, 185–187; idem., “The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing, 1943,” *Past & Present*, 179 (May 2003), 203–208.

⁷ According to Vladimir Tismaneanu, the foremost historian of communism in Romania, the overall number of the Romanian Communist Party’s members during the most of 1920s and 1930s was about 1,000; see idem., *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political*

The Soviet takeover of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in June 1940 was carried out under conditions extremely humiliating to the Romanians, in particular to the army troops who were forced to relocate to the country's interior under rather chaotic conditions (no evacuation plans had been ever drawn up since the army was expected to fight for the national territory, not to abandon it) and heavy Soviet pressure. It was at this time that the Romanian press accused in the harshest and most explicit terms the Jews from the ceded territories of attacking Romanian troops from behind, looting their properties, arresting retreating troops and officials, insulting soldiers and civilians, and even firing unto army units. Most notoriously, influential historian and publicist Nicolae Iorga exclaimed in his newspaper *Neamul Românesc* in a July 6, 1940 article titled "Why such hatred?":

Documents and materials are being collected and brought together ... official statements and declarations are being taken under oath. High-ranking magistrates and brave officers who risked their lives to defend ... the withdrawal and exodus of the Romanians, saw with their own eyes innumerable acts of savagery, killings of innocents, rock-throwing, and jeering. All these infamous and criminal gestures were perpetrated by the furious Jewry, whose waves of hatred broke loose as if some unseen order had been given. Why such hatred?⁸

Significantly, as these lines were being written, the Army was collecting documents that precluded sweeping generalizations such as "the innumerable killings of innocents": according to the Romanian General Staff's report of July 1940, during the withdrawal the troops lost a total of five officers, of whom two committed suicide, two were shot by the Soviets, and one was shot dead by the (Romanians?) "while running."⁹ But press reports such as

History of Romanian Communism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 39. Hausleitner shows that social-democrats were more influential among Bukovinian Jews than communists, see idem., *Die Rumänisierung in der Bukowina*, 233–245.

⁸ Published in Ioan Scurtu and Constantin Hlihor, *Anul 1940: Drama românilor de peste Nistru* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei de Înalte Studii Militare, 1992), 150.

⁹ See document no. 106 in *Anul 1940: Armata română de la ultimatum la dictat. Documente*, vol. 1, ed. Florica Dobre, Vasilica Manea, and Lenuța Nicolescu (Bucharest:

Iorga's quoted were already creating a "powerful antisemitic movement" in the country.¹⁰

The stereotype of the Jew as an irreconcilable and perfidious enemy of the Romanian nation found its full-blown expression in these publications. But reality was otherwise. As documented by the army units reports collected by the Romanian General Staff, the withdrawing Romanian army was attacked and humiliated by people of all ethnicities, including ethnic Romanians, not only Jews. On the other hand, not all Jews participated in the anti-Romanian demonstrations. Besides, fewer Jews were involved in anti-Romanian incidents in Bukovina than in Bessarabia (which was part of the Russian empire in 1812-1918 and in which many Jews were Russian-speaking). Finally, while some Jews, especially younger people, did rejoice at seeing the Romanians' withdrawal—hardly a surprising development given the rising antisemitism of recent years—their demonstrations were much less violent than the media reports claimed, and no proven acts of murder of retreating Romanians were ever recorded.¹¹

Some Romanian senior officers saw the events accompanying the withdrawal as a useful opportunity to strengthen their troops' antisemitic feelings, which they considered an indispensable part of Romanian patriotism. Thus, General Mihail Racovița of the 2nd Cavalry Division reported in early July 1940 that he and other commanders were eager to "form and exploit ...

Editura Europa Nova, 2000), 265. More recent research on the fate of the alleged victims of Jewish violence corroborates these findings; see Mihail Pelin, *Legenda și adevăr* (Bucharest: Edart, 1994).

¹⁰ See, for example, the diary of Ion Hudița, an influential member of the opposition National Peasants' Party, which, though suppressed by a royal decree, in fact continued to function; idem., ed. by Dan Berindei, *Jurnal politic: Ianuarie 1940–6 septembrie 1940* (Iași: Institutul European, 1998), 231. Hudița noted conversations on the train in which he traveled during these days; his fellow travelers unquestioningly believed media reports such as this.

¹¹ These issues are analyzed in more detail in Vladimir Solonari, "'Model Province': Explaining the Holocaust of Bessarabian and Bukovinian Jewry," *Nationalities Papers*, 34, no. 4 (September 2006), 485–487. In a July 2003 interview granted to the author, one survivor from Bessarabia, Tina Grecu (Ester), explicitly mentioned that Jewish youth tended to be pro-Soviet and demonstrated their sympathies in 1940, while older people were wary of their eventual fate under the Soviets. Her parents fled west of the Pruth River; she decided to stay.

this legitimate antisemitic current in order to cultivate rage against the Soviet army, which had permitted Judaic debauchery.”¹²

With the advent of Soviet administration in Bessarabia and Bukovina, those local residents (probably a small minority) who had tied their future to the Soviet regime were quickly disabused of their illusions. Persecution began in the first months of Soviet rule and lasted until its final days in early July 1941. All political activists belonging to non-Communist parties were subject to arrest, and former Romanian state functionaries, intellectuals, and those branded as “landlords and capitalist elements” were subject to deportation. Jews alongside other ethnic groups were victims of these repressions. In particular, leading Zionists, Social Democrats from the *Arbeitsbund* union of Jewish workers, and respected journalists were arrested and deported. In addition, Jewish entrepreneurs and property-owners had their businesses confiscated and nationalized. Though Jewish newspapers, theaters, and schools were allowed to remain in operation, the content of their production was heavily controlled by the Soviet state. Some of the properties of Jewish organizations were also nationalized—for example, the Jewish National House in Cernăuți became the House of Red Army Officers. Moreover, former members of the local communist underground, few though they were, were not promoted into positions of authority by the new regime; rather, cadres were imported from eastern regions of Ukraine to administer the newly-acquired province.¹³ On June 12–13, 1941, the Soviets deported to the eastern territories of the USSR (mostly to Siberia) more than 7,600 people from the Chernivtsi region of Ukraine (which included northern Bukovina, the Herța plasă, and Hotin counties of Bessarabia; from the rest of Bessarabia 17,000 to 22,000 people were deported).¹⁴ Though available sources do not indicate the ethnic composition of those deported, it is fair enough to assume that Jews were well-represented among them, since the Soviet sources mention as

¹² Dobre, et al., *Anul 1940: Armata română*, vol. 1, 159.

¹³ See Hausleitner, *Die Rumänisierung in der Bukowina*, 354–356, 363–366; Arkadii Zhukovs’kyi, *Istoriia Bukovyny*, part 1 (Chernivtsi: Redaktsiino-vydavnychiy viddil oblpohrafvydav, 1991–1993), 177–178.

¹⁴ See documents published in Valerii Ivanovich Pasat, ed., *Trudnye stranitsy istorii Moldovy: 1940–1950-e gg.* (Moscow: Terra, 1994), 161, 164–165.

categories of deportees “factory- [and] tradesmen,” i.e., occupations in which Jews were in fact disproportionately represented.¹⁵

The Soviet regime defined its political enemies primarily in class terms (though sometimes, especially in the final stages of World War II and in the immediate postwar period it persecuted particular nationalities branded as “enemy nations”).¹⁶ In 1940–1941, the Jews of northern Bukovina suffered at the hands of the Soviets not as Jews but as members of particular social and political groups; in this sense their fate was not very different from that of other ethnic groups in the region. But with the return of Romanian authorities the situation changed drastically. By June 22, 1941, when Romania in alliance with Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the Romanian regime had undergone a profound transformation. King Carol II (1930–1940) had been deposed, and from early September 1940 the country had been ruled by the dictator (Conducător) General Ion Antonescu, an extreme, xenophobic nationalist and Nazi sympathizer. Antonescu was committed to the idea of the complete “purification” of his country of all minorities, and in this he was supported by many a Romanian bureaucrat and nationalist intellectual. However, in practice the regime’s policy towards national minorities was subject to various constraints. In particular, Antonescu was aware that sudden “removal” of all minorities in a single stroke would cause too great a disruption to the country’s economy. Consequently, he envisioned the gradual “cleansing” of the country’s economy of all non-ethnic Romanians, of Jews above all, and their eventual expulsion from Romanian territory after the war. Some minorities would have to be “exchanged” with neighboring countries in return for the ethnic Romanians living there, for example with Hungary; others would have to be dumped in the territories of the losers of the war, such as Soviet Ukraine. Jews were to be eliminated in the most radical way by simply deporting them “across the Ural mountains.”¹⁷

¹⁵ On the categories of deportees see *ibid.*, 146, 711. The text of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee’s May 14, 1941 resolution was never found, but its content was summarized in a February 10, 1956 Ministry of Internal Affairs memorandum.

¹⁶ On the shift from class-based to ethnicity-based persecution under Stalin, see Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 138–190.

¹⁷ On Antonescu’s regime and his vision of and policy for an ethnically pure Romania, see Solonari, ““Model Province,”” 473–485 and *idem.*, “An Important New

This vision was, however, for the future and its implementation was conditioned by the favorable – from Antonescu’s perspective – outcome of the war. For the time being, Antonescu had to be content with creating from the soon-to-be-“liberated” Bessarabia and Bukovina what he called “model provinces,” i.e. ethnically “pure” regions governed directly by him via his plenipotentiary representatives, the governors of the provinces. The provinces were to be “models” in the sense that they would set an example for the transformation of rest of the country after the war. The first stage in this plan was the “cleansing” of Bessarabia and Bukovina of their Jewish populations. Part of them had to be murdered in the first weeks of the war under the cover of combat operations and the rest had to be deported “to the east,” i.e., to the rump Russian state allowed to remain after the German victory, of which he was confident at the time.¹⁸

On June 30, 1941, just two days before the German breakthrough in northern Bessarabia that caused the Soviet retreat and allowed Romanian and German penetration into Bessarabia and Bukovina, Ion Antonescu issued verbal instructions to the commanders of the “large [army] units” (regiment and up) that effectively incited the military to murder Jews:

Enemy agents working behind the frontlines are attempting to commit acts of sabotage, giving the enemy signals or supplying him with information, and even assaulting isolated soldiers. *The Jewish population participates in this activity.* General Antonescu ... gave an order that all those who act *in any way* against the army and against the interests of the nation are to be executed on the spot. [Italics added].¹⁹

Following this order, many in the Romanian military of all ranks engaged in the indiscriminate killing of Jewish civilians in the provinces. To cite just one example, on July 8, 1941, as the 13th Mountain Troops Regiment (Vânători de munte) entered the village Cupca (Kupka) in northern

Document on Romanian Policy of Ethnic Cleansing during World War II,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 20, no. 2 (Fall 2007), 268–297.

¹⁸ See Solonari, ““Model Province,”” 485–491.

¹⁹ Published in Matatias Carp, ed., *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Diogene, 1996; first edition – 1946), 46.

Bukovina, its commander, Colonel Justin Marinoiu, immediately ordered that all Jews be apprehended and shot. He insisted on the same treatment for Jews in the nearby villages of Serata, Adîncata, and Chelmenți. In a post-war trial, his subordinate, Colonel Ernest Albustin, testified that Marinoiu had received no orders for the killings and had acted on his own initiative. All over northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, Jews were accused of attacking Romanian troops from behind, but in reality it was the Jews who were being killed as Jews.²⁰

The bulk of the dirty work, however, was not performed by Army vigilantes and volunteers, but by specially created death squads (*echipe de execuții*). Newly available archival materials allow for tracing the creation and application of this mechanism of systematic murder in one military unit, the Seventh Cavalry Regiments from the Fifth Cavalry Division, which fought in northern Bessarabia in June–July 1941.²¹ In early July 1941, immediately after crossing the Pruth river the regiment's commander, Colonel Gheorghe Carp, summoned all officers and ordered them to form death squads from among the NCOs to "cleanse the localities" through which the regiment would pass "of Jews and Communists," killing everybody "from infants in swaddling clothes to old men with white beards."²² Two death squads were formed the same day, drawn mostly from volunteers but also from the appointment of ordinary soldiers by their superiors.²³ The death squads began their murderous activity immediately, and their "achievements" were indeed impressive. In Bessarabia alone they killed hundreds, maybe thousands of civilians, mostly Jews but also those who had collaborated with the Soviets in 1940–1941, and they continued in the same vein after crossing the Dniester River. Probably the bloodiest massacre they perpetrated took place in the Bessarabian town of Edineț, in which the army and later the gendarmerie executed at least 537 people, almost all of them Jews.²⁴ The situation was quite similar in other big Romanian units. Especially well documented are crimes perpetuated by,

²⁰ TSAFSB, 1083, 283–285, 314, USHMM Archives, RG-06.025.06.

²¹ ASRI, 64472 vols. 1–2, USHMM Archives, RG-25-004, reel 128.

²² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 107, 114, 118, 142; vol. 2, pp. 4, 137, 154, 403.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 159–160; vol. 2, pp. 137, 149–150, 154, 198–199, 215, 234.

²⁴ ANRM, 1026/ 2/ 13 p. 53, USHMM Archives, RG-54-001, reel 14.

in Jean Ancel's words, a "very small group of soldiers" under the command of Major Gheorghe Vartic, second-in-command to General Olimpiu Stavrat, Commander of the 7th Infantry Division. This division was advancing in the Herța district, in northern Bukovina and the adjacent districts of northern Bessarabia. Vartic was Pretor (Prosecutor) of the 7th Division, and his responsibility included overseeing the rear services and ensuring rear safety.²⁵ In this capacity, Vartic was also subordinated to General Ion Topor, Great Pretor of the Romanian army who was one of the key figures in cleansing operations. Wherever this division went, Vartic and his death squads left behind literally piles of dead bodies, mostly Jews, including men, women, and children, randomly executed under the bogus pretense of attacking the Romanian troops from behind and sometimes without any pretense at all.²⁶

The gendarmerie played an even greater role than the Army in the mass murder of Jews. The Romanian gendarmerie was a military police entrusted with maintaining order in rural areas of the country. In wartime supplementary gendarme battalions were created as the army's rearguard. On the eve of the war against the USSR, gendarme units were reconstituted to serve in soon-to-be-"liberated" northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, staffed by the very same officers and non-commissioned officers who had served there before June 1940. During the military operations in Bessarabia and northern Bukovina they were subordinated to the Army, and namely to the Grand Pretor (Prosecutor) General Ion Topor. As soon as the provinces were "liberated" and the front advanced further east, the gendarmerie from Bessarabia and Bukovina were re-subordinated to Inspector General of Gendarmerie Constantin "Pikky" Vasiliu, who simultaneously served as Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs. In effect, Vasiliu exercised control over those units, although legally he was not their commander.²⁷

It was probably Vasiliu's idea to recall to the newly-liberated provinces

²⁵ See Jean Ancel, "The Romanian Way of Solving the 'Jewish Problem,'" *Yad Vashem Studies* 19 (1988), 199–207. Herța Jews shared in 1941–1944 the fate of their North Bukovinian and Bessarabian brethren.

²⁶ ASRI, 20521, vol. 4/1948 92, 293, USHMM, 25.004, reel 23.

²⁷ See the testimony of Gendarme General Constantin Tobescu, who worked directly subordinate to General Vasiliu in Bucharest, TSAFSB, H-18767, vol. 2, pp. 279–312, USHMM Archives, RG-06.025M, reel 43.

those same gendarme officers who served there before 1940 and had since been dispersed throughout the gendarme units all over the country. The explicit aim was to facilitate ethnic and political cleansing: it was believed that those men were the most knowledgeable regarding the local population and would be readily able to tell “traitors” and Jews from loyalists and Christians.²⁸ In the first days of July 1941, General Vasiliu summoned the gendarme officers who were to return to southern Bessarabia to the Danube port Galaț, those who were to head to central and northern Bessarabia to the town Roman in the Romanian province of Moldova, and those slated to return to northern Bukovina (as well as part of northern Bessarabia, which was included in the restored and enlarged province of Bukovina) and to the town Fălticeni in southern Bukovina. What happened there, especially in Galaț and Roman (about Fălticeni we know much less), can be reconstructed with a sufficient degree of certainty from numerous eyewitness accounts recorded in the dossiers of postwar trials.

In all three localities Vasiliu called on the gendarme officers to unflinchingly fulfill their patriotic duty, making it clear that their immediate task upon their return to Bessarabia and northern Bukovina was to “cleanse the terrain” from communists (“suspects”) and Jews. Either on the eve of or immediately after the more inclusive assembly, Vasiliu held meetings with high officers, among them Provincial Gendarme Inspector of Bessarabia Colonel Teodor Meculescu, during which he further elucidated his plans: all Jews in the rural areas were to be murdered, while camps and ghettos were to be set up for the internment of urban Jews; all “Communists” (or “suspects”) were to be shot on the spot.²⁹

²⁸ ASRI, 20725, vol. 9, p. 82. (Deposition of Gendarme Major Traian Drăgulescu, Commander of Hotin Gendarme Legion, Bukovina province), USHMM Archives, RG-25-004M, reel 26.

²⁹ The term “cleansing of the terrain” (“*curățirea terenului*”) was used for the first time, it seems, by Mihai Antonescu, a distant relative of the dictator and his closest collaborator (at the time he was a Minister of State, from June 21, 1941 deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers) in a June 12, 1941 telegram from Bucharest to the Governors of Bessarabia and Bukovina, General Constantin Voiculescu and Colonel Alexandru R. Rioșanu: “confirming the general principles of the regime in the provinces which had been laid down in Bucharest [on a prior occasion]: ... to secure cleansing of the terrain from communists, removal of Bolsheviks, of unreliable elements, of Jewish provocateurs, removal of Jews residing in the villages.” (ASRI, 20725, vol. 7, pp. 5–12, esp. p. 9,

The plan proceeded almost without a hitch in Bessarabia, mostly due to the uncompromising enforcement of Vasiliu's murderous orders by Province Gendarme Inspector Colonel Meculescu. Meculescu had attended the conferences at both Galaț and Roman. Many of his former subordinates testified in the postwar trials to Meculescu's constant exhortations to murder, as well as his threats to severely punish—to the point of execution—anybody who dared to disobey.³⁰ Meculescu's efforts were not in vain: all over Bessarabia his men systematically killed Jews for about two months, from early July to late August.

In Bukovina, however, the plan did not proceed as "smoothly." The most obvious and crucial reason for this was the failure of Meculescu's counterpart in that province, Colonel Ioan Mănecuța, to enforce the "cleansing order" as relentlessly as Meculescu had in Bessarabia. Mănecuța, who did not participate in the Fălticeni conference, received the order from General Topor and then transmitted it to his subordinates, commanders of county Gendarme Legions.³¹ However, Mănecuța did not display any zeal in ensuring its implementation and even distanced himself from it.³²

USHMM Archives, RG-25-004M, reel 25; and file 40010, vol. 1, 92 reel 31). Many witnesses testify that this term was later used by Vasiliu, as well as Meculescu and his subordinates, while instructing the lower ranks, often with reference to the "orders from above." Whether the term was actually used or not, witnesses tended to agree that the meaning of the order was quite clear; see *ibid.*, 18424, vol. 2, pp. 182, 192, reel 17; 20521, vol. 2, p. 443, vol. 10, p. 249, reel 23; 20725, vol. 1, p. 13; 40015, vol. 3, p. 266v., 18209, vol. 2, p. 485v., reel 78; 582, vol. 2, pp. 234–234v., 257, reel 119; 18621 vol. 1, pp. 4–5, reel 120; 64472, vol. 1, pp. 20, 107, vol. 2, pp. 414–15, reel 128.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22539, vol. 12, pp. 228–230, 358–361, 391, USHMM Archives, RG-25.004, reel 16; 22539, vol. 45, pp. 14, 57–58, reel 17; 20725, vol. 4, p. 247, vol. 5, p. 154, 243–244, 249, 256v, reel 24; 18209, vol. 2, pp. 485–485v, reel 78.

³¹ In the 1946 trial, Meculescu was sentenced to fifteen years' maximum-security imprisonment (*temnița grea*) plus ten years' deprivation of civil rights, while Mănecuța was sentenced to five years' correctional imprisonment and five years' deprivation of civil rights; *ibid.*, 22539 vol. 12, pp. 456, 459. Their divergent records, as will be shown below, fully justify this difference in punishment.

³² As Hotin county Gendarme Legion chief Major Traian Drăgulescu testified, Mănecuța made Drăgulescu convey the order to his subordinates, the chiefs of gendarme sections, in July or early August 1941, while conspicuously remaining outside the meeting room. Gendarmes, who were well-versed in "reading" the behavior of their bosses, could hardly fail to get the message. See *ibid.*, 20725 vol. 9, p. 82, reel 25, and vol. 14, p. 1, reel 26.

This situation opened the door for all kinds of arbitrary decisions on the part of the gendarmes. As Mănecuța himself put it, “every gendarme proceeded as his conscience dictated.”³³ Thus, the actions of the two Gendarme Legion commanders Majors Traian Drăgulescu and Gheorghe Berzescu (overseeing operations in Hotin and Storojineț counties, respectively) were very different. Drăgulescu was not an antisemite: he was happily married to a Jewish woman. But Drăgulescu was also an opportunist and a hypocrite, tormented by the fear of losing his job, of not being promoted, or—still worse—being sent to the front. Hence, he resolved to follow Mănecuța’s lead: he transmitted the order further down the chain of command, but then abstained from enforcing it, leaving it to the conscience of his men to determine whether and how precisely to implement the order.³⁴ As a result, the record of the gendarmerie in Hotin county was uneven: while in some villagers Jews were shot, in others they were “merely” detained and deported.³⁵

Major Gheorghe Berzescu also received General Topor’s order to “cleanse the territory” via Colonel Mănecuța as Drăgulescu had, but unlike

³³ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, reel 25, p. 199.

³⁴ See his surprisingly eloquent and informative ten-page-long deposition in *ibid.*, 20725, vol. 9, p. 82, reel 25. Drăgulescu died in prison under investigation, but posthumously in 1941 his wife was able to bring many Jewish witnesses from Hotin to testify to his help and support (*ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 252–299; vol. 10, pp. 65, 67, 320, reel 23).

³⁵ According to Soviet sources, in late July 1941, approximately 540 (!) people, mostly Jews, were shot at the village of Climăuți by Romanian soldiers and the chief of gendarme post Ion Darângă. Smaller massacres organized by the chiefs of gendarme posts took place at the town Otaci (Ataki, chief of post Dumitriești), at the villages Berlinți and Medecăuți, as well as nine other villages. (On Climăuți, Otaci, and Berlinți see ANRM, 1026/2/ 27, pp. 19–21, USHMM Archives, RG-54.002 M, reel 5; Medecăuți Soviet Extraordinary Commission, Chernivtsy region of Ukraine, GARF, 7021/79 Sokirianskii raion, pp. 103-103v., USHMM Archives, RG-25.002, reel 16. On other villages, see *ibid.*, p. 15; File 17, p. 172.) In Lipcani township and in the villages Tețcani and Trânca the Jews were rounded up and deported by the gendarmes to the concentration camps, but not shot—in stark contrast to neighboring Bessarabia, where Jews from the rural areas almost never escaped death once they were caught by the gendarmes. (On Lipcani see ANRM, 2084, especially p. 17; on Tețcani, see *ibid.*, File 5201, especially pp. 127v. –128; on Trânca, see *ibid.*, file 2877, especially p. 23, USHMM Archives, RG-54.003M. Copies of the files from this archive are on microfiches, to be located by file number).

Drăgulescu, he refused to transmit it down the line and it had no effect in the territory under his supervision. Indeed, it appears that none of the gendarmes under his command participated in the killing operations in July–August 1941, although they did participate in the arrest and beatings of Soviet activists.³⁶

The behavior of Berzescu's gendarmes contrasts favorably not only with those of Drăgulescu, but also with those of Legion Commander Major Constantin Cichendel, in charge of the neighboring Cernăuți county. Records of the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission for Investigation Wartime Crimes by the Fascists and their Accomplices testify that in July and August 1941 Cichendel's men killed dozens, probably hundreds of Jews, although the major massacres there were perpetrated, as in the Storojineț county, by the Romanian and German armies.³⁷

The most difficult mission of Berzescu's gendarmes was to secure control and maintain order in the northernmost Storijineț county, which bordered with Galicia, a stronghold of Ukrainian nationalism. Here the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) established its densest network of operatives, who managed to seize power at the time of the Soviet withdrawal. Acting under the direct command of the Ukrainian National Committee in Lublin they created Ukrainian National Guard detachments and formed organs of local power, effectively controlling the situation during the period between the departure of the Soviets and the arrival of the Romanians. As the Governor of Bukovina in the provincial capital Cernăuți related to Ion Antonescu in September and October 1941, the first flag that was hoisted in many localities of Cernăuți and Storojineț counties was the Ukrainian one, and in village of Ștăneștii de Jos and in some other places the local population even had honored that flag in public ceremonies. The OUN militia also engaged retreating Red Army troops in numerous skirmishes.³⁸

³⁶ In one such case, namely in the village Lucovăț de Sus, several people reportedly died from the gendarme's beatings. See GARF 7021/ 79 Vyzhnitskii raion, pp. 14–16, USHMM Archives, RG-25.002M, reel 15.

³⁷ See *ibid.*, Gertsaevskii, Zastavnianskii, Kitsmanskii, Sadgorskii, and Chernovitskii raiony, reels 14–15.

³⁸ Arkadii Zhukovs'skyi, *Istoriia Bukovyny*, part 2, 145–146; Vasyľ Veriga, "Bukovyn'skyi kuryn' 1941–1944," in *Na zov Kyeva: Ukraïns'kyi natsionalizm y II svitovii viiny. Zbirnik stattei, spogadiv i dokumentiv* (New York: Novyi Shliakh, 1985), 109–110;

According to all available Soviet, Romanian, and Jewish sources, simultaneously with establishing their control in these localities the OUN militia proceeded to cleanse them of Jews. In particular, the events in the village of Ștăneștii de Jos (Stanivtsy Dolishnye in Russian and Ukrainian) can be reconstructed with unusual precision due to the abundance of sources.³⁹ In early July 1941, between the Soviet withdrawal and the arrival of Romanian troops, a Ukrainian nationalist committee formed the village and effectively took control of the situation. One of its first acts was to begin arresting local Jews and detaining them in the mayor's office (*primaria* in Romanian, *sel'skii sovet* in Russian) and on the premises of the local sawmill. In a postwar trial one of the accused recounted that members of the committee had been given the order to arrest all Jews and to turn them over to the Romanian troops once the latter arrived.⁴⁰ Whether that order involved the actual killing of Jews or not,

Andryi Duda and Volodymyr Staryk, *Bukovyns'kii kuryn' v boiah za ukrains'ku derzhavnist', 1918, 1941, 1944* (Chernivtsi: Ukrainskiy Narodnyi Dim v Chernivtsah, 1955), 55–59, 182–184; and Hausleitner, *Die Rumänisierung in der Bukovina*, 313–318. See also Bukovina Governor Corneliu Calotescu's September 20 and October 29, 1941 memoranda to Ion Antonescu in OA, 492/1/12, pp. 100–105 and 120–129, as well as a October 31, 1941 secret police note in *ibid.*, 492/1/10, no pagination, USHMM Archives, RG-25.007M, reel 1.

³⁹ See GDASBU, 2615, USHMM Archives, RG-31.018M, reel 21; GARF, 7021/79/125, pp. 5, 40–42v, USHMM Archives, RG-22.002M, reel 14; ASRI, 18621, vol. 2, pp. 36–44v, USHMM Archives, RG-25.004M; Marius Mircu, *Ce s-a întâmplat cu evreii în și din România*, vol. 2 (Bat Yam, Israel: Editura GLOB, 1996), 71–76 (first published in 1945 as *Pogromurile din Bukovina și Dorohoi*). The full title of the Soviet Extraordinary Commission was: “Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the Fascist German Invaders and Their Accomplices, and of the Damage they caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises, and Institutions of the USSR.” On the history and operation of the Extraordinary Commission, see Marina Sorokina, “People and Procedures: Toward a history of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR,” *Kritika* 6, no. 4 (Fall 2005), 797–831.

⁴⁰ GDASBU, 2615, p. 180, USHMM Archives, RG-31, reel 21. I believe that the order originated in Lublin in Nazi-occupied Poland or in L'viv in Galicia from the Ukrainian Committee with which Ukrainian nationalists in Bukovina had close ties. Many Ukrainian historians, while acknowledging that OUN underground organizations resurfaced in the last days of the Soviet withdrawal, deny OUN responsibility for the persecution of Jews. Instead, these historians claim that it was Romanians who

such killings began to occur even before contact with the Romanian army was established. The arrival of Romanian troops commenced a full-scale pogrom. Killings continued until the arrival of the Romanian gendarmes under Major Berzescu, who immediately ordered the killings to be stopped.⁴¹ In the end, between 80 and 130 local Jews were killed, most from Stăneștii de Jos and the remainder from nearby villages. Some of the killings were perpetrated with exceptional cruelty. Ukrainian nationalist militias also arrested, mistreated, and killed Jews at Milie (Milia in Romanian, Milievo in Russian and Ukrainian) and Răstioace (Rostoki in Russian and Ukrainian), and possibly at other places as well. In many localities Ukrainian nationalists were at this time rounding up and imprisoning Jews, in many cases either killing them or transferring them to the Romanian army and gendarmerie for execution.⁴²

Also acting as a systematic murderous force against the Jews of northern Bukovina in July 1941 was one of the four Einsatzgruppen (SS extermination brigades); Einsatzgruppe D was assigned to the Romanian sector of the front. While later in the war the Einsatzgruppen would be tasked with the systematic extermination of all Jews, in July 1941 their target was limited to the Jews seen as potentially the most dangerous, such as male

were arresting and killing Jews; one of those historians goes as far as to claim that Ukrainians were “upset” by the Romanian policy to persecute Jews. See Andrii Duda, *Bukovyns'kyi kuryń 'v boiah za ukrains'ku derzhanvnist' . 1918–1941–1944*, 61.

⁴¹ Marius Mircu, *Ce s-a întâmplat cu evreii în și din România*, vol. 2, 73–75. Mircu even claims that the gendarmes attempted to free some of those detained, but the Ukrainians would not let them do it.

⁴² See Mircu, *Ce s-a întâmplat*, vol. 2, 46–48; GARF, 7021/79 Vyzhnitskii raion, pp. 1, 109, RG-22- 002M, reel 14. See Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord: Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941–1943* (Hamburg: Hamburg Edition, 2003), 157. Angrick cites post-war testimonies of Jewish survivors. In some cases existing sources are not sufficient for establishing whether the anti-Jewish violence of local Ukrainians was organized by the underground nationalist organization or whether it was “spontaneous.” This is why, for example, Angrick refers to the massacres in Rostoki as carried out by the Romanian army units together with “local rabble” but then suggests that it was Ukrainian nationalist militia units who carried out the killings (Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, 155, 157). Angrick again mentions the “local rabble” in his discussion about massacres in Banilov (*ibid.*, 155), but Soviet Extraordinary State Commission documents clearly show that 197 Jews were massacred there by a “band”—a term reserved for nationalist armed formations led by a certain Ivan Kolotilo (GARF, 7021-79-125, pp. 4, 57).

members of the Jewish intelligentsia and community and religious leaders. However, any sign of “suspicious” activity, even if not directly traceable to “the Jews,” could lead to mass executions of detained Jews. One of the companies of the Einsatzgruppe D, Einsatzkommando 10b (under Commander Alois Persterer), arrived in Cernăuți on July 6 and immediately proceeded to fulfill its murderous task. The next day they selected and interrogated male Jewish intellectuals, and although they found no “politically damnable” evidence, executed 101 of them. Together with the Romanian army and police, the Einsatzkommando arrested and interned in the former Palace of Culture about 2,000 “suspicious” Jews, of whom more than 500 were machine-gunned by the Romanians on July 9. The remainder, who ostensibly had been released, were then shot while exiting from the Palace and later along the streets of the city. The total number of Jewish victims of the first days of terror is estimated at approximately 2,000.⁴³

Jews from the rural areas who had survived the first wave of mass murder were interned in transit camps and eventually deported across the Dniester River, “to the east.” The Romanian authorities’ original intention was to completely “cleanse” both provinces of Jews in the first weeks of the war, dumping the survivors across the Dniester into the rump Russian state, and eventually sending them beyond the Volga or even the Urals.⁴⁴ The deportees would thus be destined to die en route of hunger, exhaustion, and inevitable epidemics. However, the war was not developing exactly to Antonescu’s liking: instead of ending in a rapid German victory, it was dragging on. The German army command did not like the Romanian idea of massing Romanian Jews in the rear of their frontline troops, and consequently ordered them back to the west, across the Dniester. After some wrangling the Romanians finally succumbed, delaying their plans for cleansing the provinces of Jews. Though the Romanians stubbornly refused to accept the Jews back, the Germans forced some, probably the majority,

⁴³ Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, 148–155, 159.

⁴⁴ Cf. Antonescu’s October 6, 1941 disclosure to the Council of Ministers that he intended to “cast [the Jews] across the Ural mountains” in Marcel-Dumitru Ciucă, Aurelian Teodorescu, Bogdan Florin Popovici, eds., *Stenogramele sedintelor Consiliului de Ministri: Guvernarea Ion Antonescu*, vol. 5, 5 (hereinafter referred to as Ciucă, ed., *Stenogramele*).

of the deportee columns back across the Dniester. Consequently, the Jews were even more exhausted, with a countless number of them dying or barely able to move. Some Jewish deportees whom Romanians categorically refused to accept back in their territory were shot by German and Romanian soldiers. International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania estimates that number as anywhere between eight and ten thousand.⁴⁵

Despite this setback, Antonescu was determined to see through to the end his plan for the “purification” of the two provinces. On August 30 in the Bessarabian town of Tighina (Bender), Romanian General Tătăranu and German General Hauffe signed an agreement transferring the territory between the Dniester and Southern Bug Rivers to Romanian jurisdiction until the end of the war. The 7th and final article of this document provided for the deportation of Romanian Jews into that region (Romanians called it Transnistria, literally “across the Dniester”) until the termination of hostilities, at which point their deportation further “to the east” would become possible.⁴⁶

In anticipation of this deportation, Romanian authorities began gathering Jews from Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in concentration camps and ghettos. Some of those were purely transit camps and rather small; Jews were kept there a few days before being sent to the larger camps. Jews from northern Bukovina were concentrated in the camps located in northern Bessarabia, Hotin county (under wartime Romanian rule this Bessarabian county was included in the reconstituted province of Bukovina). The largest camps were at Secureni and Edineț, each holding more than ten thousand inmates in late August and early September 1941. Conditions in the camps were awful and the death rate was appalling. In the Edineț camp, according to the eyewitnesses whose testimonies were recorded by the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission, ten to fifteen people died every day, bringing the overall number to 304; corpses were interred in mass graves

⁴⁵ See International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, *Final Report* (Iași: Polirom, 2005), p. 136. More on failed deportations see *ibid.*, p. 134-136; Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României: Problema evreească*, vol. 1, part 2, 146–158; and Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, 198–205.

⁴⁶ The German and Romanian versions of the document are published in *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust*, vol. 5, ed. Jean Ancel (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986), 59–63; and *ibid.*, vol. 9, 188–189 (hereinafter referred to as Ancel, *Documents*).

400 meters from the camp.⁴⁷ In Sochireni the mortality rate was in all probability even higher: one survivor claimed that hundreds of Jews died every day.⁴⁸ To receive meager rations, Jews were required to perform hard labor. There was a lack of basic sanitation, with the simplest medications and even soap not available. When the inevitable typhus epidemic flared up, the authorities, rather than improving the Jews' conditions, concentrated their efforts on limiting the inmates' contacts with the local Christians in order to prevent the disease from spreading outside the camp.⁴⁹

In the fall of 1941, deportations to Transnistria were carried out in the most barbaric manner (the Jews from both northern and southern Bukovina were deported together with those from Herța plasa and Dorohoi county, as Herța, part of the historical province of Moldavia, had been included in the 1941 reconstruction and enlargement of the province of Bukovina). On September 7, General Topor had issued instructions stating that evacuation from the Vertujeni camp would begin on September 10.⁵⁰ The order contained, among others, the following elliptic phrase: "10. Method of treatment of those who do not obey? (Alexianu)." The meaning of this code was disclosed by Commander of the 60th Police Company Lieutenant Augustin Roșca in his declaration to the Commission of Inquiry into the Irregularities of Chișinău Ghetto in December 1941 (Nicolaescu commission, after the name of its chair General Nicolaescu).⁵¹ Simply put, it meant that all those

⁴⁷ See GARF, 1026/1/2, pp. 2–2v., reel 2.

⁴⁸ GARF, 7021/79 Sokiriansky raion, p. 64–65.

⁴⁹ More on these camps see in Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României: Problema evreească*, vol. 1, part 2, 186–199.

⁵⁰ The bill of indictment of Voiculescu contains a reference to Voiculescu's mentioning this oral order; see ASRI, 22539/12, p. 209, USHMM Archives, RG-25.004M, reel 16. One can gauge the sensitivity of the issue at the time from the fact that Voiculescu's activities report to Antonescu from the end of 1941 did not mention this order at all as the basis of deportation. See ANRM, 706/1/22, p. 6 USHMM Archives, RG-54.001M, reel 1. General Topor's instructions see *ibid.*, p. 43.

⁵¹ The full text is available in ASRI 21227/2, pp. 6–7, excerpt published as document 145 in Comisia internațională pentru studierea Holocaustului din România, *Documente*, ed. Lya Benjamin (Iași: Polirom, 2005), 320 (hereinafter referred to as ICFR, *Documente*). This treatment was called the "Alexianu method" because the governor of Transnistria wanted to receive as few Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina as pos-

Jews who could not keep up with the column “due to their weakness or illness” were to be shot. Two to three days prior to the departure of the convoy, Roșca was to send one of his subordinates to the localities along the route to prepare the terrain for executions. Graves for approximately 100 bodies each were to be dug at ten-kilometer intervals at a sufficient distance from the villages to keep the “screams and shots inaudible” to the inhabitants. The authorities were instructed to mobilize the local population, especially youth of pre-military age (premitarii), for the tasks of digging graves and interring the corpses after the executions.

The gendarmes and policemen assigned to the operation strictly adhered to these instructions. Thus, Roșca declared that this order was in toto, and as a result about 500 Jews were shot en route from Secureni to Atachi, a town on the Dniester from whence they crossed the river into Transnistria. This was most certainly an understatement, because the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission later discovered two kilometers from the camp four graves where 1,650 corpses were buried; these were, according to eye-witnesses, bodies of Jews from the camp shot during their deportation to Transnistria.⁵² The same “treatment” was accorded to Jews deported from the Edineț camp (the operation was carried out under the command of Roșca’s deputy Lieutenant Victor Popovici).⁵³ Before crossing to Transnistria, representatives of the National Bank of Romania confiscated any valuables the Jews carried with them, such as gold, jewelry, Romanian *lei*, and foreign currency; in exchange the Jews were given Soviet rubles or *Reichskassenschein* (Reich credit certificates), a quasi-currency issued by the Germans for use in the occupied Soviet territories. This exchange took place at fixed rates of

sible. See his activities report of November 1941 in DACHO 307/3/4, pp. 65–66 USHMM Archives, RG-31.006M, reel 37.

⁵² GARF, 7021/79/number of file illegible Sokiriansky raion, p. 5.

⁵³ See ICHR, *Documente*, 320. During the 1953 investigation and trial, Popovici claimed that though he received this order he ignored it, and as a result the Jews were not shot. Though the court accepted his version and absolved him, while sentencing Roșca to six years’ imprisonment in a special treatment institution, the supporting evidence appears to have been slim. See ASRI, 21227 vol. 1. In assessing these trials and sentences one should bear in mind that it took place during a period of growing antisemitism in the Soviet block. For more on these deportations, see Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României: Problema evrească*, vol. 2, part 2, 191–194, 199.

forty times (for *lei*) to one hundred times (for gold) lower than the true rate. This “exchange,” in essence a robbery, was carried out with great brutality.⁵⁴

Throughout the summer and fall of 1941, as most Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina were detained in the concentration camps, the city of Cernăuți remained the only place in those provinces where survivors of the first wave of murder lived in relative security. Until October 12, no ghetto had yet been established there and Jews were free to move about the city—an exception made possible by the courageous resistance of the municipal administration headed by Mayor Traian Popovici, who sabotaged antisemitic orders from above. However, following Antonescu’s October 10 decree to immediately create a ghetto and to begin deportations of all Jews from the city on October 14, Governor Calotescu was finally able to crush the resistance of Popovici and his group. The ghetto was erected and preparations for deportations ensued.⁵⁵

Still, on October 15 Antonescu issued an order to allow 15,000 “economically useful” Jews to remain in the city of Cernăuți. This surprise reversal of the initial order is usually attributed to Traian Popovici’s influence, but it seems that the real answer to this mystery lies elsewhere. Without detracting from the noble memory of Traian Popovici—a great humanist and Romanian patriot, a man of remarkable modesty and honesty, whom Yad Vashem granted, in 1989, the honorable title “Righteous among the Nations,” and after whom a street in Bucharest was named in 2002—it appears that this traditional view needs reconsideration. It is almost certain that the real impetus for Antonescu’s change of position came from the German consul in the city, Fritz Gebhard Schellhorn. At an October 15 meeting with Bukovina Governor General Calotescu, Schellhorn protested the decision to deport all of the city’s Jews on the grounds that they were absolutely indispensable to the “economic reconstruction of the province,” particularly in such vital local industries as lumber, and that indiscriminate deportation could impede the German war effort.

⁵⁴ See relevant documents in ANRM, 706/1/22, pp. 97–105, USHMM Archives, RG-54-001M, reel 1, and the undated note of the Minister of Finance in *ibid.*, 586 vol. 1, RG-54.002M, reel 13.

⁵⁵ See Traian Popovici’s memoir, *Spevedania/Testimony*, English translation by Viviane Prager ([N.p.]: Fundația Dr. W. Filderman, [n.d.]) (first published, 1945), 10–38. For a more detailed description of the events in Cernăuți, see Ancețel, *Contribuții la istoria României: Problema evreească*, vol. 1, part 2, 230–277.

Schellhorn's solution was to select those Jews who were "absolutely necessary for economic reconstruction" and to spare them from deportation. The selected Jews, however, were to be kept in the city only on a temporary basis until their replacements could be found from among local non-Jews.⁵⁶

Schellhorn summarized his arguments in an October 16 memorandum to Governor Calotescu:

As the situation now stands, the best teacher [of a given profession or craft occupied by a Jew] is the Jew himself, and I am certain that the best possible result will be achieved under a system whereby every Jew will be paired with a non-Jewish apprentice, whom the Jew will be obligated to introduce [to his craft] and to teach his specialty as thoroughly as he can. The Jew will become removable from the economy at the moment his replacement is capable, according to the experts' opinion, of taking over completely the Jew's business. But this system will have to be implemented thoroughly and without exceptions. In this way successors will be cultivated, who with certainty and according to their abilities, sooner or later, will be able to replace all Jews who participate in the economic life of Cernăuți, and to make them dispensable.⁵⁷

In two October 15 despatches to Berlin, Schellhorn reiterated his doubts concerning the economic repercussions of the deportation of all Jews from Cernăuți, mentioning that day's meeting with Calotescu, but he presented

⁵⁶ See Fritz Gebhard Schellhorn, *Aufzeichnung über die Ereignisse während meiner Tätigkeit als Leiter des Deutschen Konsulats in Chernowitz, in Jassy, wieder in Czernowitz und der Konsulaabteilung der Gesandtschaft in Bukarest* (hereinafter referred to as Schellhorn, *Aufzeichnung*) in AAPA, Anlass Schellhorns, 59–60. Ion Antonescu's telephone order to Calotescu to let 15,000-20,000 "economically useful" Jews stay in Cernăuți is expressly mentioned in the February 2, 1942 Commission of Investigation (chairman Lieutenant Colonel Victor Siminel) report on the irregularities that took place in the Cernăuți ghetto (hereinafter referred to as Siminel Commission). ASRI 2868 vol. 207, p. 86, USHMM Archives, RG-25.004M, reel 135.

⁵⁷ DACHO, 307/1/10, p. 213, USHMM Archives, RG-31.006M, reel 5. The document is published in Otmmar Trașca and Dennis Deletant, eds., *Al III-lea Reich și Holocaustul din România: 1940–1944. Documente din arhivele germane* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România, 2007), 320–323

the arguments he used to convince the governor as targeting only those Jews who were employed in German firms.⁵⁸ This was done in an obvious attempt to shield himself from possible accusations of “philosemitism.”

What was the motive behind Schellhorn’s intervention? In his memoir he claimed that he was driven by humanitarian considerations and an aversion to the persecution of innocent people, but the evidence is somewhat mixed. It was indeed the case, as the Romanian secret police reported at the end of 1941, that the German consul used his official position to exempt from deportation all Cernăuți Jews of German and Austrian citizenship, and this fact seems to confirm his material disinterest in the affair.⁵⁹ But Schellhorn’s credibility is undermined by the omission in his memoir of the fact that the selected Jews were to be spared deportation only temporarily, until their replacements had been trained. Still, whether or not this member of the NSDAP since 1933 was another Schindler, and regardless of his personal motives, one thing is clear: it was his intervention and his argumentation for temporarily exempting “economically useful” Jews from deportation that swayed Antonescu’s opinion.

In October–November 1941 Popovici, who was entrusted with selecting “economically useful Jews,” managed to exempt from deportation 19,000 Jews (4,000 more than 15,000 exemptions provided for in Antonescu’s order), sometimes issuing his own authorizations (referred to as Mayor’s permits), thus breaching the limits imposed on his authority. On November 13, 1941, the “surplus” 4,000 people received permission to remain in the city temporarily thanks to Antonescu’s suspension of further deportations until the following spring.⁶⁰ A very limited number of “economically useful” Jews were allowed to remain, once again on a temporary basis, in other towns of the province.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 316–319.

⁵⁹ See ASRI, 2868 vol. 207, p. 36, USHMM Archives, 25-004M, reel 135.

⁶⁰ See Ion Antonescu’s order to suspend deportations in Ciucă, ed., *Stenogramele*, vol. 5, 154. On the selection process, see Popovic, *Spovedania/Testimony*, 38–46; for documents of Siminel Commission, see ASRI 2868 vol. 207, USHMM Archives, RG-25.004M, reel 135, and Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României: Problema evreească*, vol. 1, part 2, 256–265.

⁶¹ For reasons that remain obscure, while Schellhorn pleaded for Cernăuți Jews only, Antonescu extended Schellhorn’s reasoning to smaller Bukovian towns, where very few “economically useful Jews” were allowed to stay temporarily. The overall number—15,000 to 20,000—thus referred to the whole province.

Once Jews were designated as “non-useful,” they were slated for deportation. Unlike Jews from other localities of Bessarabia and Bukovina, who were forced to traverse all distances on foot, the Jews of Cernăuți were deported by train in cattle-cars to Mogilev-Podil’sk on the west bank of the Dniester; before the deportation they were searched for valuables by representatives of the National Bank, which were then “exchanged” according to the same derisory rate as elsewhere in the provinces.⁶²

Deportations resumed in early June 1942, by which point the authorities had compiled a list of 4,471 of Jews from Cernăuți who had escaped deportation in the fall of 1941 due to its suspension by the Conducător; the only exception allowed by the governor was for Jews seventy years of age and older. The first train departed to Transnistria on June 8, 1942, when 1,781 Jews from Cernăuți and seventy-six from other prefectures of the province were sent to Transnistria. On June 11, the second transport with 308 Jews from Dorohoi county was sent to the same destination (Dorohoi county was part of the historical province of Moldavia, but in 1941–1944 it was included in the province of Bukovina and its Jewish residents slated for deportation, together with those from Bukovina as a whole). The third transport departed on June 15 with 1,139 Jews from Cernăuți and twelve from other prefectures of the province. The fourth transport, which departed on June 26, theoretically was intended for Jews who had hidden from the previous deportations, along with new categories: those deemed politically suspect, those who shirked their forced labor for the army, and those who “were removed as useless from enterprises and civil service by the [provincial] Directorate of Labor”; on this date, 11,110 Jews from Cernăuți and 52 from Dorohoi county were deported.⁶³ The Governorship report containing this data does not specify how many Jews belonged to each category, but whatever the number of Jews deemed “economically useless” included in the last transport, the very fact that they were targeted meant that from the point of view of the authorities the transitional period envisaged in Schellhorn’s memorandum was over and that the time for complete “purification” finally had arrived.

⁶² See Mircu, *Ce s-a întâmplat*, vol. 2, 105–106.

⁶³ See July 1, 1942 governorship report, in DACHO, 307/1/244; citation is from p. 3, USHMM Archives, RG-31.006M, reel 9.

On October 13, 1942, however, Mihai Antonescu announced to the Council of Ministers the decision to suspend (in fact, terminate) deportations to Transnistria; the announcement took the authorities completely by surprise, coming at a time when they were preparing to begin the last phase of “purification.”⁶⁴ This decision was due to the political considerations stemming from the growing realization that Germany would not win the war. Ion and Mihai Antonescu were gradually apprehending the necessity of improving relations with the Western Allies, namely Britain and the USA. Henceforth until the very end of their hold on power, these leaders sought to disengage Romania from its alliance with Hitler under the proviso that the British and the Americans would guarantee them advantageous armistice terms and protection against imminent Soviet invasion. Both leaders tended to ascribe enormous political influence to British and American Jewry and hoped that moderating their Jewish policy would facilitate an agreement with the Western powers. Purely humanitarian considerations had no bearing on the shift in policy towards Jews.⁶⁵

Movable and immovable assets left behind by the Jews deported to Transnistria were considered “abandoned” and thus became the state’s property.⁶⁶ This formerly Jewish property was subject to “Romanianization,” i.e., allocation to ethnic Romanians. As beneficiaries of Romanianization, newly-minted ethnic Romanian entrepreneurs were required to employ only ethnic Romanians in their formerly Jewish businesses. Romanianization policy was pursued throughout Romania, although at a slow pace in the Old Kingdom since the Conducător and Mihai Antonescu were concerned that too rapid

⁶⁴ For Mihai Antonescu’s announcement of the indefinite suspension of all deportations, see Ciucă, *Stenogramele*, vol. 8, 382.

⁶⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the Antonescu government’s changing foreign policy orientation, see Sebastian Balta, *Rumänien und die Grossmächte in der Ära Antonescu, 1940–1944* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2005), 240–298.

⁶⁶ See Law-Decree N 2 507 from September 3, 1941, published in Lya Benjamin and Sergiu Stanciu, eds., *Evreii din România între anii 1940–1944: Izvoare și mărturisiri referitoare la evreii din România*, vol. 1: *Legislația antievrească* (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1993), 164–166. Article 2 provided for “the Romanian State entering into possession (stăpanire)” of these goods. Later Mihai Antonescu defined the legal status of these goods as being in the “apparent ownership” of the state; see Ciucă, ed., *Stenogramele*, vol. 6, 551, April 30, 1942.

an expulsion of Jews and other ethnic non-Romanians from all spheres of national economy might inflict an unacceptably high level of damage to the economy, especially in wartime.⁶⁷ In the two eastern “model” provinces, however, Romanianization was believed to be achievable in a speedy and complete manner. Indeed, the basic premise of “model-ness” presupposed speedy and complete Romanianization.

Bukovina was one of the richest and most developed provinces of Greater Romania and, due to the rapidity of the German advance in 1941, had not suffered much from Soviet scorched-earth policy. The province, and especially Cernăuți, became a magnet for all sorts of fortune-seekers from all over Romania, earning the nickname “Romanian California,” as Romanian Jewish journalist Marius Mircu wrote in 1945:

Sensible people would leave their honest but not effortless occupations, professions, or profitable rents (army officers resigned from the army) and depart to Cernăuți to enrich themselves by plunder. [For a nominal fee, any ethnic Romanian could lease a formerly Jewish factory or shop] Like the gold-seekers in California, who arrived, gathered a quantity of gold, and departed from the state leaving behind no interest, so too the “Californians” from Cernăuți, after processing all the raw materials to be found in the factory, or after selling the entire stock of merchandise in the shop, would leave everything in the lurch and return home, to the town from whence they came.⁶⁸

Romanianization was a corrupt business all over Romania, particularly so in Bukovina. Professor Eugen Pavlescu, the first head of the Bukovina Romanianization department, was notorious for his massive waste of funds: he distributed former Jewish properties to his friends and relatives for derisory prices without even bothering to register stocks of raw materials held at those enterprises. In February 1942 Antonescu ordered the removal of Pavlescu from his post and an investigation into his corrupt dealings; however,

⁶⁷ On Romanianization see Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 237–263.

⁶⁸ Mircu, *Ce s-a întâmplat*, vol. 2, 115.

it was stalled together with the cases of other officials from the province accused of corruption.⁶⁹ By March 1942, sixty-nine cases had been opened against various officials in Cernăuți alone, to which afterwards two more were added, but as late as April 1943 only four of the cases were brought to court while fourteen were dismissed under various pretexts. Even when some officials were found guilty, they received ludicrously minor sentences, usually a month or two of imprisonment.

Under the circumstances, many non-Jews in Bukovina—particularly in Cernăuți—stood to gain economically as a result of the expedient removal of all Jews from the province. During the summer of 1942 antisemitic pressure from below on the governor's office grew steadily. Enterprises and institutions competed for Jewish labor and the right to employ Jews was seen as an important privilege. Inevitably, resentment grew among those entrepreneurs that failed to obtain relevant authorization. On July 15 and August 8, 1942, the Cernăuți Chamber of Labor together with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry each submitted to the governor their reports on the role of Jews in the city's commerce and industry. According to the Chamber of Labor, of 1,891 Jewish employees of the industrial enterprises, handicraft workshops, and local civil service, 888 were unskilled or otherwise "useless" persons; consequently, the Chamber requested their deportation. According to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, of 580 Jewish employees in the commercial firms, 323 were "parasites of the local economy." Furthermore, this Chamber opined that allowing the use of Jewish labor at some firms while denying this privilege to others created "a situation of unfair and dangerous competition for firms ... led by real Romanian merchants dedicated to the pure nationalist ideal." Consequently, this body proposed not only that the 323 unskilled Jews be deported, but also that the rest of the Jews be verified and only in rare cases be allowed to stay an additional three months, during which they would prepare their replacements prior to deportation. The Chamber insisted that the "supreme national ideal" of the Romanianization of commerce could be achieved only after the city was completely cleansed of Jews, without exception.⁷⁰

In November 1941 the deportations were halted temporarily, over

⁶⁹ See Pavelescu's file in DANIC-V, 106/942, USHMM Archives, RG-25.019M, reel 59.

⁷⁰ DACHO, 307/3/16, pp. 3–5, USHMM Archives, RG-31.006M, reel 28.

the protests of some local public servants to whom former Jewish houses were commonly allotted. Individual non-Jewish employees resented what they considered the “privileged situation” of their Jewish colleagues, and self-styled “patriots” even organized (illegal) committees demanding the prompt and full “liberation” of the country from the Jews, whom they called “the most dangerous beings, the most important factors in this war.”⁷¹

On August 15, 1942 the governor issued an ordinance introducing tighter restrictions on the employment of Jews: it limited the number of Jews a firm could employ in accordance with its size, established that employment of a Jew could not last longer than three months for commercial firms, and announced that on November 1, 1942, “all authorizations for the employment of Jewish personnel [would] automatically expire.” In industrial enterprises the maximum term of employment was four to six months, depending on an individual’s skills. All firms employing Jewish labor had to have their Jewish employees “doubled” by non-Jewish ethnic Romanians who would take the Jews’ places following their removal.⁷²

Even after the suspension of deportation on October 13, 1942, and despite several extensions of the “final term” for the release of Jewish employees, the pressure on Bukovinian enterprises to release Jewish personnel and replace them with ethnic Romanians continued. True, the Jews fired in this way were no longer deported to Transnistria; instead they were transferred to the jurisdiction of the army, which “made use” of their forced labor at various sites. They could also be deported for various violations to the Sadagura, Edineț, Vlașca, and Hotin concentration camps in Bukovina province. The justification for punishment of Jews had shifted from collective to individual guilt, i.e., there had to be a particular reason for internment (such as

⁷¹ See a leaflet of “a group of Romanian invalids from the country.” (Ibid., 38/ 6/ 193, p. 743), July 1942; “information report,” Cernăuți police (28 October, 1941), *ibid.*, page illegible, approx. 15, USHMM Archives, RG-31.006M, reel 37, and various documents (complaints, requests, etc.) in DACHO, 38/4/18.

⁷² See *ibid.*, 307/3/illegible, pp. 367–370, USHMM Archives, RG-31.006M, reel 29. Such rules were first laid down in the December 15 1941 ordinance Nr. 5000/1941 and then amplified in the March 1942 instructions for its implementation. Enterprises requesting those authorizations had to present a list of Jews to be employed as well as documents certifying their qualification indicating the date ending the period for which permission for employment was requested.

not wearing the Star of David, cursing Hitler, etc.). Rather than being held indefinitely, sentences for offenders usually lasted for a specific period of time; generally, though conditions were harsh, they would not necessarily lead to death.⁷³

In late 1942 and early 1943 the continued presence of Jews in Bukovina was still considered a temporary state of affairs, and the deportations were expected to resume. The army—which, as a major beneficiary of “free” Jewish labor, retained a stake in continuing the Romanianization of the economy—grew increasingly suspicious of the perceived slowness of “purification” in Bukovina. On November 2, 1942, responding to accusations of “philosemitism,” the governor assured the General Staff in Bucharest that he had been working hard for more than a year to replace Jews in the local enterprises and had already “evacuated” 90,000 Jews from Bukovina to Transnistria; he, more than anybody else, was thus interested in seeing “the complete success of the operation.” But the situation of the province was “absolutely special” and recognized by Marshal Antonescu as such; if the Jews were still employed in some enterprises, it was done “not in their interests but in the interest of the national economy.”⁷⁴

The change in the policy came only in the spring of 1943. As late as December 29, 1942 Governor Calotescu approved a request from the Directorate of Romanianization, ironically enough, to employ 11 Jewish specialists for two months only, during which ethnic Romanian replacements would be prepared. On March 18, 1943, in a request for an extension on the right to employ a Jew, one Romanian merchant referred to a “final deadline” of April 1, 1943.⁷⁵ But in March or April 1943 Calotescu was demoted from his position as governor, and the new governor, Corneliu Dragalina, relaxed the persecution of Jews; from then on all requests for extensions were approved without further ado.⁷⁶ At this point, Cernăuți’s remaining

⁷³ See the representative of the General Staff’s report on the situation in Edineț concentration camp in August 1942, in *ibid.*, 307/3/246.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 307/3/17 pp. 293–295, USHMM Archives, 31.006M, reel 28.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 307/3/16, p. 894, USHMM Archives, RG-31.006M, reel 29; and *ibid.*, 307/3/ number of file illegible, p. 651, USHMM Archives, RG-31.006M, reel 32.

⁷⁶ On the changing policy towards Jewish employment, see subsequent materials in the same file. On the demotion of Calotescu and Voiculescu, see Ciucă, ed., *Stenogramele*, vol. 9, 222. Mircu believed that Dragalina was an exception among Romanian mili-

Jews had a fairly good chance of surviving until the city's liberation by the Red Army on March 29, 1944.

The Jews deported from the provinces to Transnistria (rather, the few still alive there) had a very limited chance to return to their homes until the reconquest of the provinces by the Red Army (Transnistria, northern Bukovina, and Bessarabia were in Soviet hands by mid-April, the rest of Bessarabia by August 1944). On July 8, 1943, Ion Antonescu approved the return from Transnistria to Romania of certain categories of Jews, such as war invalids, widows, orphans whose "parents of had been killed in the field of honor" during former active military in the Romanian army, Jews baptized before 1920, and those older than 70 years old. On November 12 of the same year he ordered the repatriation of all Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina, beginning with the aforementioned categories as well as "specialists necessary to Romania."⁷⁷ In December 1943 approximately 7,000 Jews entered Romanian territory from Transnistria, mostly natives of Dorohoi county; later efforts were confined to facilitating the emigration of 5,000 Jewish orphaned children to Palestine.⁷⁸ Very few able-bodied Jews managed to return to Romania during Antonescu's time and even fewer to Bessarabia and Bukovina.⁷⁹

The human cost of the murderous Romanian policy of "purification" of Bukovina from Jews was appalling. While the number of Jews killed is impossible to assess with any degree of certainty, it is clear that it was in

tary officers since he was not an antisemite and in fact was receptive to Jewish needs and complaints (see "Oameni de omenie," 93–95); this view is supported by Schellhorn's characterization of Dragalina (see Schellhorn, 65–66). One Jewish survivor from Cernăuți noted that the general easing of the atmosphere in the city occurred after the defeat at Stalingrad, "when the Romanians realized that the end was coming," and that change was evident at all levels of administration (Tsviling Matiss, USHMM Archives, Acc. 1029 # 252).

⁷⁷ The decisions are published in Benjamin, ed., *Evreii din România între anii 1940–1944*, vol. 4; and documents 270 and 274 in Șerbănescu, Ion, ed., *Bilanțul tragediei—renașterea speranței* (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1998), 303, 309–310.

⁷⁸ See Balta, *Rumänien und Grossmächte*, 343–345; and Carp, *Cartea neagră*, vol. 3, 422–425, 473–478.

⁷⁹ A June 1944 police report from the town Bolgrad in southern Bessarabia mentions 108 Jews who were deported to Transnistria and received permits to return to southern Bessarabia, "where a permanent residency was fixed for them." (ANRM, 680/1/4766 vol. 1, pp. 154–155, USHMM Archives, RG-54.002M, reel 17).

the thousands, possibly approaching ten thousand (the overall number of victims of this murderous campaign in the two provinces is assessed by the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania as anywhere between 45,000 and 60,000, most of them in Bessarabia). Many more died in concentration camps and during death marches in Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria. According to Romanian data—which is incomplete and probably inaccurate—some 86,000 Jews were deported to Transnistria from Bukovina and 56,000 from Bessarabia. The death rate among deportees in Transnistria was very high; according to the assessment of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, between 105,000 and 120,000 of the deportees died.⁸⁰

Such was the terrible price paid by the Jews of the two provinces in for the sake of an ethnically pure Romania. Even so, Ion Antonescu and his supporters believed that only a small part of what they called “the national ideal” had been achieved. Their overall aim was much more radical and ambitious: the insane vision of the complete ethnic purification of all Romania, not “merely” of its two eastern provinces, and of all minorities, not “merely” of Jews. There can be no doubt that, had the war turned out as they hoped, this plan would have been carried through to the end, with a simply unimaginable toll of death and destruction.

⁸⁰ For the latest and most authoritative assessments of the numbers of victims, see ICHR, *Final Report*, 382. On the fate of Jews deported to Transnistria, see *ibid.*, 141–168, and Jean Ancel, *Transnistria, 1941–1942: The Romanian Mass Murder Campaigns*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2003), translated from Hebrew into English (vols. 2–3 contain documents in Romanian).