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THE JUNE/JULY 1940 ROMANIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM BESSARABIA AND NORTHERN BUKOVINA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ON INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN ROMANIA

Introduction

Long after the end of the Second World War, the summer 1940 annexation of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and the county of Herța by the Soviet Union was still a taboo subject in Romanian historiography. Gradually, however, as Romania loosened its relations with Moscow, studies began to be published on this topic, along with research on interwar Romania. As a result of the studies on Bessarabia and Bukovina, Romania became the only country from the former Soviet bloc where research was published on the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. This matter, however, was largely subordinated to the problematic relationship between Romania and the Soviet Union. When bilateral relations deteriorated, references would appear to the June 1940 Soviet ultimatum forcing Romania to relinquish sovereignty over the two provinces. When relations improved, communist Romanian propaganda avoided talk about the ultimatum. Due to these vacillations, until 1989 the best studies of the annexation of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, and the county of Herța were written abroad.¹ After 1989, this omission of Romanian historiography was partly rectified. From this point onward, both general and specialized research of varying scholarly quality began to tackle the subject.² At the same time, a series of

¹ Among the works analyzing the subject: Gregorie Gafenco: *Preliminaires de la guerre de l'Est* (Fribourg, 1944 [Romanian version, 1996]); Platon Chirnoagă, *Istoria politică și militară a războiului României contra Uniunii Sovietice* (Madrid, 1965); Maria Manoliu-Manea, ed., *The Tragic Plight of a Border Area: Bessarabia and Bucovina* (Los Angeles: American Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1983); Mihai Pelin, "Săptămâna Patimilor" in *Antonescu, Mareșalul României și războaiele de întregire*, ed. Iosif Constantin Drăgan (Venice, 1988), vol. 1: pp. 29-130.

² From the works published we note: Ion Constantin, *România, marile puteri și problema Basarabiei* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995); Florin Constantiniu, *Între Hitler și Stalin. România și Pactul Ribbentrop-Molotov* (Bucharest: Danubius, 1991); Florin Constantiniu, *1941: Hitler, Stalin și România* (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2003); Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român*, 3rd ed., (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2003); Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *Bătălia pentru Basarabia* (Iași: Editura Moldova: 1990); Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu and Ion Constantin, *Basarabia în anii celui de-al doilea război mondial* (Iași: Institutul European, 1995); Dinu C. Giurescu, *România în cel de-al doilea război mondial (1939-1943)* (Bucharest: All Educational, 1999); Mircea Mușat, *Drama României Mari* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației România, 1992); Ioan Scurtu and Constantin Hlihor, *Anul 1940. Drama românilor dintre Prut și Nistru* (Bucharest: Academiei de Înalte Studii Militare, 1992); Ioan Scurtu and Constantin Hlihor, *Complot împotriva României. 1939-1947* (Bucharest: Academiei de Înalte Studii Militare, 1994); Ion Șișcanu, *Raptul Basarabiei* (Chișinău: Universitas Chișinău, 1992); Ion Șișcanu, *Uniunea Sovietică-România 1940* (Chișinău, 1995).

documents from Romanian and foreign archives were published that enhanced the understanding of the events of June/July 1940.³ Equally important were the revelations of published memoirs, which proliferated in the post-1989 period.⁴

Despite the richness of the research on Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, and the county of Herța, relations between ethnic Romanians and ethnic minorities (notably Jews) for the June-August 1940 period remains under-researched. If before 1989 the topic was not approached due to the ban issued by the Communist regime, during the postcommunist transition it remained on the backburner despite the repeal of all official bans.⁵ Few scholars inside Romania addressed this topic.⁶ Possible causes for the hesitation of Romanian researchers to approach this subject may include limited access to archives and especially the reluctance to deal with a painful and uncomfortable past that contradicted a self-image forged during the years of communist rule. More recently, however, as Romania has begun to integrate into European and Euro-Atlantic security and political structures (namely, NATO and the EU), Romanian historiography has become more interested in this subject as well as the broader issue of Romanian participation in the Holocaust—a taboo for many decades. Gradually, the topic began to be approached at scholarly conferences and in doctoral dissertations, books and scholarly articles, and media broadcasts. The following chapter examines the withdrawal of the Romanian civil administration and troops from Bessarabia and its impact on relations between ethnic Romanians and the local

³ Vitalie Varatec and Ion Șișcanu, eds., *Pactul Molotov-Ribbentrop și consecințele lui pentru Basarabia. Culegere de documente* (Chișinău: “Universitatea,” 1991); Ion Mamina, *Consilii de Coroană* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997); Florica Dobre, Vasilica Manea, and Lenuța Nicolescu, *Anul 1940. Armata română de la ultimatum la dictat. Documente*, 3 vols. (Bucharest: Europa Nova, 2000).

⁴ The following are among the most important memoirs: Carol al II-lea, *Între datorie și pasiune. Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 2: 1939-1940, “Șansa” SRL, ed. Marcel-Dumitru Ciucă and Narcis Dorin Ion (Bucharest, 1996); Raoul Bossy, *Amintiri din viața diplomatică*, vol. 2, (Bucharest, 1993); Grigore Gafencu, *Jurnal. 1940-1942* (Bucharest: Globus [1991]); Paul Mihail, *Jurnal (1940-1944)*, (Bucharest, 1999); Constantin Pantazi, *Cu Mareșalul până la moarte. Memorii* (Bucharest: Publiferom, 1999); Constantin Sănătescu, *Jurnal* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993); Mihail Sebastian, *Jurnal 1935-1944* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1996).

⁵ Among the notable exceptions, see: Dinu C. Giurescu, *Evreii din România, 1939-1944*. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann în Ierusalim. Un raport asupra banalității răului* (Bucharest: All, 1997); Mihai Pelin, *Adevăr și legendă* (Bucharest: EDART, 1994); Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *Armata, mareșalul și evreii. Cazurile Dorohoi, București, Iași, Odessa* (Bucharest: International Publishing, 1998).

⁶ For a notable exception, see: Lya Benjamin, ed., “Legislația antievreiască,” vol. 1, *Evreii din România între anii 1940-1944* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1993); Lya Benjamin, *Prigoană și rezistență în istoria evreilor din România. 1940-1944. Studii* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001). Among the scholarship from abroad during this period: Jean Ancel, ed., *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust*, 12 vols. (Jerusalem: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986); Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României. Problema evreiască, 1993-1994*, 2 vols. (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001); Radu Ioanid, *Sabia Arhanghelului Mihail. Ideologia fascistă în România* (Bucharest: Diogene, 1994; English edition, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Radu Ioanid, *Evreii sub regimul Antonescu* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1997).

Jewish population. It uses evidence from Romania's National Archives, the Romanian Military Archives, and the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Further research in former Soviet archives is needed.

The Internal and External Circumstances of the Annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina

The International Context: Soviet-German Relations, 1939-1940

The annexation of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and the county of Herța was a direct result of the radical changes in the balance of power at the end of the 1930s. These changes determined that central and southeastern Europe would remain at the disposal of the two totalitarian powers, Germany and the USSR. On August 23, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union concluded a non-aggression treaty, the “Ribbentrop-Molotov Treaty/Pact.” The Soviets demanded the addition of a secret protocol in which the two powers divided up spheres of influence: central and southeastern Europe—an area stretching between the Baltic and Black Seas—as well as Finland, Estonia, and Latvia were assigned to the Soviet sphere; Lithuania and the town of Vilna were assigned to the German sphere. Germany and the Soviet Union then divided Poland, roughly following the line of the Narev, Vistula, and San Rivers. In southeastern Europe, with Germany declaring “complete disinterest for these regions,” the Soviets claimed Bessarabia.⁷ Here it is worth noting that the German version of the Pact referred to Romanian “regions” to be ceded to the Soviet Union, whereas the Soviet version named only Bessarabia. The Soviets would subsequently use the German version in June 1940 to make additional requests for Northern Bukovina and Herța County.

The Ribbentrop-Molotov Treaty constituted the prelude to the Second World War, which began on September 1, 1939, with Germany's attack on Poland. On September 28, 1939, during a visit to Moscow by German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, a treaty of friendship and border recognition was concluded between Germany and the Soviet Union; this treaty, however, made no changes to the initial agreement on southeastern Europe. During the following period, Germany and the Soviet Union took steps to enforce their agreements on the

⁷ *Pactul Ribbentrop-Molotov și consecințele lui pentru Basarabia. Culegere de documente* (Chisinau: Universitas, 1991), p. 5.

respective spheres of influence. Moscow moved to impose “mutual assistance treaties” (i.e., terms of occupation) on Estonia (September 28, 1939), Latvia (October 5, 1939), and Lithuania (October 11, 1939), which allowed the Soviet government to send 85,000 troops to those countries. In contrast to the Baltic States, Finland opposed Soviet demands on territorial revisions and refused to grant the Soviet troops access to its facilities. Consequently, on November 30, 1940, the Red Army attacked Finland. The war raged on until March 12, 1940, when the two countries signed a peace treaty.

The Internal and International Situation of Romania, September 1939 – June 1940

The signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Treaty worsened Romania’s geopolitical situation, as it was consequently inserted between the two great powers, Germany and the USSR, both of which—though particularly the Soviet Union—were hostile to Romania. Faced with this situation, the Romanian Crown Council of September 6, 1939, decided to proclaim the neutrality of Romania. At the same time, the government in Bucharest tried to secure Romanian borders and avoid military confrontation by operationalizing the Balkan bloc of neutral countries, the Balkan Agreement of 1934, and by attempting to reach a non-aggression pact with the Soviets with the assistance of Turkish mediation. There is evidence that the Soviets wanted to impose on Romania the “Baltic model”—mutual assistance treaties followed by swift occupation—yet Finnish resistance during winter 1939/40 forced the Soviets to delay the application of this strategy.⁸

The end of Soviet-Finnish hostilities in spring 1940 allowed Moscow to focus on “the Romanian case.” On March 29, 1940, V. M. Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister, informed Romanian authorities that the absence of a non-aggression treaty between the two countries was because of “the existence of an unsolved legal problem: i.e., that of Bessarabia, whose annexation by Romania was never recognized by the Soviet Union.” He then added that the Soviet Union “never considered the return of Bessarabia by military means.”⁹ This sudden Soviet concern with Bessarabia signaled that Romania was now a focus of the Kremlin’s attention. Through April and May 1940, Romanian-Soviet relations became ever more strained; still, the

⁸ For a more detailed discussion, see Florin Constantiniu, *1941. Hitler, Stalin și România* (Bucharest: Encyclopedic Universe, 2002), pp. 94-98; and Vitalie Varatec, *6 zile din istoria Bucovinei (28 iunie – 3 iulie 1940). Invazia și anexarea nordului Bucovinei de către URSS* (Rădăuți-Bukovina: Institutului Bucovina-Basarabia, 2001), pp. 12-26.

⁹ Vitalie Varatec, *Preliminarii ale raptului Basarabiei și nordului Bucovinei, 1938-1940* (Libra, 2000), p. 229-230.

uncertain developments on the Western Front prompted caution in Moscow. When German victory seemed assured, Stalin decided to occupy the Baltic countries and to directly address his issues with Romania. Soviet preparations for combat soon began on June 9, 1940, when massive Soviet forces were placed on Romania's northern and eastern borders.¹⁰ Faced with German victory, the Romanian government decided on May 28, 1940, to intensify its rapprochement with Germany, whom it considered the only power capable of containing the Soviets.¹¹ This about-face in foreign policy was accompanied by an increased collaboration of the Royal Dictatorship with the German-backed Iron Guard.

The Soviet Ultimatum to Romania (June 26-28, 1940)

On June 23, 1940, the day after the signing of the German-French truce, Molotov met Schulenburg, the German ambassador in Moscow, and proposed to discuss the situation of Bessarabia and Bukovina. The mention of Bukovina—which was a former Hapsburg territory incorporated into Romania in 1918 and not part of the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov deal—irritated the Germans, who opposed Molotov's terms. Negotiations were renewed between June 24 and June 25, resulting in the Germans yielding to Soviet demands on Bessarabia, yet maintaining their opposition to the cession of Bukovina. Faced with this opposition, the Soviets compromised by asking only for northern Bukovina.

These negotiations fractured the German-Soviet relationship.¹² Arguably, the ensuing tensions were at the heart of the secret German resolution to attack the Soviet Union. As early as the beginning of July 1940, the German High Command drew up the first study on a campaign against the Soviet Union, the Lossberg Plan. In any event, the Soviet-German negotiations sealed Romania's fate. The Kremlin decided to rapidly enforce the negotiated terms of the Moscow agreement with Germany. On June 26, 1940, at 10 p.m., Molotov handed a note to Gheorghe Davidescu, chief of the Romanian diplomatic mission in Moscow. The note demanded the "return" of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union as well as the "transfer" of northern Bukovina to Soviet sovereignty. The answer from Bucharest was expected the next day. But, due to faulty

¹⁰ *Detalii în Pactul Ribbentrop-Molotov și consecințele lui pentru Basarabia* (1991), p. 14-41.

¹¹ Grigore Gafencu, *Jurnal. 1940-1942* (Bucharest: Globus, 1939), p. 18-19.

¹² Florin Constantiniu, *Între Hitler și Stalin. România și Pactul Ribbentrop-Molotov* (Bucharest: Danubius, 1991), pp. 104-105; Florin Constantiniu, *1941. Hitler, Stalin și România*, pp. 114-115.

phone lines, the text of the ultimatum did not reach Romania until the morning of June 27.¹³ The situation was made even worse by Davidescu's refusal to take the map the Soviets had attached to the ultimatum note. The map included Herța in the Soviet claims, though it was not included in the text of the ultimatum note. Since the Romanian government was not aware of this map, the exact location of the new Soviet border remained unknown, with dramatic consequences for the Romanian authorities and troops in Herța.

The day of June 27, 1940, was tense for the Romanian government, as it became obvious that Romania was militarily and politically isolated: Germany advised the Romanians to yield to Soviet demands, Italy did the same, and the governments in Belgrade and Athens insisted that Bucharest should not disturb regional peace through military resistance. Only Turkey—ready to enact the Balkan Pact, which provided for armed action against Bulgaria in case of Bulgarian aggression—promised to back Romania.¹⁴ When the two Crown Councils convened on June 27, the options available were stark: acceptance of Soviet demands (surrender, in other words) or armed resistance. Hoping to maintain the rest of Romanian territory, the majority of Council members decided to surrender.¹⁵ The Romanian government sent its official response to Moscow on June 28: “In order to avoid the grave consequences that might follow the use of force and the opening of hostilities in this part of Europe, the Romanian government is obliged to accept the conditions of evacuation indicated in the Soviet response.”¹⁶ The Romanian government did demand that the Soviet-imposed, four-day deadline for evacuation be modified in order to ensure better organization of the operation. The Soviets rejected this demand. This decision to surrender has remained a controversial topic in Romanian historiography. Before 1989 Romanian historians had, for the most part, praised the realism of the adopted solution. Over time, however, the decision came to be criticized.

Another important element of the Soviet ultimatum was the surprise it produced both in the political establishment and in popular sentiment. The background of this surprise was the rapid fall of France, Romania's long-time advocate, which was perceived as a terrifying blow.

¹³ Texts of the notes of July 27-28, 1940, in Ioan Scurtu, Constantin Mocanu, and Doina Smârcea, *Documente privind istoria României între anii 1918-1944* (Bucharest: Didactică și Pedagogică, 1995), pp. 529-530; Ioan Scurtu and Constantin Hlihor, *Anul 1940. Drama Românilor dintre Prut și Nistru* (Bucharest: Academiei Militare, n.d.), pp. 146-148.

¹⁴ Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *op.cit.*, 148-150.

¹⁵ For the Crown Councils' discussions, see Ion Mamina, *Consilii de coroană* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică), pp. 189-209.

¹⁶ Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *Bătălia diplomatică pentru Basarabia. 1918-1940*, p. 221.

Writing about the decision to surrender, Romanian diplomat Alexandru Cretzianu mused: “It is enough to say that the king, the prime minister, and the military chiefs seem to have lost, for a brief moment, their dearest illusions and, at the same time, their lucidity. They were simply unable to find the necessary strength to face up to the disaster.”¹⁷ Yet, the fall of France and the shock it provoked did not make the decision to surrender any less questionable, particularly as the same Romanian government had issued categorical statements during the preceding months indicating that they would not accept surrender without putting up military resistance; for example, on January 6, 1940, in Chişinău, King Carol II affirmed his resolution to protect Bessarabia at any price.¹⁸ Moreover, the government had been flooded with intelligence revealing Soviet intentions, although the technical details of the aggression were not known; nevertheless, it remained passive. After the opening of hostilities on the Western Front, many politicians and military commanders contented themselves to hope for WWI-type developments. As a result of the surrender, Romania lost 50,762 square kilometers (44,500 km² in Bessarabia and 6,262 km² in Northern Bukovina). Of this land lost, 4,021,086 hectares were agricultural (20.5% of farmland in Romania). The ceded territories were home to 3,776,309 people, of whom 53.49 percent were Romanians; 10.34 percent were Russians; 15.3 percent were Ukrainians and Ruthenians; 7.27 percent were Jews; 4.91 percent were Bulgarians; 3.31 percent were Germans; and 5.12 percent were of miscellaneous ethnicity.

The annexation of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, and the county of Herţa by the Soviet Union had important consequences for the domestic and international situation of Romania. In foreign policy, Romania strengthened its relationship with Nazi Germany. On July 1, 1940, the Romanian government gave up on the Anglo-French guarantees of April 13, 1939. The next day, Carol II requested a German military mission to come to Romania. Domestically, on July 4, 1940, a new government was formed, led by Ion Gigurtu, a politician well connected to the government and big businesses of Nazi Germany. The Iron Guard (the Legion) was represented in the new government by three officials: Horia Sima, minister of religion and arts, (though Sima would resign on July 8), Vasile Noveanu, minister of treasury, and Augustin Bideanu, undersecretary of state in the Ministry of Finance. The composition of the new government signaled that Romania was orienting toward the Axis powers. The goal of these

¹⁷ Alexandru Cretzianu, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁸ Carol II, *Între datorie şi pasiune. Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 2, Şansa SRL, p. 85.

changes was not the reinstatement of an old foreign policy tradition, as the government alleged, but a desperate attempt of the Carol II regime to avoid new territorial losses while preserving political power.

The Evacuation of Romanian Military Units from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina

The Situation of Romanian Military Forces in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, June 1940

From September 1939, the majority of Romanian military forces were deployed between the eastern Carpathians and the Dniester River. Deployed here was the Army Group I (which had subordinated the Third and Fourth Armies), the Mountain Corps with the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Cavalry Divisions, and eight fortification regiments. In fact, 65 percent of Romanian military forces—1,200,000 troops—were deployed on the Eastern front. According to Operational Order no. 18 of June 15, 1940, the 3rd Army was to wage war on the Ceremuș and Upper Prut rivers. The fallback position was along the Rodna Mountains–Little Siret–Sihna–Jijia line of defense, with a “red line” defense in the Zupania–Prislop–Cârlibaba region. In Bessarabia, the 4th Army was to defend the Cornești–Lower Răutul–Dniester line. The defense of Northern of Bukovina and Bessarabia was the responsibility of the same armies, which were augmented with specially constituted army units.¹⁹

The growing tension on Romania’s eastern border made army commanders ask for details on their missions in the event of Soviet aggression and the adoption of preliminary measures to evacuate selected property and staff from Bessarabia. For example, on June 12, 1940, the 4th Army proposed that the families of officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and civil servants as well as the property of cultural institutions, churches, factories and warehouses be sent to Romania. The government did not approve these demands for political reasons.

At the same time, the Army High Command drew up a series of evacuation plans for the territories between the Dniester and the Prut. The Tudor Plan was based on the railway timetable during peacetime. It also called for the movement on foot of convoys and evacuation caravans.

¹⁹ Romanian Military Archives (henceforth: AMR), fond 948, 3rd Section, Operations, file no. 1891, f. 128-131.

The Mircea Plan, on the other hand, was based on the wartime railway timetable, with caravans moving only during the night. These blueprints were not connected to the international situation and were to be operationalized only “in the event special orders [were] issued.”²⁰ According to the plans, prefects, recruiting centers, police and gendarmerie as well as local priests were put in charge of the evacuation operations. Orders were issued that military headquarters and administrative offices were not to abandon the ceded territory until combat units were ready to launch complete evacuation operations.²¹ The civilian population could be evacuated as ordered, whereas “non-sympathizing ethnic minorities” were slated to remain. The evacuation of reservists and paramilitaries was the first priority, and the evacuation of the civilian population was to come before the evacuation of property.²² Particularly problematic was that the two plans split a population of millions into privileged and pariah categories, with the latter being denied the choices of regular citizens. Although the documents were technically strictly secret, their content was largely known, especially those provisions concerning ethnic minorities. This provoked distress among the ranks of ethnic minorities, and particularly among the Jews. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Jews took part in actions against Romanian authorities or the Romanian administration.

The Odessa Commission and the Soviet Advance

The Soviet ultimatum demanded that the Romanian troops evacuate the territory of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in four days, beginning on June 28. It also proposed the establishment of a joint commission to discuss the problems concerning the Romanian Army evacuation and the takeover by the Soviet troops. In its response, the Romanian government accepted the idea of the commission and asked for an extension of the evacuation deadline. On the same day, Gen. Florea Tenescu, chief of the General Staff, appointed Gen. Aurel Aldea as the head of the Romanian government delegation in the Romanian-Soviet evacuation commission. The second representative was Col. Hagi Stoica (Ret.), ex-commissioner for Polish refugees. Among other duties, Aldea was charged with drafting daily evacuation plans for the Romanian troops.²³

²⁰ Ibid., file no. 1836, f. 23.

²¹ Ibid., f. 24.

²² Ibid.

²³ Archives of the External Affairs Ministry (henceforth: MAE), fond 71/USSR, vol. 206, f. 2.

The Romanian delegation headed for Odessa, where the commission was to meet, during the night of June 28. During the first meeting, the Romanian representatives protested against the excessively fast advance of the Soviet troops and asked that a plan be drawn up for the evacuation of Romanian troops and the advance of the Red Army with the intent to separate the two armies by a day's march. The Soviet representatives rejected this proposal, arguing that the Romanian delegation had arrived too late. At same time, they delivered a draft agreement on the two armies' march schedule to the Romanian party and asked for the transfer of all responsibility for the evacuations to the Romanian command, including responsibility for "misunderstandings that might arise between the Red Army and the Romanian army."²⁴ The Soviet party accepted a one-day extension of the evacuation—until the July 3, 1940, at 2 p.m., Moscow time. The Soviets also demanded that the Romanians hand over maps concerning military and civilian infrastructure in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. Joint evacuation commissions were to be set up on the Red Army's advance lines.

During the second meeting on June 30, 1940, Romanian negotiators made a series of observations regarding the Soviet draft agreement, and the commission adopted "the evacuation plan of the Romanian troops from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina." At the same time, the commission drafted seventeen evacuation plans for the Romanians troops and assigned a joint evacuation commission for each of them. Yet, as early as the night of June 27/28, 1940, without waiting for the Romanian response, the Soviet troops crossed the border at five points. On June 28, 1940, the Romanian cities of Cernauți, Hotin, Bălți, Chișinău, and Cetatea Albă were already under Soviet occupation. Soviet Commanders dispatched mobile units (motorized infantry and cavalry) to move quickly toward the Prut River, in advance of the Romanian evacuating troops. The Soviet troops would regularly establish checkpoints to disarm, threaten with death, and humiliate the Romanian military.²⁵ As Soviet troops reached the Prut on June 30, 1940, and dug in, the issue of the one-day march time between the two armies became meaningless—a fact expressed by Lieutenant-General Kozlov, the Soviet representative.²⁶ It was an accomplished fact that completely swept aside the Odessa Commission deal on the four-day evacuation deadline. Needless to say, the faster-than-agreed Soviet army advance created serious problems for the Romanian army's evacuation from Bessarabia and the Northern Bukovina.

²⁴ Ibid., f. 6.

²⁵ AMR, fond 948, file 527, f. 37 (Report of Captain C. Georgescu, 26th Infantry Division).

²⁶ MAE, fond 71/USSR, file 98, f. 47.

The Evacuation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina

The first Soviet ultimatum of June 26, 1940, was preceded by Romanian army preparations for defensive combat (Mobilization Order no. 18). Yet, on June 28, 1940, at 7:00 a.m., Romanian commanders of Army Group One of the 3rd and 4th Armies received Order no. 6006 from the Romanian High Command, informing them of the cession of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina and ordering them to evacuate several major cities (Cernauți, Cetatea Albă, and Chișinău) on the same day. Army commanders were asked to take steps to prevent Romanian troops from opening fire on the Soviets or reacting to Soviet provocations as well as to prevent the destruction of property. Commanders were also asked to contact Soviet troops and prepare Romanian army units to move westward toward the Prut River in two to three hours.²⁷

The Soviets, however, displayed uncommonly aggressive tactics, which put Romanian troops, especially those stationed in Bessarabia, in very dangerous or fatal situations. Alexandru Cretzianu of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs recorded: “continuous waves of protest from the Chief of the Army High Command reported an increasing number of incidents, which left numerous dead and wounded behind.” Moreover, “having to obey the order not to defend themselves against Soviet aggression, some Romanian army officers committed suicide.” Therefore, the Romanian Army High Command “insisted that the order prohibiting the Romanian military to shoot back in self defense be revoked.”²⁸ The Cretzianu notes summarize the reports of Romanian field commanders about the humiliation,²⁹ abusive arrest,³⁰ and disarmament of the Romanian troops.³¹

In general, most in the Romanian military showed competence, honesty and discipline. On the other hand, however, there were many instances in which parts of the Romanian military did not conform to these values or simply disintegrated. For example, feeling they needed to protect their families—a perception amplified by Soviet propaganda—many minority soldiers and Romanian natives from Bessarabia deserted their units and returned home with their gear. As a consequence, Army Divisions 12, 15, 21, 26 and 27 lost more than half of their men because of desertions. On July 4, 1940, the Third and Fourth Armies reported that 233 officers, 26 NCOs,

²⁷ AMR, fond Micro-films, roll P 21645, frame 399, file 948, file no. 1067, f. 54, 55.

²⁸ Alexandru Cretzianu, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, fond 948, file 155, fond 107; 109.

³⁰ *Ibid.* f. 108.

and 48,629 soldiers did not report for duty (of which only 5 officers, 6 NCOs and 42 soldiers had died).³² The scope of disintegration of some army units was so great that a large amount of war materiel was simply abandoned behind the evacuation lines. Also, some army commanders were so surprised by the surrender and its terms that they did not draft any evacuation plans. Sometimes there was absolutely no communication between entire army units. Many commanders showed lack of leadership and military courage, and in many units the evacuation resembled flight more than a consummate evacuation. On July 3, 1940, at 2 p.m., the Soviets declared the new Romanian-Soviet border definitively closed.

At this point, the tragedy of the Romanian army and civil administration was nearly over, and many were safely evacuated; still, a good number were trapped behind.³³ The Romanian representatives on the Odessa Commission pleaded for the repatriation of 15,000 people and the return of abandoned army materiel captured by Soviet troops. As the Soviet representatives on the Commission refused to give their written consent, repatriation depended on the goodwill of local Soviet authorities, who had released only 3,000 people by the end of August 1940.³⁴ For many of those released, the condition of liberation was to consent in writing to serve the interests of the Soviet Union.

The evacuation of the Romanian army from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina took place in the absence of evacuation preparation, as on June 26 and 27, 1940, Romanian field commanders received orders only on combat preparations. In addition to the surprise of the decision to surrender, one can add the exceedingly short evacuation period, the Soviet disrespect of evacuation deadlines, and the provocations and abuses by the Soviet military as causes of the problems associated with the evacuation. The humiliation of having to abandon Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina without a fight as well as the severe terms of the surrender generated strong resentment in the ranks of the military toward King Carol II and his regime; the army was demoralized and blamed politicians for the debacle. In numerous reports and investigations it was pointed out that the order to withdraw was received with bewilderment, disillusion, and concern by the military. For example, one report stated: “The abandonment of Romanian territory without a fight disoriented both the officers and the rank-and-file soldiers who, although

³¹ Ibid., fond Micro-films, roll I.II, 2.1644, frame 104.

³² Ibid., fond 3, file 1, f. 139; fond Micro-films, roll P.II.1.1124, frame 507.

³³ Ibid., roll P.II.2.653, frame 500.

³⁴ MAE, fond 71/USSR, tome 99, f. 105.

aware of their inferiority in numbers and war materiel, had resolved to resist at any price the Soviet army, whom they looked down on as badly trained.”³⁵

Attitudes and Actions of the Jews during the Evacuation of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and County of Herța

One of the dominant myths in Romanian historiography about the period of June 28-July 3, 1940, was that the Jews in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina behaved disloyally toward the retreating Romanian troops and civilian administration. This belief, though false, was used to justify subsequent anti-Jewish Romanian actions.

The Situation of the Jews of Romania, 1919-1940

On December 9, 1919, within the framework of the Versailles Treaty, the Romanian government, together with France, England, Italy, and the United States, signed the Treaty on Ethnic Minorities. This agreement obliged Romania to grant citizenship to all ethnic Austrians and Hungarians born in former Hapsburg lands that became part of Romania in 1918 (Transylvania and Bukovina). The same document granted citizenship to all Jews who then lived in Romania and who did not hold other citizenship. These obligations were subsequently codified in the new Romanian Constitution (1923), which prohibited discrimination based on religion, religious denomination, ethnic origins or language (articles 7 and 8).³⁶ A new law was passed on February 25, 1924, to extend citizenship to former citizens of the Hapsburg and Russian empires who resided in Transylvania, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș; it was extended to those in Bessarabia between March 27 and April 9, 1918, and to those in Bukovina on November 28, 1918.³⁷ This legislation was in force for nearly a decade and a half. During this time, the Jewish population participated freely in all domains of Romanian life.

At the same time, however, antisemitic currents became bolder. Their political manifestations were the League of National Christian Defense (LANC), led by A.C. Cuza and from 1930 the Iron Guard (also called The Legion of Archangel Michael). Running under the name “Totul pentru Tara” (Everything for the Motherland), the outlawed Iron Guard won 15.53

³⁵ Ibid., fond 948, Section 1, file 155, f. 108.

³⁶ Scurtu, Mocanu, and Smârcea, *Documente din Istoria României*, p. 558.

³⁷ *Evreii din România între anii 1940-1944*, vol. 1, “Legislația antievreiască” (Anti-Jewish legislation), pp. 26-27.

percent of the votes in the 1937 elections and was ranked third on the political scene. Yet, none of the parties won more than 40 percent of the votes (the minimum required by Romanian law), and King Carol II used the opportunity to establish a personal dictatorship by appointing an outside party, the National Christian Party (NCP), to form the government. The NCP was established in 1935 through the merger of Cuza's LANC and nationalist Octavian Goga's National Agrarian Party. This government, led by Octavian Goga, lasted forty-four days.

The Goga government instituted Romania's first official antisemitic measures. On January 21, 1938, the Goga government issued State Decree no. 169 on the Revision of Citizenship, which required Jews to register documents proving they had not settled in Romania between 1918 and 1924 within twenty days of the publication of "nationality logs" by the local municipalities. Even though in the Old Regat this deadline was extended, it nevertheless proved to be far too brief for all Jews to register or find the required papers. In addition, Romanian civil servants entrusted with the procedures committed many abuses. As a consequence, of 617,396 Jews whose citizenship status was "reviewed" (84 percent of the 728,115 Romanian Jews), 225,222 lost their citizenship and were considered foreign residents. They were able to remain in Romania with renewable one-year permits. A prelude to advancing foreign and domestic antisemitism, the citizenship review severely affected the situation of Romanian Jews and foretold a succession of antisemitic measures that would lead to the tragedy of Romanian Jewry.

The Jews and the Romanian withdrawal from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina

There are rich archival resources on the situation of the civilian population in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from June 28 to August 30, 1940. Numerous military records (such as operation logs, reports, notes, and diaries) and civilian documents (administrative reports, police reports, personal diaries) indicate that some Jews from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina participated in anti-Romanian/pro-Soviet actions during this period. Scholars who emphasize the relevance of these documents point to such actions as the flying of Soviet flags, rallies of support for the Soviet Union, desecration of Romanian government signs, public monuments and Romanian Orthodox churches, participation in Soviet actions to disarm Romanian soldiers and officers, confiscation of Romanian government property, mistreatment of Romanian army personnel, and even murder. It is also argued that these actions were more numerous in towns with large Jewish populations (such as Cernauți, Cetatea Albă, Storjineț,

Hotin, Soroca, Chişinău, Bălţi, Ungheni, and Ismail) or in villages situated on the retreating routes of Romanian army units.

Some historians argue that the high number of such incriminating documents reflects a historical reality: the Jews in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were anti-Romanian.³⁸ However, a critical examination of the documents depicts something quite different than the catastrophic picture presented to the public since the cession of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. First, it is important to note that many of the so-called incriminating documents contained generic evaluations and accusations about such collective entities as the “Jews from Bukovina,” “Jews from Chişinău,” “the Jewish population from Bălţi,” and “Jews and communists from Româneşti.” Moreover, field reports do not indicate any specific situations and give no names. Second, given the dramatic circumstances in which these documents were written, there were myriad instances of rumor spreading and exaggeration, as many in the withdrawing army and civilian population saw “communists,” “Jews,” and “Jewish communists” everywhere. Many times, these distortions were used to disguise the poor organization of the withdrawal. For example, after Gen. Constantin Atanasescu abandoned his troops and fled to Galaţi (a city in the Old Regat), his actions were blamed on ethnic minorities, including Jews; the cases of Gen. Ioan Ralcu and Gen. Marin Popescu were similar.

Third, many Romanian historians popularized narratives of mystification to make the 1940 attacks against the Jews justifiable. For example, in his book on Marshal Antonescu, historian Gheorghe Barbul invented the story of two Romanian officers caught up in the events of 1940 and 1941: in the first, Captain Enescu, committed suicide after the humiliation he was forced to endure by the Jews in Edineţ, Bessarabia, during the withdrawal; in the second, Captain Niculescu, a witness to that event, swore revenge and upon his return with the army to Edineţ in 1941 executed a number of Jews there; when offered redemption on the battlefield by Antonescu, he gave his life in the siege of Odessa.³⁹ Not only the story, but also the two protagonists were entirely fabricated.⁴⁰

Fourth, if the Jews were disloyal to Romania, they would not have withdrawn with Romanian troops, as many did, especially those who were prosperous. Fear of Soviet occupation was pervasive among ethnic Romanians and Jews alike. Unfortunately, some Jews were

³⁸ Jean Ancel, *op.cit.* See also Alexandru Şafran (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), p. 18.

³⁹ Gheorghe Barbul, *Memorial Antonescu. Al treilea om al Axei*, p. 131.

⁴⁰ Mihai Pelin, *op.cit.*, pp. 88-101.

prevented from joining the evacuation columns by the Romanian authorities, who were enforcing the “Tudor” and “Mircea” evacuation plans. Fifth, ethnic Ukrainians in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were known to espouse pro-Soviet attitudes and gave the Red Army a warm welcome. As these reports do not distinguish between Jews and Ukrainians, it is impossible to evaluate the level of Jewish participation. However, it is well known that only ethnic Germans, who were later re-settled, showed reserve, aware that they enjoyed the protection of the Third Reich. Sixth, even some ethnic Romanians welcome the Soviets in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. Such was the case in the town of Soroca, where local notables such as Mayor Gheorghe Lupașcu, former prefect Petre Sfeclă, National Renaissance Party (NRP) leader Alexandru Anop and school inspector Petre Hrițcu organized a rally to welcome “Soviet liberators.” As King Carol II noted on July 30, 1940, this was not an isolated case: “News from Bessarabia is even sadder. Unfortunately I was right about the so-called NRF, as some of its leaders there seemed to have converted to Bolshevism and were among the first to welcome the Soviet troops with red flags and flowers.”⁴¹

Confronted with an extremely serious crisis and doubting their regime could survive, Romanian government officials turned the Jews into a political “lighting rod,” channeling popular discontent toward the minority. Notable in this report is the reaction of the Romanian press, whose rage was directed more toward Jews than the Soviets, the real aggressors. Given that the Romanian press was censored in 1940, the government must have played a role in this bias. A typical form of anticipatory scapegoating was to let Jewish leaders know that the Romanian authorities might launch acts of repression against the Jews.⁴² In his memoirs, Chief Rabbi Alexandru Șafran noted that on June 26, 1940, Minister of Interior Mihail Ghelmegeanu asked to meet with Șafran and Filderman, whereupon he politely asked them to warn the Jewish population in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina not to launch provocations against the Romanian military and civilian authorities there.⁴³ After late June, Jewish leaders were denied access to high-ranking Romanian officials.

The actions of the Jewish community leaders did not help. To express the Jewish community’s disapproval of abuses committed against Romanian troops in Bessarabia, the Federation of Jewish Communities decided to send the chief rabbi to deliver a speech in the

⁴¹ Carol II, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴³ Alexandru Șafran, *op.cit.*, pp. 51-52.

Romanian Senate. Despite the crisis resulting from the loss of territory, however, the Romanian Parliament was not in session; so the Jewish position was instead made public on July 3, 1940, the day of national mourning. The official document professed the loyalty of the Jews from the Old Regat to Romania and its ideals and reminded Romanians that Jews had given their lives as soldiers in Romania's war of independence in 1877, the Balkan War of 1913, and the Great War.⁴⁴ At the same time, the July 10, 1940, issue of the newspaper *Curierul israelit* included an article pointing out the differences between the Jews from the Old Kingdom and those from the surrendered territories. It also severely criticized the anti-Romanian attitudes of those Jewish citizens who acted against Romanian authorities and troops during the evacuation.⁴⁵ The purpose of these Jewish efforts was to diminish violence against the Jews living west of Prut and to safeguard good relations with the Romanian population. The withdrawing Romanian army in Bessarabia and Bukovina had to deal with both the aggression of Soviet troops and the hostility among some of the population of Bessarabia, including some members of the local Jewish communities. Upon this reality, Romanian authorities superimposed the myth of collective Jewish guilt, resulting in a series of violent acts against the Jews living in territories under Romanian sovereignty.

Anti-Jewish Violence in Dorohoi and Galați

The Romanian withdrawal from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina was marked by a series of aggressions toward the Jews. They took place both in the surrendered territories and in the Old Regat province of Moldavia. The orders to commit violence against the Jews and even to kill them were not given by the Romanian High Command or by other high military structures. Rather, the situation started to unravel from below at the level of small units or individuals. They were usually expressions of antisemitism, of anger at the humiliation endured during the withdrawal, or of the "scapegoating" syndrome, which permeated popular opinion in Romania at the time, shaped as it was by a censored popular press. These acts of physical violence had no specific motivation. They were simply outbursts of rage against ordinary Jewish citizens who found themselves withdrawing with the Romanian troops and civilian authorities.

⁴⁴ Apud Alexandru Mihai Stoenescu, *Armata, mareșalul și evreii* (Bucharest: RAO, 1998), pp. 106-107.

⁴⁵ Jean Ancel, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

The available evidence points to a number of killings committed against Romanian Jews by the Romanian army. Thus, in Ciudei in Storojineț County and in Zăhănești in the county of Suceava, Maj. Vasile Carp, commander of the 86th Mountain Regiment ordered the execution of several Jews. Romanian army troops also executed two Jews in Comănești and one in Costina; another eight Jews suffered the same fate, and the list of murders would continue.⁴⁶ Jewish soldiers serving in the Romanian army were not spared either. On many occasions they were expelled from their units, humiliated, beaten, or even killed for no reason. This is all the more surprising as there is no evidence that Jewish officers abandoned their units during the withdrawal from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, which stood in stark contrast with the behavior of many Romanian officers. Also, the percentage of Jewish soldiers who deserted during the withdrawal was not higher than that of their Romanian counterparts.

Another serious development observable until mid-July 1940 was the physical brutality committed by soldiers or civilians against Jews traveling by train in the eastern Romanian province of Moldavia.⁴⁷ Sometimes, the victims were ethnic Romanians mistaken for Jews. The scope of violence committed on the trains was so great that the government sent armed soldiers to patrol trains and railway stations, arrest stray soldiers, and issue orders warning against the perpetration of such acts. As a consequence of these measures, by mid-July, this form of violence subsided. Acts of destruction and pillaging of Jewish property by the Romanian military were also widespread. For example, on July 2, 1940, in Siret, Moldavia, twenty-four Jewish stores were pillaged, causing damage estimated at two million Romanian lei; and Jewish individuals were robbed and beaten, as happened to Valerian Boca, former superintendent of the University of Cernăuți.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the most serious anti-Jewish actions of the Romanian army were the killings in Dorohoi, which had a sizeable Jewish population, and Galați. The scope of these killings almost equaled that of pogroms.⁴⁹ The murders in Dorohoi occurred against the backdrop of Romanian-Soviet clashes caused by misunderstandings about the exact location of the new Soviet-Romanian border. Two Romanian officers—Captain Ioan Boroș and Under-lieutenant Alexandru Dragomir, both of the 16th Artillery Regiment—died in the clashes. Yet, during the

⁴⁶ Ibid., op. cit. p. 251.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 211-217. For the Carp case, see also: AMR fond 948, section 2, information, file 941, 1513.

⁴⁸ AMR fond 948 section 2, Information file 941, f. 558-556.

⁴⁹ Ibid. f. 435.

same skirmishes with the Soviets, a Jewish soldier—Iancu Solomon of the 16th Artillery Regiment—was also killed as he attempted to protect his commander. This heroic gesture, however, went unnoticed by the perpetrators of the Dorohoi killings, most of whom were enrolled in the 3rd Group Border Guards and 8th Artillery Regiment.

The attacks against Jews in Dorohoi began on July 1, 1940, during the funerals of Captain Boros and Private Solomon in the Dorohoi cemetery. Romanian soldiers murdered the ten Jewish soldiers who attended the funerals on site. The carnage continued in other parts of the city, as well, leaving several dozen more Jews dead. After this brief episode, Romanian army soldiers went on a rampage in the city, killing scores of Jewish civilians (the official body count was fifty-three murdered Jews). In addition to the killings, many Dorohoi Jews were wounded. These attacks ceased only upon the intervention of Gen. Constantin Sănătescu, commander of the 8th Army Corps, who reprimanded Gen. Theodor Șerb, commander of the Corps of Border Guards. Sănătescu remarked: “I am surprised by these acts of banditry committed by what I thought were elite units.” He ordered an investigation to be conducted and the guilty to be punished.⁵⁰ The 8th Army Corps and Border Guards Corps’ subsequent investigation found that the responsibility lay mainly with Captains Gheorghe Teoharie and Constantin Serghie. Investigations also showed that the perpetrators purposefully distorted the facts by inventing stories about the Dorohoi Jews committing acts of aggression against the Romanian army throughout the city and about rumors of a Soviet attack panicking the troops.⁵¹ Yet, none of the perpetrators was court-martialed. The army instead dispensed administrative punishments (reassignment, brief arrest) to the officers and privates involved.

The Romanian army was responsible for an even higher number of civilian deaths during the events that took place on June 30, 1940, in Galați, a Romanian city that was an important evacuation center during the withdrawal from Bessarabia. More than 10,000 evacuees of different ethnicities were then crowded into the city, and in the tense atmosphere created by the evacuation, retreating Romanian army soldiers simply opened fire on a crowd of civilians, killing roughly three hundred, most of them Jews. The stated reason was that the civilians had disobeyed army orders or had broken off guarded columns. The exact number of Jews killed in

⁵⁰ For these cases see Jean Ancel, *op.cit.*, pp. 217-227; Alex. Mihail Stoenescu, *op.cit.*, pp. 120-139; Marius Mircu, *Pogromurile din Bucovina și Dorohoi*, “Viața Literară,” (Bucharest, 1945).

⁵¹ AMR, Border Guard Corps fond, file 2769, f. 851.

Moldavia during the withdrawal from Bessarabia and Bukovina ranges between 136 (of which ninety-nine bodies were identified) to several hundred or even thousands.

There was not a high level of Romanian army leadership involved in the bloodshed. Rather, the killings were a consequence of local initiatives. In fact, high-ranking commanders ordered an end to the anti-Jewish crimes. Like General Sănătescu, General Aurelian Son, commander of 11th Army Corps, demanded on July 4, 1940, that his subordinates “confront the excesses of the lower-ranking Romanian military and the Romanian population against Jews, as they are signs of a real pogrom.” He went on to call on all army unit commanders to “take all necessary measures” to “calm” the soldiers as well as the civilian population. Also, Colonel Mihai Chiriacescu, chief of the General Headquarters of the same army corps, warned, “the army must have no other preoccupation but that of defending the country.” He also ordered that “during the military education meetings with the troops, officers must insist that any action directed against the Jews is prohibited” and that perpetrators would be court marshaled.⁵²

Such interventions of the Army High Command structures made the violence stop, but the relationship between Jews and the Romanian population remained irreparable, even though the direct responsibility for these brutalities and killings belonged to isolated groups or individuals; they occurred against the background of an antisemitic psychosis, which scapegoated the entire Jewish community in Romania. This fixation was encouraged by many Romanian civil and military authorities as well as the popular press.

Anti-Jewish Measures of the Gigurtu Government (July/August 1940)

After the surrender of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, and the county of Herța, Romania sped up its rapprochement with Germany. The surrender also radically affected the Carol II regime, which chose to bring the Legion into the government. At the same time, the absurd argument that the Jews were responsible for the surrender became a popular myth among Romanians. These two developments accentuated the reactionary and anti-Jewish character of the Carol II regime.

On July 4, 1940, the Gigurtu government was inaugurated and immediately proceeded to take discriminatory measures against the Jews, arguably to placate public opinion, please the Axis powers, and persuade Germany to guarantee Romania’s national security. Thus, on August

⁵² This order was issued in a July 19, 1940, document.

8, 1940, at the request of the new government, Carol II proposed a bill (*decret-lege*) on “the legal status of Jews residing in Romania.” The bill identified as a Jew any individual of the Judaic faith, including those born of mixed marriages. Jews were divided into three categories: (1) Jews who came to Romania after December 30, 1918, (2) Jews who became citizens between 1879 and December 30, 1918, a category that included Jews decorated in Romania’s wars (1877, 1913, 1916-1919) and (3) individuals not belonging to any of the first two categories.

This bill literally excluded Jews from Romanian society by depriving them of the rights and obligations they were previously allowed. For the first and the second categories, the obligation to serve in the army was replaced by an obligation to pay extra taxes and to do community work. All Jews were prohibited from buying real estate in the countryside and adopting Romanian names. Racial segregation of Jews was ordered in the school system. Jews were to be terminated from all public institutions within a period of three to six months (the firing of Jewish public servants had in fact begun in July 1940) under threat of prison terms of up to two years. Mixed marriages were prohibited by law and punishable by two- to five-year prison terms. The anti-Jewish legislation of the Gurgu government reflected the growth of antisemitism in Romanian society and the amplification of this phenomenon generated by the evacuation of Bessarabia and Bukovina.

As Germany prepared to force Romania to cede Northern Transylvania to Hungary, the Carol II regime further weakened national solidarity by waging a war against Romania’s Jewish citizens. The fall of the regime at the beginning of September 1940 led to Antonescu’s even harsher dictatorship, to a clampdown on what little was left of civil liberties under Carol II, and to a state-run genocide of the Jews. The beginnings of this genocide can be located in the developments that occurred during the Romanian withdrawal from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in the summer of 1940.