

FINAL REPORT

of the

International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania

Presented to Romanian President Ion Iliescu

November 11, 2004
Bucharest, Romania

NOTE: The English text of this Report is currently in preparation for publication.

Antisemitic Propaganda and Official Rhetoric concerning the Judeo-Bolshevik Danger: Romanian Jews and Communism between 1938–1944.

Introduction

“Judeo-Bolshevism,” one of the central themes of fascist ideology, places the alliance between Jews and communists at the origins of the communist movement and the Bolshevik revolution. It considers Jews to be the true inspirers and culprits of undermining public order. Although it is a variant of an older conspiracy-theory view of history—the “Judeo-Masonic” plot narratives—the theory of the Judeo-Bolshevik plot has an even wider historical diffusion and greater political implications.

In the history of antisemitism, the “Judeo-Bolshevik danger” has been dealt with from at least three different and complementary angles. The first is its treatment as an epistemological formula, which places Judeo-Bolshevism into the cognitive structure of pre-scientific (“primitive”) thought, which makes it a hyper-deterministic concept, as in the “diabolic causality,” analyzed by Léon Poliakov.¹ The second analytical approach is that of political history. This approach characterizes studies on revolutionary socialist movements, their position with respect to antisemitism, and the problem of the emancipation of the Jews. Finally, the theme of Judeo-Bolshevism is approached by studies on the social history of the European Jewish communities from the point of view of the effects of fascist and Stalinist violence. The steadfastness with which Jews are demonized and blamed for all social crises indicates the reproductive force of certain archaic stereotypes that cross the ages and render impotent scientific explanations. This steadfastness necessitates an analysis of the topic that is both historical and trans-historical. The following chapter, therefore, will focus on three historically determined aspects of the available literature on the period of Romanian history stretching from 1938 to 1944.

First, from the point of view of political history, it focuses on the fact that a number of members of the Jewish minority in Romania joined labor movements during the interwar period and regarded these allegiances as modes of emancipation and integration in the social and political life of Romania. During the interwar years, due to its multiethnic, atheist and

¹ Léon Poliakov, *La causalité diabolique: essai sur l'origine des persécutions* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1980).

internationalist character, the socialist movement placed itself into the avant-garde of the modernization process in Romania.

It nevertheless must be stressed that militants of Jewish origin did not act as representatives of the Jewish community, as religious belonging was meaningless in an atheist movement or party. The overrepresentation of ethnic minorities within the communist parties of those years was a direct effect of the nationalist conflicts and discrimination against minorities that plagued interwar Romanian politics. While generally favorable to granting equal rights to the Jews, neither the Romanian socialists nor the Romanian communists spared the use of antisemitic stereotypes in their discourse and imagery, such as the caricatured representation of capitalism and the bourgeoisie in the form of the Jewish usurer. It turned out that the critique of international plutocracy could turn into a locus of encounter for nationalist and left wing positions. This locus later became the breeding ground for Nicolae Ceausescu's nationalist-socialist regime.

Second, in terms of the history of political ideas, conspiracy theories on the world Jewish plot (among which the Judeo-Bolshevik theory is but one variety) are the products of a diabolical representation of history,² and the result of the secularization of religious superstitions (Karl Popper). Diabolic causality systematically assigns to a group or certain individuals the power to trigger malefic events because they would benefit these groups or individuals. "Diabolic causality" is typical to "primitive mentalities" (Levy-Bruhl) and is defined by scholars as pre-scientific or pre-logical (Leon Brunschvig). It demonstrates the perpetuation of certain mystical forms of thought in modern society as well as certain manifestations of intellectual regression in Soviet societies.³ It is necessary to distinguish between the reproductive capacity of such superstitions in any society and their political operationalization in ideological constructions with criminal effects, such as "Judeo-Bolshevism."

Third, a major argument against the thesis of the Judeo-Bolshevik plot is the typically nonviolent history of pre-Holocaust European Jewish communities. Contrary to the antisemitic thesis, Jews were generally loyal to bourgeois democratic regimes. This loyalty was based on the twin historical processes of social assimilation and social mobility. The adherence to ideologies of revolutionary salvation was statistically negligible and in effect was a direct consequence of

² Mircea Eliade's thesis on the "terror of history" can be cited among the examples.

³ Leszek Kolakowski or Alexandre Zinoviev, quoted by Poliakov.

the growth of antisemitic political nationalism in late nineteenth century.⁴ Moreover, the Jewish “habitus” was characterized, in fact, by the absence of narratives of domination and by the delegitimation of violent action, especially physical violence. The Jews’ relationship with violence, which generated the “fascist-Stalinist mentality” during the 1930s and 1940s in Central Europe, was lower in comparison to other ethno-religious communities.

This is demonstrated by the fact that the Jewish community censored violence relating to many facets of social life: economic relationships, education, social status relationships, neighborhood and interethnic relationships, marital or extramarital sexual relations, and forms of socialization (e.g., the relationship with the consumption of alcoholic beverages). Together, all of these factors led to a form of collective censorship that limited the violence in the Jewish community. The non-violent nature of the Jewish community was largely due to the exemption of its male members from military service and their ineligibility for military careers, which shielded the Jews from the ritual exercise of combat experienced by other ethnic communities.

French sociologist Victor Karady, based on a thorough investigation, has described the life of Hungarian Jews during the first half of the nineteenth century, which was similar to Jewish life in Romania. “If the crimes and misdemeanors against the state were rather rare, physical aggression and violence was even rarer among their population. The number of Jews who committed petty crimes was proportionally smaller than in the general population and smaller still with regard to violent crimes. This [self-] censorship of aggressiveness applied equally to physical damage (arson) or burglary...which affect other people’s goods. The inclination of abstaining from physical violence of any kind seems to be confirmed in a general way. The only important exception is a duel, which belongs to the honor code of the elites, assimilated with the old aristocracy but repressed by the penal code. [One] is right to see in the over-representation of the Jews in duels the exception which confirms the rule. In short, violent crimes represent only one-fifth (20.3 percent) of the infractions committed by the Jews in comparison to the more-than-double proportion...(42.1 percent) of non-Jews...In this respect, we already evoked family morality (and as a hypothesis, school education), their rapport with the state, toward sexuality, toward their recreational activities, fields from which one could say that assimilated Judaism from the period of the old Hungarian regime [until the war] is proof of a

⁴ See for example, Karady, Victor, “Les Juifs et la violence stalinienne,” in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 120 (December 1997): pp. 3-31.

better control of aggressiveness and the correlative impulses of a renouncement of using physical force.”⁵

The use of massive violence against Jews during the Holocaust led to deep identity shifts in the Jewish psyche; the moral pact with the “old society” was torn and the adoption of a radical strategy began: Zionist de-assimilation and, to a lesser extent and for a shorter period of time, the adoption of socialism. In Romania, the de-assimilation strategy was the dominant strategy after 1944 and was spurred by both the Holocaust and the subsequent policies of forced assimilation and nationalist discrimination of the Communist regime.

Characteristics of the Coverage of “Judeo-Bolshevism” in the Wartime Press

A Single Discourse

The Romanian press between January 1, 1938, and August 23, 1944, was notable for its ideological monotony: dailies and most magazines adopted the same normative stances (the same opinions, vision, beliefs) and the same interpretations of domestic and international politics. The wide diversity of opinions that characterized the interwar Romanian press gradually disappeared after 1938 and was soon replaced by a single opinion: the opinion first of the Goga government, then of the Royal Dictatorship, and eventually of the Antonescu governments.

Two days after its investiture, the Goga government (December 28, 1937–August 23, 1944) shut down democratic dailies such as *Adevarul*, *Dimineata*, and *Lupta*, signaling that press censorship was the new rule in town. Other radical changes came during the Royal Dictatorship. When the king turned his Front of National Rebirth (*Frontul Renasterii Nationale*) into the Party of the Nation, defined with unconcealed pride as a “a single and totalitarian party,” in June 1940, he also issued a decree-law that explicitly criminalized “the advocacy, by word or in writing, of changing the political organization of the state provided for under the decree-law establishing of the Party of the Nation.”⁶ Nichifor Crainic, an influential intellectual and journalist with extreme-right views and the minister of propaganda in 1940, “completed” what the National Christian government had started, as he himself argued: “Octavian Goga performed a splendid act of Romanian justice when he suppressed *Adevarul*, *Dimineata*, and *Lupta*. The rest could only be achieved in 1940 when, as minister of propaganda, I eradicated all Jewish dailies, weeklies, and monthlies in Romania. The holy right to speak for the Romanian nation belongs

⁵ Victor Karady, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

⁶ Transformarea Frontului Renasterii Nationale in “Partidul Natiunii,” *Universul* 57, no. 170, June 23, 1940, p. 1.

exclusively to Romanians. We can speak for the foreigners in our country because we are masters of this land.”⁷

Later, in 1942, in a triumphant survey of the Antonescu government, Mihai Antonescu devoted a special chapter entitled “National Propaganda,” which provided statistics on the regime’s measures to repress freedom of speech: “The healthy Romanianization of the press has led to the suspension of 30 worthless journals, of which 12 were dailies and 18 were periodicals; 4 were foreign and 26 were Romanian; it also led to the suppression of 171 useless journals and the suppression of obscene magazines, and the waste of forbidding their publication.”⁸ At the same time, the Ministry of Propaganda established its own publications—*Cuvintul Maresalului Catre Sateni* (The Marshal’s Word to the Villagers), *Bessarabia*, *Bukovina*, *Transnistria*, *Argesul*, *Pentru Jertfitori* (For Those Who Sacrifice Themselves), *Dacia Traiana*, *Soldatul*, *Der Soldat*, and *Il Soldato*—in which servitude to the government was of course total.

But, it was not only the government publications that reflected this monolithic political discourse; it could also be found in seemingly independent, but in fact government-affiliated, widely distributed newspapers and magazines, such as *Curentul*, *Viața*, *Universul*, *Gandirea*, *Convorbiri literare*, *Vremea (Razboiului)*, *Revista Fundatiilor Regale*. And clearly, the notorious extreme-right publications, such as *Porunca Vremii* and *Sfarma Piatra*, spread the repressive government discourse. The leitmotif of this single discourse adopted by the entire Romanian press of the time can be summarized in two words: anti-democratic and pro-totalitarian. In the words of Pamfil Șeicaru, editor and owner of *Curentul*, the dominant idea during those years was that “democracy [had] been liquidated,”⁹ that a diametrically opposite political order in the vein of fascism or national-socialism¹⁰ was going to replace democracy in the historical process of political transformation that, from a Romanian point of view, was desirable, even imperative.

⁷ Nichifor Crainic, “Dupa douazeci de ani,” *Gindirea*, vol. 20, no. 10, December 1941, p. 515; Not was only the minister of propaganda adept at censorship, which he deemed a cause of national spiritual health, but he was also a known intellectual figure of the time. Ion Al. Bratescu-Voinesti, for example, advocated for the “necessity even during a time of peace, of an institution to discourage, like in the past, ordinary people from becoming forgers of public opinion,” this is used as a reason to create “a plan of reorganization of the censorship services” and send it to the leader of the state: see Ion Al. Bratescu-Voinesti “Am vazut pe Maresalul,” *Curentul*, vol. 16, no. 5408, March 8, 1943, pp. 1, 5.

⁸ “Doi ani de guvernare a Maresalului Antonescu. Expozeul d-lui prof. Mihai Antonescu la radio,” *Viata*, vol. 2, no. 501, September 10, 1942, p. 7.

⁹ Pamfil Șeicaru, “Stat totalitar,” *Curentul*, vol. 13, no. 4458, July 11, 1940, p. 1; see also Vasile Netea, “Stat si Natiune,” *Vremea Razboiului* vol. 14, no. 646, May 3, 1942, p. 1; Nichifor Crainic, “Aliatii lui Hitler,” *Gindirea* vol. 20, no. 7, September 1941, pp. 337-340.

¹⁰ Following are two editorials with very telling titles: Leonida C. Pop, “National-socialismul—axa de purificare a Europei,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 77, June 1941, p. 1; Mircea Pop, “Actualitatea fascismului,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 214, November 2, 1941, p. 1.

These premises were inevitably leading to the cult of the European figures who, through their politics, embodied the “new direction” of history: Adolph Hitler, Mussolini, Salazar, Ion Antonescu, and others. The Romanian media was not only full of praise for these men,¹¹ but also for their opinions, speeches, and articles as well as those of their deputies—Goebbles, Alfred Rosenberg, Ribbentrop, Manfred von Killinger, and Count Ciano, among others—their works often reproduced in their entirety or summarized generously and always exceptionally appreciated.

From “Judeo-Democracy” to “Judeo-Communism/Judeo-Bolshevism”

One of the frequently used arguments to demonize democracy at the time was that democracy essentially meant “the establishment of foreign and Kike rule,” as Traian Brăileanu, minister of national education, religion, and arts in the National Legionary government put in during a press conference.¹² Frequently associated with the “Judeo-masonry”¹³ and “plutocracy”¹⁴ arguments, democracy appeared to these critics to be a wholly Jewish idea or an idea employed to serve Jewish interests exclusively. According to Nichifor Crainic: “The fact that until recently Romanian nationalistic claims ended in tragedy was due to international Jewish power, which was grafted onto Western democracies and exercised genuine terror on those countries’ governments. In a way, we were the vassals of this *Judeo-democracy*, and Romanian nationalism could not achieve anything without the consent of Judeo-democracy [a.n.]”¹⁵

The surviving Western democracies were presented the same, as being infiltrated and controlled by the Jewish element. The American administration was described as a puppet in the hand of the Jews,¹⁶ as was the British government under the leadership of Winston Churchill.¹⁷

¹¹ It is very difficult to list all the articles published on this issue. Some self-evident examples are: “Adolf Hitler, sinteză a veacurilor,” *Viața*, vol. 1, no. 24, April 24, 1941, p. 5; Ion Băleanu, “Adolf Hitler, omul providențial al Europei,” *Viața*, vol. 1, no. 22, April 20, 1941, p. 6. Even in moderate magazines one can find such examples: see C. Rădulescu-Motru, “Mareșalul Ion Antonescu” *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, vol. 8, nos. 8-9, August–September 1941, pp. 243-248, in which the “Conducător” is described as Romania’s savior.

¹² The phrase is from the “Problema elitelor in Statul Legionar. Conferinta d-lui prof. Traian Braileanu, ministrul Educatiei Nationale, Cultelor si Artelor” (Conference held by Traian Braileanu, minister of national education, religion, and arts in the National Legionary government), *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4640, January 13, 1941, p. 3.

¹³ For example: General Bagulescu, “Caracatita iudeo-masonica,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4648, January 21, 1941, p. 6; and “Declaratiile d-lui Prof. Ion Zelea Codreanu facute presei,” *Curentul*, vol. 13, no. 4525, September 16, 1940, p. 5.

¹⁴ For example: “Intre plutocratie si communism,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4839, August 6, 1941, p. 3.

¹⁵ “Importanta decretului-lege pentru exproprierea imobilelor urbane ale evreilor. Declaratiile facute presei de catre d. Nichifor Crainic, ministrul propagandei,” *Viața*, vol. 1, no. 3, April 2, 1941, p. 7.

¹⁶ See, for example: “‘Prietenii’ lui Roosevelt. Un reportaj de cifre si nume extrem de clare si nu May putin semnificative,” *Viața*, vol. 1, no. 262, December 20, 1941, p. 7. Texts supporting such points of view are very

In the view of many Romanian publications, Great Britain's genuine European spirit had been perverted by the influence of a non-European one: "Today's intercontinental war will have to decide between the European spirit [embodied by Hitler] and the Anglo-Saxon one, which was also created by Europe, but was distorted by Judaism. Victory, as in all ages, can belong only to Europe, which represents the aristocracy of the spirit."¹⁸

The Romanian press was flooded by the rhetoric of the Axis as defender of Europe, particularly after June 1941. Typical of the Romanian representation of "Europe" and "the European spirit" were such tropes as "holy war," "crusade," and "victory of the Cross."¹⁹ Against this rhetorical backdrop, Romania was considered to have "a decisive role for the history of the old continent,"²⁰ a banality that was obsessively repeated in journals and magazines.²¹ The public discourse was saturated with sacrificial-triumphalist and heroic references, constructing a salvationist mythology of the war waged by Germany and its allies.

The formation of the alliance between Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union was seen as the key moment that led to a shift in focus from "Judeo-democracy" to "Judeo-communism." The Romanian press construed this military alliance through what they perceived as the arch-commonality of the communist and capitalist worlds: the Jewish element. In England, "the diabolical work of the Jews were introduced to the fortress in order to ruin it....The land of Carlyle, the apologist of heroism, has become a jungle ruled by the soulless hordes of communist Judeo-Masonry."²²

In fact, the interconnection between "Judeo-democracy" and "Judeo-communism" was an older idea in Romanian political culture, frequently cultivated in the 1930s; so, this sudden and quasi-total wartime switch had, in effect, been prepared earlier. Tudor Teodorescu-Braniste, a remarkable democratic journalist, noted this conflation of democracy and communism, which

numerous. Sometimes they are borrowed from the German press ("Puterea reala in Statele Unite va fi acaparata de evrei. Evreul Bernard Baruch,..." *Viata*, vol. 2, no. 508, September 17, 1942, p. 8) or from the Italian one (Virginio Gayda, "Internationalismul american nu este altceva decit un asalt disperat al iudaismului" [editorial, published under the title "Teze italiene"], *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4755, May 12, 1941, p. 1).

¹⁷ Stefan Ionescu, "Yankeii, lorzii si Evreii,..." *Viata*, vol. 1, nos. 259-260, December 18, 1941, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁹ A random example: "Romania, aparatoarea Europei," *Curentul*, vol. 16, no. 5354, January 1, 1943, p. 1.

²⁰ Romulus Dianu, "Intelegerea," *Curentul*, vol. 16, no. 535, January 17, 1943, p. 1.

²¹ Not only *Curentul* but also its director excelled at presenting Romania's war against the Soviet Union in this light. "At Stalingrad," he concluded in an editorial, in flagrant disagreement with the reality on the front, "the Germans and the Romanians represent the millenary tradition of military honor that has changed the history of Europe." (Pamfil Seicaru, "Profetului de la Stalingrad," *Curentul*, vol. 16, no. 5374, February 2, 1943, p. 1). The director thus proved that he was consistent with himself, for he had long considered Romania to be fulfilling a "European mission" in this war; Pamfil Seicaru, "Misiunea noastra europeana: fata la Est," *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4856, August 23, 1941, p. 1.

²² Theo Maiorescu, "Neomenie engleza...sau isterie iudaica," *Viata*, vol. 2, no. 530, October 9, 1942, p. 3.

extremist spirits were already using aggressively, in the last issue of *Adevarul* to escape total censorship: “The fact that a significant part of public opinion today is lost and has repudiated liberty to embrace dictatorship is not its fault, but is instead the fault of those who contributed to this societal loss of direction. Let us not forget that for years moderate and sincere democrats were labeled ‘Bolsheviks,’ even though the labelers knew they talked about people committed to freedom and legality within the limits of constitutional monarchy. In so doing, they sought to compromise and put out any initiative of genuine and well-reasoned democracy.”²³ Thus, democracy and communism seemed to many to be conceptually related and organically linked: communism appeared to be little more than an elementary, radicalized form of democracy.

The alliance between the Soviets and Anglo-Americans was seen as the ultimate, irrefutable evidence of the essential resemblance between democracy and communism. Despite passing misunderstandings between the two political orders and their differences in form, which were sometimes acknowledged by the very people who emphasized the similarities in their “essence,” as early as the 1940s, both were increasingly presented as the work of the same author (Judaism), having the same goal (Jewish dominance), and being deeply hostile to Europe. The official Nazi viewpoint, based on what Hitler called the “Judeo-Bolshevik plot” and the “anti-German plot organized by Jews and democrats as well as Bolsheviks and reactionaries,”²⁴ was therefore well received in the Romanian press at the time.

The Judeo-Bolshevism Thesis

If the “Judeo-democracy” thesis was not very widespread in Romania during the interwar years, that of “Judeo-Bolshevism” was much more popular. Yet in many contexts, the two arguments were used interchangeably.²⁵

There was a sudden increase in the use of the Judeo-Bolshevism argument after the June 1940 Soviet ultimatum, which resulted in territorial losses and Romania joining the Axis in the war against the Soviet Union. If the representation of the Jews as being disloyal and traitorous toward the Romanian state was not new, the punishment, which began in January 1938, was justified after the 1940 territorial losses, and the media perception of the Jewish minority,

²³ Tudor Teodorescu-Braniste, “Criza democratiei,” *Adevarul*, vol. 51, no. 16,539, December 30, 1937, p. 1.

²⁴ “A inceput razboiul de salvare a tarilor din ghearele bolseismului. Textul integral al Proclamatiei Fuehrer-ului adresata poporului german.” in *Viata*, no. 85, vol. 1, June 25, 1941, p. 1. See also Hitler’s speech, “The International Kike, England, and Soviet Russia,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 225, November 13, 1941, in which expressions such as Judeo-Bolshevism” and “Anglo-Kikishness” abound.

²⁵ Romulus Dianu, “Capitalismul englez se bizuie pe bolseism!...” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4798, June 26, 1941, p. 1.

derived from the official one, was simplified even more: the inclination toward communism was considered as defining for the Jews. The journalistic discourse insinuated that there was an irresistible link between the Soviet Union and the Jews from the Romanian state, especially those from Moldova, in keeping with the position of the Romanian authorities.

Many in the press regarded the Soviet Union as a product of Jewish militancy. The theory that the October 1917 Bolshevik revolution had been led by Jews knew many versions: “the Bolshevik revolution was prepared by Lenin and a long list of Kikes: Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Uritzky....All these Russian names conceal those of Bronstein, Radomirsky, Apfelbaum....The secret meeting of October 10, 1917, where the decision was made to launch the armed revolt, included seven kikes, five Russians (three of whom were married to Jewish women), and a Pole”;²⁶ this all was regarded as “the greatest Jewish audacity of all time.”²⁷ The regime thus installed could mean only Jewish dominance; for example, the fact that the “ferocious Stalin had the Jew Kaganovici as an advisor was solid proof of the Kominern’s orientation.”²⁸ Mihai Antonescu himself paid special attention to this topic when he stated, “in the Soviet Union intellectuals are slaves, peasants are stones, and Jews are masters.”²⁹ In his turn, Nichifor Crainic, whose political and journalistic position weighed heavily in the epoch, was never shy to speak of “Judeo-Russians” and “Judeo-Bolshevik Russia” and to blame the loss of Bessarabia and Bukovina on the Jews.³⁰

It was not only dailies that invoked “Judeo-Bolshevism” in reference to the Soviet Union, but so did magazines and reviews with the most respectable pasts. *Convorbiri literare*, for example, joined the general choir, using in its editorials phrases like “the Judeo-communist Bolshevism of the Soviet republics” and “the Judeo-Bolshevik Bela Kun.”³¹ The editor-in-chief himself (I. E. Toroutiu) spoke of “the apocalyptic confrontation between the Judeo-Bolshevik

²⁶ A. Pomescu, “Cea mai mare indrazneala a lui Israel,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4837, August 4, 1941, p. 2.

²⁷ Idem. The theory that the communist revolution meant “Jewish domination” was abundant in the Romanian press at the time; see also: Catalin Ropala, “Incercare de a patrunde sensul revolutiei comuniste,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 270, December 30, 1941, p. 5.

²⁸ Alex. Hodos, “Razboiul pe care Israel il va pierde,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4833, July 31, 1941, p. 1.

²⁹ “Doua conceptii,” *Universul*, vol. 59, no. 181, July 6, 1942, p. 3.

³⁰ Nichifor Crainic, “Aliatii lui Hitler,” *Gindirea*, vol. 20, no. 7, September 1941, p. 337.

³¹ “Pentru un nou rasarit,” *Convorbiri literare*, vol. 74, no. 7, July 1941, p. 709. It is interesting to note that the Romanian intervention in Hungary at the end of the World War I—to suppress the communist movement led by Bela Kun—was now appreciated by many Romanian publications as a kind of protochronic act in the fight against Judeo-Bolshevism. For example, Horia I. Ursu, “Rolul poporului roman in apararea Europei,” *Vremea Razboiului*, vol. 14, no. 640, March 8, 1942, pp. 1, 14. The Romanian perception of the Hungarian revolution as having to do with “Judeo-Bolshevism” was nothing new and even enjoyed a certain prestige, given that such an interpretation had been proposed by important figures in Romanian culture like N. Iorga (see, for instance, his articles: “Bolsevism?... O noua forma a sarlataniei imperialiste,” *Neamul Romanesc*, vol. 14, no. 62, March 17, 1919, p. 1 or “Bolsevismul ungiuresc,” *Neamul Romanesc*, vol. 14, no. 63, March 18, 1919, p. 1).

super-state and the civilized peoples of Europe, in a genuine crusade.”³² The Judeo-Bolshevik argument was, needless to say, widespread in journals with a tradition of far right extremism (*Sfarma Piatra, Porunca Vremii*).³³ In short, media representations, always molded propagandistically, often made use of the terms “Jew,” “communist,” and “Bolshevik” interchangeably, a fact that went unchallenged.

Under these circumstances, soon after the Soviet Union’s extension up to the Prut River, the Romanian Jews’ attraction to the Soviet state became a sort of leitmotif in the contemporary press. In July 1940, *Curentul* published “reports” from the post-June 1940 Romanian-Soviet border, which described a continuous exodus of Romanian Jews toward the newly-Sovietized Bessarabia: “It is interesting to note that most people now crossing the Prut are Jews, irrespective of social class or years of residence in the country. On Portului Street I saw long columns of carriages full of luxury suitcases and chests filled with fine clothes, expensive things, etc.; and near or beyond them, we saw groups of Jews who, judging by their clothes, were cultured people of a certain status.”³⁴ The author did not use the term “Judeo-Bolshevik” or “Judeo-communist” to designate the travelers, but he was convinced that something irresistible attracted Jews toward the Soviet world, something irrational, chimerical, befitting their “spirit.”

The belief that all of Bessarabian and Bukovinan Jewry celebrated Moscow’s annexation of the two regions, thus revealing their anti-Romanian, pro-Soviet sentiments, was widespread and knew a variety of expressions, from blunt assertions to the presentation of allegedly irrefutable “evidence.” For example, an article in *Viata* (director: Liviu Rebreanu) in November 1941 about the demographic problems of Chisinau and supposedly based on unassailable statistical data (furnished, of course, by the Romanian authorities), asserted: “When Soviet Russia conquered Bessarabia last year, the city of Chisinau had 120,000 inhabitants. Because for the Jews of Romania, the Bolshevik heaven represents a powerful point of attraction, many Jews resettled in Bessarabia, so that under Bolshevik domination, Chisinau reached almost one million inhabitants. After Chisinau was set on fire by the retreating Bolsheviks, the city was left with 38,000 inhabitants. This was the number recorded by the Romanian administration.”³⁵

In the same order of ideas, the newspaper *Universul* (directed and owned by Stelian Popescu) published, for instance, photographs of happy people with the following caption, “Judeo-communist manifestation in Chisinau for the kidnapping of Bessarabia and Northern

³² I. E. Toroutiu, “Suflete inchiriate,” *Convorbiri literare* 74, nos. 8-10 (August-October 1941), p. 949.

³³ “Alianta judaismului cu bolsevismul,” *Porunca Vremii*, vol. 11, no. 2299, August 9, 1942, pp. 1, 3.

³⁴ “Exodul evreiesc din portul Galati continua,” *Curentul*, vol. 13, no. 4470, July 23, 1940, p. 1.

Bukovina by the red beasts.” The comment accompanying the photographs pointed out once more, “The hideous faces of those in the photographs are those of the Jews of Chisinau.” Although the images contained no clue, however small, to support such identification, the author’s certainty knew no bounds. The end of the article was an encouragement for retribution: “We recognize the difficult work of our authorities in identifying those who were our enemies and assassins. But once identified and proven that they participated in the unbelievable and awful horrors, no mercy.”³⁶

“No mercy” had long been the underlying motto of the only political and journalistic discourse in Romania. From the time of the Goga government, the anti-Jewish laws and measures continued without interruption, taking away elementary political and civil rights, with the press approving them every time, sometimes explicitly in journalists’ comments,³⁷ other times implicitly, through popularization.³⁸ In such a political and social climate the anti-Jewish

³⁵ “Populatia actuala a Chisinaului,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 225, November 13, 1941, p. 1.

³⁶ Elefterie Negel, “Bucuria evreimii la rapirea Basarabiei,” *Universul*, vol. 58, no. 213, August 9, 1941, p. 7

³⁷ Pamfil Seicaru, for example, commenting on the Goga government’s law on the revision of citizenship, excelled in the superlative: “An act of decisive political importance, a testimony of nationalist faith, a pledge of sincerity given to the country [...] It is the merit of the Goga government to have fulfilled the Romanian sensibility through the decision to revise all citizenships—in order to exclude all who fraudulently sneaked in from the benefit of political rights, all who have benefited from the moral defect of the state administration [...] It is an act of reassurance and affirmation of our sovereignty [...] a safeguard for the future, the animation of the most righteous of expectations” See Pamfil Seicaru, “O chezasie a sinceritatii,” *Curentul*, vol. 11, no. 3580, January 20, 1938, pp. 1, 2.

³⁸ The Romanian press of the time offered constant support to the antisemitic policies of the regimes between 1938 and 1944. The anti-Jewish laws and administrative measures were popularized and sustained on a regular basis by the media: the citizenship revision laws (for example: Isaia Tolan, “Revizuirea incetatenirilor,” *Curentul*, vol. 11, no. 3581, January 21, 1938, p. 7); “Decretul-lege pentru oprirea casatoriilor intre romanii de singe si evrei” and “Decretul-lege privitor la starea juridica a locuitorilor evrei din Romania” (*Curentul*, vol. 13, no. 4483, August 11, 1940, p. 4); the exclusion of Jewish lawyers from the bar and Jewish employees from the National Railroad Company (CFR); the removal of all Jews from cultural institutions (“Elimination of Jews from theaters and any artistic enterprises. Decision of the Ministry of Religion and Arts,” *Curentul*, vol. 13, no. 4520, September 11, 1940, p. 1) or from the national education system (Lorin Popescu, “107 zile de munca in cimpul scolii, al bisericii si al artelor,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4630, January 1, 1941, p. 9); the expropriation of Jewish rural and urban estates (“Importanta decretului-lege pentru exproprierea imobilelor urbane ale evreilor. Declaratiile facute presei de catre d. Nichifor Crainic, ministrul propagandei,” *Viata*, no. 3, vol. 1, April 2, 1941, p. 7); the decree-law establishing the Jews’ duty to perform “community work” (“Toti evreii din Capitala sunt obligati sa presteze munca in folos obstesc,” *Universul*, vol. 58, no. 217, August 13, 1941, p. 3), the establishment of the Jewish Center (*Centrala Evreilor din Romania*) (“Spre rezolvarea problemei evreilor in Romania,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 264, December 22, 1941, pp. 1, 3); the new status of Jewish doctors (“Organizarea si functionarea Colegiului medicilor,” *Universul*, Vol. al 60-lea, no. 270, October 3, 1943, p. 7); the confiscation of Jews’ radios (Alex. Hodos, “Israel intr-o noua robie...,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4871, September 7, 1941, pp. 1, 7); the military taxes imposed on Jews (“Evreii care locuiesc in strainatate vor plati inzecitul taxelor militare,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 215, November 3, 1941, p. 3), the law against “camouflaging Jewish interests” (“Numele persoanelor care au camuflat interesele evreiesti,” *Viata*, vol. 2, no. 492, September 6, 1942, p. 5); the increase in the price of bread for the Jews (*Porunca Vremii*, vol. 11, no. 2307, August 20, 1942, p. 3); etc. Romanian newspapers also regularly reported, in detail and sympathetically, on antisemitic measures instituted by other countries in an attempt to demonstrate that what was happening in Romania was in line with what was happening in “civilized Europe” (“Evreii din Franta in tabere de munca,” *Viata*, no. 47, vol. 1, May 17, 1941). Other papers printed abundant foreign antisemitic literature (*Porunca Vremii*, for instance,

acts, even when committed outside of the established legal framework, enjoyed a sort of legitimacy and, consequently, an implicit impunity. The January 1941 pogrom perpetrated by the Legionnaires in the Vacaresti and Duesti areas of Bucharest drew upon this kind of propaganda. Three weeks passed before the Romanian press ran stories on the murders, plunders, arsons, and murders “against the innocent Romanian inhabitants, and particularly in the Jewish quarters of Duesti and Vacaresti, where genuine pogroms were perpetrated.”³⁹ An official communiqué released at the time—reporting 236 dead, of which 118 were Jews—ending with a sentence suggesting mitigating circumstances for the perpetrators: “More than half of the dead were communists recruited from among the ranks of workers, craftsmen, traders, drivers, apprentices, etc.”⁴⁰ In other words, they deserved their fate...

Journalistic references to Romanian Jews as promoters of communism increased considerably after Romania joined the war against the Soviets in 1941. July and August 1941 issues of the newspaper *Curentul* described at length the “destruction of Chisinau” and the burning of its cathedral, for which the daily undoubtedly blamed local pro-communist Jews: “Kikes, the great pioneers of communism, during their flight across the Dniester did not forget to set fire to the dearest altar, not only of Bessarabia but of Romania itself.”⁴¹ *Curentul* depicted events in Northern Bukovina in the same way. Even the paper’s director, Pamfil Seicaru, who in his texts was generally reserved regarding “Judeo-Bolshevism,” joined his colleagues in poisoning Romanian public opinion: “One year of Bolshevik occupation has taught Jews how to hate and commit acts of unparalleled immorality, so that now the cohabitation of Jews and Romanians in Bessarabia would be tantamount [to] provocation.”⁴²

The year of Soviet occupation of Bessarabia was presented everywhere as the year of Jewish occupation. *Viata*, for instance, also wrote about “the reign of the kike element between the Prut and the Dniester;” the newspaper maintained that in the Bessarabian education system that the role of teacher was entrusted to the Jews, “the majority [of whom were] degenerate individuals from a moral point of view.” The end of the article formulated the following vengeful

published Edouard Drumont’s sadly famous book *La France juive* under the title “France Turned Kike” as a serial in 1942.

³⁹ “Un rezumat complet asupra modului in care s-a desfasurat rebeliunea,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4663, February 7, 1941, p. 7.

⁴⁰ “Bilantul rebeliunii,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4663, February 7, 1941, p. 8.

⁴¹ “Barbaria bolsevica a distrus capitala Basarabiei,” *Curentul*, 14, no. 4832, July 30, 1941, p. 5; C. Mironescu, “Jidanii alaturi de <tovarasii> bolsevici sunt autorii distrugerii Chisinaului,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4837, August 4, 1941, p. 7; or Radian Eugen, “Dinamitat si incendiat, Chisinaul nu May este azi decat un imens morman de ruine. Cardasia jidanilor cu bolsevicii,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4843, August 10, 1941, p. 5.

⁴² Pamfil Seicaru, “Romanizare si birocrație,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4891, September 27, 1941, p. 1.

conclusion: “They came [the Jews]; there they will return while we Romanians will rebuild the nests spoiled by the year of Judeo-communist occupation.”⁴³

This media climate fit the intentions of the Antonescu government, which saw Jews as sworn traitors. The first measure Ion Antonescu, “Leader of the State,” took once Romania had entered the war was to “remove” the Jews from the rural areas of Moldova—convinced, of course, that they were all potential friends of the enemy; the newspapers at the time printed the government press releases with titles in large red print.⁴⁴ That the Antonescu government saw Romanian Jews—and not just those in the rural areas—as sworn traitors was apparent a few days later when the press failed to show any signs of horror, concern, or doubt when it coldly announced, “five hundred communist Jews were executed in Iasi,” the brutal but predictable consequence of the “Judeo-Bolshevik” mania brought to a climax. The official communiqué on the Iasi pogrom pointed to Iasi’s “Judeo-Bolshevik population,” which was supposedly guilty of having shot at Romanian and German troops, and urged ethnic Romanians to inform on Jews under threat of execution: “Whoever fails to reveal in due time these rioters against public safety and order shall be executed together with their entire families.”⁴⁵

By then, “Judeo-communism” had turned into an endemic political and media psychosis. The official repressive measures reached a terrifying level of abuse and arbitrariness. A communiqué released after the genocide of Iasi informed the public opinion that the authorities were determined to go even further: “Any attempt to repeat these vile aggressions shall be mercilessly repressed. For every Romanian or German soldier killed, fifty Judeo-communists will be executed.”⁴⁶ The press only welcomed the resolute manner in which Antonescu’s authorities intended to move against the “treason”⁴⁷ of the “Judeo-communists.”

In such a context, the life of Bessarabian and Bukovinian Jewry became a nightmare. “All Jews here,” wrote a war correspondent for *Curentul*, posted in Bessarabia, “are spies, they are all ready to sabotage any measure serving the national interest and would give their lives to be able

⁴³ Savin Popescu Lupu, “*Jidovii apostoli*. Cum au darimat localurile de scoala. Apostoli-felceri. Despre imoralitatea evreiceii invatatoare. Urmele jidovilor in scoli,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 271, December 31, 1941, p. 5.

⁴⁴ There are countless articles praising this measure. To illustrate with two examples: “A inceput lupta pentru purificarea rassei,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4801, June 29, 1941, p. 3; and “Evreii din comunele rurale vor fi indepartati. Comunicat,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 89, June 29, 1941, p. 1.

⁴⁵ “500 de evrei comunisti executati la Iasi. Ei au tras din case focuri asupra ostasilor germani si romani. Comunicat,” *Universul*, vol. 58, no. 175, July 2, 1941, p. 1.

⁴⁶ “Pentru fiecare ostas german sau roman vor fi executati 50 iudeo-comunisti. Comunicat,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4806, July 4, 1941, p. 1.

⁴⁷ C. Soldan, “Tradari...,” *Universul*, vol. 58, no. 178, July 5, 1941, p. 1.

to contribute anything to the Bolshevik's success."⁴⁸ This was why, the daily continued, "the safety measures against these are getting harsher day by day. Jews between the ages of 16 and 55 were evacuated from all boroughs and towns, and from now on, their residence is in the camp."⁴⁹ With unrestrained satisfaction, the war correspondent then described the tragedy of the Jews as he saw it: "On the roads of Moldova, I met numerous convoys of carriages and full trains of wandering Kikes... And the women and elderly who remained in the boroughs and towns wore a distinctive patch sewn on a yellow armband—the Kikish yellow star. Their time has finally come.... Therefore, let us carry on this holy war with dignity, for it will bring us two final victories: the defeat of Bolshevism and the destruction of Judaism."⁵⁰

The situation was the same in Bukovina, and the press did not hesitate to advertise and support the measures taken by the Romanian administration there. Alexandru Riosanu, Ion Antonescu's envoy to Bukovina, issued several ordinances establishing the regime of the local Jews, such as the conditions in which they were allowed travel and buy supplies and the duty to wear the yellow star. One of these ordinances was publicized through posters that read, "The population shall be informed that... 50 Jewish leaders from Cernauti were arrested and imprisoned, and they will guarantee with their lives and belongings the complete silence of the Jewish population. If the Jews commit the slightest act of violence against the Romanian or allied armies, all hostages shall be executed immediately."⁵¹ The antisemitic policies thus developed all the attributes of state terrorism, and the Romanian press regarded them as justified. The current and concrete acts of justice concerning the Jews became genuine models of abuse or even crime, with the press reporting them approvingly.⁵²

⁴⁸ Aurel Popoviciu, "Evreii, uneltele si aliatii bolseviciilor" (Jews, instruments and allies of Bolsheviks), *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4809, July 7, 1941, p. 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* The cynical description of the situation of the Jews in Bessarabia can be found in a number of articles. See, for example: C. Mironescu, "Bolsevicii indemnau la desfrii tineretul din Basarabia," *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4843, August 10, 1941, pp. 1, 4.

⁵¹ Apud "Noul regim al evreilor din intreg cuprinsul Bucovinei," *Universul*, vol. 58, no. 211, August 7, 1941, p. 7.

⁵² See, for instance, the section on "5 comunisti care pregateau acte de sabotaj au fost condamnati la moarte si executati," *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 223, November 11, 1941, p. 6. The article presents the arrest, on November 2, of a group of six "communists," who "were preparing acts of sabotage" out of which five were of Jewish origin (Paneth Francisc, Paneth Lili, Moses Francisc, Kornhauser Adalbert and Iosipovici Ada) and one of Hungarian descent (Naghy Elisabeta), on their being sentenced to death by the Court Martial of the Military Command of Bucharest three days later, followed by their execution on November 7, 1941. Others were victims of the enforcement of the "Law of sabotage and illicit speculation," which targeted Jewish merchants.

Solutions to the “Judeo–Bolshevism” Ideology

In the political and journalistic imagery outlined above, “Judeo-communism” appeared to be the theory of absolute evil, which synthesized and amplified—against the background of the ongoing war—as a kind of ideological corollary, the “defects” of Jewishness as perceived in traditional antisemitism. From this point of view, the ideas of Goebbels, Nazi minister of propaganda, were echoed generously in the Romanian press at the time: “Kikes are the cause of war. This is why our treatment of them does not subject them to any injustice. They deserve this treatment. It is the government’s task to finish them off for good;”⁵³ or, “It was the Jews who wanted this war... This may lead to serious decisions, but that is of no consequence considering the size of the danger... By conceiving, a plan of total destruction against the German people, they [the Jews] have signed their own death sentence.”⁵⁴

This theory was largely shared by the Bucharest regime. Antonescu himself concurred when he told Filderman: “the war initiated by Judah against Germany now turns against Judah himself.”⁵⁵ In its turn, the Romanian press contributed to this atmosphere with its articles, writing about “the war of the Jews”⁵⁶ and the fact that “today’s war with all its misfortunes was prepared, and its fire maintained, by the power of Jewry throughout the world.”⁵⁷

In the face of the type of “Jewish danger,” which defined the majority’s situation as one of legitimate defense, the search for radical measures became imperative. When reading the press of the time, one can see that the “Final Solution” to the “Jewish problem” was often discussed and desired. “Only by stepping over the corpses of Judaism and Bolshevism, will humankind be able to find peace, prosperity, and the spiritual mission conferred by Providence,”

⁵³ “Cum trebuiesc considerati jidanii. Consideratiunile d-lui dr. Goebbels,” *Viata*, vol. 1, no. 230, November 18, 1941, p.3.

⁵⁴ Joseph Goebbels, “Razboiul si evreii,” *Viata*, vol. 3, no. 738, May 10, 1943, p. 3 (reproduced from *Das Reich*). Similar views, shared by other German or Italian officials, were also promptly publicized in Romania. “The war was unleashed by the Jews... It was only the destructive hatred of the Jewish instinct that unleashed this war against creative Europe,” asserted the head of the press in Nazi Germany (see “Alianta plutocratiei si bolsevismului tinde la nimicirea Europei. Discursul d-lui dr. Dietrich la Congresul ziaristilor europeni,” *Viata*, vol. 3, no. 786, June 28, 1943, p. 8). His aide said the same thing: “The Jew is the enemy of all peoples... Judaism has been the factor on which this war has been founded, whose engine it is, moreover.” (see “Vice-seful presei Reichului despre problema evreiasca,” *Universul*, vol. 60, no. 276, October 9, 1943, p. 7). This stereotype was also imported from fascist Italy: “The war waged by the Axis is thus revealed as a fight for freedom from the yoke of banks and Judaism” (see Virginio Gayda, “Internationalismul american nu este altceva decit un asalt disperat al iudaismului,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4755, May 12, 1941, p. 1).

⁵⁵ “Presa germana despre raspunsul dat de Maresalul Antonescu evreilor: ‘Rasboiul deslantuit de iuda impotriva Germaniei se intoarce acum impotriva lui insusi,’” *Viata*, 1, no. 213, November 1, 1941, p. 8.

⁵⁶ Ilie Radulescu, “Razboiul evreimii,” *Porunca Vremii*, vol. 11, no. 2320, September 4, 1942, pp. 1, 3.

⁵⁷ Alex. Hodos, “Ascuta, Israele!” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4857, August 24, 1941, p. 1. See also Aurel Popoviciu’s article cited above (“Evreii, uneltele si aliatii bolsevicilor,” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4809, July 7, 1941, pp. 7, 12).

wrote Ilie Radulescu, director of the far-right newspaper *Porunca Vremii*.⁵⁸ A.C. Cuza, “specialist” for many decades on the “Jewish problem,” often gave interviews or made statements in which he invoked the imperative of a “unitary solution”⁵⁹ to the Jewish issue, such as the re-settlement of Jews in non-European lands, like Uganda, Madagascar, Rhodesia or Palestine.⁶⁰ *Curentul* often dedicated articles to this topic, sometimes pleading for the mass expulsion of Jews⁶¹ and providing suggestions—ostensibly motivated by humanitarianism—for the location of their re-settlement (e.g., Bolivia),⁶² other times, hinting that “the solution to the Jewish problem will perhaps be of an heroic nature...to cure them and save the world order.”⁶³ The newspaper *Unirea* embraced the same “solution” by formulating explicit threats in case the Jews would not consent to their “voluntarily” departure from Romania: “It hinges only on the...availability of the necessary instruments for liquidation plans to be operationalized.”⁶⁴

Between Myth and Reality: Jewish Participation in the Communist Movement

First, the affiliation, support, or sympathy for a political party or civic organization represents a freely-assumed individual act. This choice is the result of a combination of various factors, such as internal economic and social stability, character of the political regime, the international political situation, family affiliation, level of education, professional affiliation, intensity of religious feelings, affiliation with community or civic structures, age, and residence. Therefore, when a non-democratic political regime practices overt ethnic and racial discrimination, those belonging to heavily-discriminated communities tend to be more open to political parties or civic organizations that are most focused on fighting the established system and/or the racial or ethnic policies applied by the political regime. This type of individual political reaction should not be confused with the reaction of the ethnic community.

Second, community civic structures have their own autonomy and identity. They elaborate on specific reactions of members of the community in response to exceptional historic situations. Within the context of non-democratic political systems (those that do not recognize

⁵⁸ Ilie Radulescu, “Razboiul evreimii,” *Porunca Vremii*, vol. 11, no. 2320, September 4, 1942, p. 3.

⁵⁹ “Problema jidoveasca nu se poate rezolva decit prin aplicarea unei solutii unitare. Importante declaratii facute ziarului *Curentul*, de dl consilier regal prof. A.C. Cuza,” *Curentul*, vol. 13, no. 4466, July 19, 1940, p. 1.

⁶⁰ “D. prof. A.C. Cuza propune un congres anti-evreiesc. Trebuie gasit un teritoriu in care sa fie colonizati Evreii,” [interviu], *Curentul*, vol. 11, no. 3603, February 12, 1938, p. 9.

⁶¹ Alex. Hodos, “Israel intr-o noua robie,...” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4871, September 7, 1941, pp. 1, 7.

⁶² “Posibilitati de emigrare in Bolivia pentru evreii din Romania,” *Curentul*, vol. 11, no. 3626, March 17, 1938, p. 11.

⁶³ Alex. Hodos, “Asculta, Israele!” *Curentul*, vol. 14, no. 4857, August 24, 1941, p. 1.

ethnic or religious communities or practice chauvinistic or antisemitic politics that may lead to minority exclusion from the civic, economic, or political community of rights and even to genocide) the representatives of civic community structures may resort to liberation or rescue actions on behalf of and for the benefit of their community; the efforts of Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, head of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, to prevent deportations and help the Jews who had already been deported provide a good example. These attitudes are largely presented in the chapter of this report entitled “The Life of the Jewish Community under Ion Antonescu and the Jewish Community’s Response to the Holocaust in Romania.”

Third, between 1938 and 1944, the Communist Party in Romania had messages and politically critical attitudes toward the antisemitic policies of the state during the dictatorial governments. In general, the PCR (the Romanian Communist Party) adopted the positions of the Communist International on issues related to minorities or antifascism.

PCR documents from the 1938-1944 period from the Romanian National Archives describe some of the party positions concerning the Jewish problem. From this perspective, three attitudes of the Communist Party appear. First, a direct rejection of the discrimination and antisemitic political actions organized by the state; second, an implicit reaction; and third, a reaction of trivialization of the Holocaust in Romania.

Clearly, with the exception of the last type of reaction, in any other situation the messages of the PCR during those years would have been at least potential sources of attraction for the Jews from Romania who lived under an acute feeling of multiple insecurities. A few examples that illustrate Communist Party attitudes include the critique of the Romanianization process and a rejection of the alleged positive affect of this process on the economic and social status of the Jews.⁶⁵ “The Antonescu-Sima government instituted the ‘Romanianization of personnel’ across the entire country, based on law, to fire tens of thousands of Jewish and Hungarian workers and clerks and replace them with their subordinates, especially with those originating from the ranks of the refugees...In the Jewish and Hungarian businesses and foreign capital (except the German) a few thousand highly-paid Romanianization commissars were nominated....Under the slogan “Romanianization of industry and commerce,” the Legionnaires and their armed followers began the expropriation of small and large Jewish stores all over the

⁶⁴ X. Y. Z., “Rezolvarea problemei evreiesti. Nimic nu va putea impiedica lichidarea ei categorica si definitiva,” *Unirea* (1941); Mihail E. Ionescu and Liviu Rotman, eds., *The Holocaust and Romania* (Bucharest, 2003), p. 313.

⁶⁵ Arhivele Nationale ale Romaniei (ANR), Fond CC/PCR-Cancelarie, no. 2520, dos. 5/1941, “Scrisoare despre infringerea rebeliunii legionare,” *Istoria Partidului Comunist Roman* (ISISP documentary), vol. 5, doc. 3, “De la regimul legionar la dictatura militara,” February 1941.

country with threats of death. The Legionary regime led by General Antonescu and Horia Sima not only instigated division but also divided, either by law or without the law, the belongings of the Jewish population.”⁶⁶ The PCR also harshly criticized the violent antisemitism of the extreme right. In January 1938, following antisemitic actions in Transylvania, the PCR felt obliged “to explain to the masses, using the Marxist repertoire, the meaning of periodical pogroms: they are not accidents, but a product of the policies wished by the dictatorship of finance capital....By informing the masses about the attitude of revolutionary workers, communists will raise sympathies for revolutionary workers’ organizations within minorities.” The filtering of antisemitism through the lens of class struggle and the radical opposition between the bourgeoisie and proletariat led the PCR to criticize the political positions of Jewish community leaders: “At the same time the Communist Party must show, through the facts (the speeches of Ely Bercovici, Filderman in the Parliament, the complete absence of the Hungarian Party), all the cowardice and humiliations of the minorities’ bourgeoisies and to unmask those who are the allies of the liberals: the Union of Romanian Jews, the Hungarian Party that made alliances with the executioners of their own people.”⁶⁷

The antifascist documents or those against the dictatorial political regimes expressed, among other things, the Communist Party’s position in favor of equal rights for minorities. Titles included: “Defending nationalities’ rights and exposing the demagoguery of the government on this issue”⁶⁸ and “Against the national policy of persecution, the cancellation of the decrees on the revision of citizenship, and the cancellation of the ‘law for the protection of national labor’...for equal rights to all people in Romania.”⁶⁹

The Jewish problem was also present in the correspondence between the Romanian Communists and their relations within the Third International. Typical is a letter written after the Legionary rebellion:

[T]he Iron Guard lost much of its influence and this rebellion opened the eyes of many people. The murders, pillaging, and arsons that were committed have been underreported in the

⁶⁶ Istoria PCR, vol. 5, doc. 3, “De la regimul legionar la dictatura militara,” February 1941.

⁶⁷ ANR, dos. 3/1938, “Instruțiuni. Sarcinile PC din Romania fata de agitatiile antisemite.”

⁶⁸ ANR, dos. 13/1939, “Scrisoare trimisa din tara, informeaza despre actiunea intreprinsa de Secretariatul PCR cu prilejul Consfaturii reprezentantilor partidelor politice din Romania, May 16, 1939,” May 19, 1939.

⁶⁹ ANR, dos. 11/1938, “Platforma—Contra pericolului crescut de fascism si razboi, pentru unirea poporului roman cu popoarele conlocuitoare. Catre toti cetatenii dornici de pace, democratie si progres. Catre poporul roman si popoarele conlocuitoare din Romania,” May 1938.

press. On January 21-22, 1941, before the Iron Guard initiated serious attacks upon the Board of Ministers, Antonescu did not interfere. Legionnaires sacked at will the Bucharest districts of Vacaresti, Otesti, and others. On Domnitei Street, Legionnaires organized genuine orgies. A group of Jewish men and women were beaten to death with iron bars in the middle of a circle of ‘dancing’ Legionnaires. At the city slaughterhouse, the Jews were hung on slaughterer’s hooks for cows, and we have photographs of those atrocities.⁷⁰

The PCR, through the civic association it controlled, allowed the Jews to militate for specific objectives; for example, in the Union of Patriots, the PCR stated that “The Jewish group must have its own commission to allow the Jews to take care of purely Jewish issues.”⁷¹

The PCR also organized networks of aid to the Jews from the Vapniarka camp in Transnistria, where the majority of those detained were Jews and communists.⁷² It is worth mentioning that in 1942 when the Romanian communists remained interned in the Tirgu Jiu camp, over 400 Jewish communists were deported to Vapniarka. Because they were fed peas for cows, most of them returned to Romania paralyzed. Over forty Romanian communists of Jewish origin who had been sentenced to prison were moved from Vapniarka to the Ribnita prison. Only three of them survived.

At the same time, however, there were instances in which the PCR did not adopt a direct position about the Holocaust, instead talking indirectly about atrocities or putting Jewish victims under the more generic rubric of “cohabiting nationalities.” Although its indictment of the Antonescu regime was made clear in a document issued in the aftermath of the Iasi pogrom, which acknowledged the “poverty, hunger, forced labor, serfdom, destructive war in the interest of German fascists, internments in concentration camps and mass executions of Jews and

⁷⁰ ANR, dos. 5/1941, “Scrisoarea tov. Zimmer adresata tov. Draganov despre infringerea rebeliunii legionare,” March 1941.

⁷¹ ANR, dos. 28/1943, “Proces verbal incheiat in sedinta CC/PCR din 29-30 August 1943, in care s-a analizat situatia internationala si locul Romaniei in cadrul acesteia, sarcinile PCR in etapa actuala precum si raporturile dintre Uniunea Patriotilor, PSD etc.,” August 30, 1943.

⁷² ANR, dos. 39/1943, “Proces verbal intocmit in sedinta CC/PCR din 3 Oct.1943 intitulat *Sedinta Sergiu*” where mention is made to “Frontul Plugarilor ajuta regulat Vapniarka,” inv. 2348, dos. 3/1943, “Corespondenta unor evrei deportati in Transnistria,” 1943.

Romanian patriots,” the PCR confined itself to referring to the Jewish victims there as “the 2,000 patriots from Iasi,” whose murder “may not deter the Romanian people.”⁷³

A report of the Central Committee Secretariat of the PCR of May 20, 1938, described the difficult situation of Jews following the Citizenship Revision Law, without naming the Jews at all, although the law was directed at them:

The royal dictatorship wages savage terror on cohabiting nationalities through its “citizenship revision” bill, which stripped the citizenship of tens and thousands of people. By barbarously applying “the law of national labor protection,” thousands more men and women lost their jobs. The royal dictatorship runs a chauvinist policy of stirring Romanian people against cohabiting people and thereby endangers the security of the country in the case of aggression of fascist countries against Romania.⁷⁴

A document of the PCR Central Committee following the Legionary rebellion defined the Legionary movement as “stirring and feeding wild chauvinism in the Romanian people, by stirring hate among nationalities, by forcing workers to work between twelve and sixteen hours a day for miserable wages, by fomenting pogroms against the revolutionary working class and the oppressed nations.”⁷⁵

Fourth, as sociologist Andrei Roth has shown, during the interwar years, Jews were over-represented in the Romanian Communist Party. This means that their proportion was higher than the proportion represented by the Jewish minority as a demographic group versus the entire population. “In spite of this,” writes Roth, “this over-representation of Jews in the Communist movement does not mean that the majority of the Jews were Communists or that the majority of the Communists were Jews.” For example, in 1933, the Jews represented 4 percent of the population, and at the same time, in the Communist Party, which had 1,665 members, they represented 18.22 percent (303 Communists in a community of over 750,000 Jews). The Jews

⁷³ Istoria PCR, doc. 7, “Platforma- Program din 6 September 1941 intitulata: Lupta poporului roman pentru libertate si independenta nationala,” elaborata de CC/PCR, September 1941.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ ANR, dos. 32/1941, “Circulara a CC/PCR in care se enumara sarcinile organizatiilor de partid dupa rebeliunea legionara,” February 1941

represented the third ethnic group after the Hungarians (26.8 percent) and Romanians (22.65).⁷⁶ Between 1933 and August 23, 1944, the number of party members changed. According to a CC/PCR document, in 1940 the party allegedly had between 3,000 and 4,000 members; by August 23, 1944, they numbered only around 1,000.⁷⁷

Judeo-communism was propaganda meant to divide people. It was not based on PCR membership statistics or on its political strength. PCR membership between 1938 and 1944 was very small. Together with its sympathizers, the communists could not count on more than 4,000 people. Moreover, between 1924 and August 23, 1944, the PCR was outlawed and had extremely limited resources for influencing the political actions taken by those in power. Romanian Magyars and Jews joined the PCR because, at that time, the party was militantly antifascist, both ideologically and programmatically, and it made many pro-minority overtures. The PCR's attitude concerning the minorities was in accordance with the thesis of the Thirteenth International and stipulated, in general, the principle of self-determination.

Fifth, the Jewish population suffered during the occupation of Bessarabia and Bukovina by the Soviet army and administration during the summer of 1940. There are statistical data and nominal lists concerning the deportation of the Jewish citizens of Bessarabia and Bukovina. The deportations were made on the basis of the ideological criteria of the "class struggle." Under these circumstances, Jews in the Zionist movement, considered by the Soviets to be a bourgeois political organization, as well as those belonging to the petty bourgeoisie (tradesmen) and traditional parties of Romania were deported. The following statistics concerning the deportation or detention of the Jewish population by the Soviet authorities between 1940 and 1941 are derived from data from Chisinau:⁷⁸

Locality	People Deported	Jews Deported	Percentage of Jews Deported
Chisinau	589	158	26.82
Balti	291	116	39.86
Bender	203	64	31.52
Briceni	46	18	39.13
Lipcani	35	18	51.42
Cahul	149	45	30.20
Calarasi	60	31	51.66
Bravicea	28	14	50.00
Cimislia	67	15	22.38
Total	1468	479	32.62

⁷⁶ Dinu C. Giurescu, "Evreii romani 1939–1944," in *Realitatea Evreiasca*, no. 51, 1997.

⁷⁷ For the number of Communist Party members between 1933 and 1945, see Ioan Chiper, "Consideratii privind evolutia numerica si compozitia etnica a PCR, 1921–1952," in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, vol. 6, no. 21, 4/1998.

⁷⁸ *Cartea Memoriei*, registry of the victims of totalitarian communism, Chisinau, 1999.

Conclusions

This chapter argues that the tropes of “Judeo-Bolshevism” and “Judeo-communism” were expressions of totalitarian antisemitic and nationalist propaganda during the years of 1938 to 1944, and they continue to be today. They are far from being mere conceptual points of reference for clarifying and evaluating the genesis and the transformations of Romanian communism. These two expressions became widely used instruments of the nationalist chauvinist repertoire, fashioned to avoid confrontation with real political and economic problems and to channel support toward a primitive and rigid social disposition fed by ethnocentric and racist ideas. The facile activation of such attitudes, through antisemitic slogans derived from the strategy of “scapegoating,” incited irrationality and divided people. The only real reason for such expressions is a mental propensity, be it individual or collective, to react to these slogans in a predictable manner: the dehumanization and punishment of a human collectivity.

Membership in a political party or movement is an act of individual will that is determined by historical, national, and international circumstances, social and familial milieu, and education. The overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the left political movements during the interwar years was strongly influenced by the rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe.

While studies on the impact and perception of the Judeo-Bolshevik myth have become more accessible, those concerning the complex relationships between political parties and community institutions, or the implication of people and personalities belonging to various ethnic communities in the political arena, still represent an understudied chapter.