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# The Paper Solution

## Jewish Emigration from Romania during the Holocaust

MIHAI CHIOVEANU

With June 1941, the Romanian government, backed by state institutions and agencies, turned ethnic cleansing into a top priority policy. Dreams of a Jew free Romania (with other ethnic and religious minorities targeted as well) made Ion Antonescu and his henchmen easily accept mass killing, ghettoization, evacuations, deportations, and relocations as effective genocidal means to achieve envisioned ultra-nationalistic and redemptive ends. However, with late 1942, and the continent wide Holocaust in full swing, Bucharest decided to reject Berlin's *International Final Solution*. Plans to deport the Romanian Jews to Poland were abandoned, and further evacuations to Transnistria halted<sup>1</sup>. Instead, Romanian decision makers decided to return to and promote emigration, a former, long-abandoned by that time Nazi strategy and policy, as the only acceptable solution to the *Jewish Question*<sup>2</sup>. By 1943, and only 16 months after the terrible genocidal massacres in Bessarabia and Bukovina, Mihai Antonescu, no less anti-Semitic when it came to *Romanianization*, which he coined as economic reform, yet this time rejecting "any act of barbarity", denying and deflecting responsibility for past crimes, took the risk to repeatedly inform exasperated German diplomats, experts, and SS advisers on Jewish matters that for the Romanian government emigration is no longer just a faint echo of a previous, unworkable solution, but a viable, long term goal, and always favored by Romania policy<sup>3</sup>.

An unacceptable alternative for the Germans, yet a perfect excuse for the Romanians to halt deportations, emigration did not aim for protecting, not to say saving the Jews. Going back to the original plans and practices, as they could not cope with the hasty dynamic of Nazi policy, the Romanians made no secret out of their intention to continue their ethnic cleansing operations by other, more civilized means, and with more profitable ends: obtain funds from ransoming Jews, contain German protests, signal the allies that Romania took a different path<sup>4</sup>. However, none of the goals were fully achieved by the end. Facing critics from the Western allies, protests and threats from the deceived Germans, and corruption from his own greedy bureaucracy, Ion Antonescu decided in late May 1944 to halt emigration "to the moment when the state will be able to organize it on serious grounds"<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mihai CHIOVEANU, "The Unforeseen Defection. Romania's Disengagement from the Nazi Final Solution", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. VII, no. 4, 2007, pp. 879-902.

<sup>2</sup> Saul FRIEDLANDER, *The Years of Extermination*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2007, pp. 450-451.

<sup>3</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Evreii din România între anii 1940-1944*, vol. III, 1940-1942: *Perioada unei mari restriști*, partea a II-a, Hasefer, București, 1997, doc. 556, pp. 273-274.

<sup>4</sup> Andreas HILLGRUBER, *Hitler, Regele Carol și Mareșalul Antonescu. Relațiile germano-române. 1938-1944*, Romanian transl. by S. Neagoe, Humanitas, București, 1994, pp. 283-284.

<sup>5</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Evreii din România între anii 1940-1944*, vol. IV, *Bilanțul tragediei – renașterea speranței*, Hasefer, București, 1998, doc. 357, 358, pp. 395-397.

Episodical and incoherent, Jewish emigration from Romania during the war went rather slow as the government refused taking major risks and any direct involvement in coordinating the operations. Considering the rather small number of Jews that left Romania as to reach Palestine after a long and unsafe voyage, one can only conclude that emigration did not matter much in saving the Jews nor when it came to ethnically cleanse Romania<sup>1</sup>. It served rather to deceive the allies, and as an excellent excuse for departing the German solution.

Not surprisingly, before and after 1989, Romanian historiography paid attention to Jewish emigration as to blatantly turn it into an irrefutable argument for the denial of Holocaust in Romania. Presenting it as a vigorous policy of Antonescu's regime, and as part of the efforts of the Romanian government to frustrate the German *Final Solution*, some historians went as far as to translate emigration in terms of protecting and thus, saving the Jews<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, Romania was presented as a gate to safety for not only Romanian, but also Hungarian, Polish, German, and so on, Jews, both legal and illegal emigrants. Analyzed outside the context, overemphasized through an abundance of metaphors, presented as part of a continuum – the fact that from the spring of 1941 to the autumn of 1942 the Romanian government rejected and prevented emigration as a solution to the *Jewish Question* is obliterated – , in striking opposition to the Nazi Final Solution, and without mentioning that the Nazis also favored emigration up to 1941, the issue was often abused in a desperate attempt to diminish or overlook the dimensions of extermination and the radical nature of Romanian state anti-Semitism<sup>3</sup>. Living apart several aspects that were not addressed, such as the status of Jews, rather refugees from death than immigrants, the goals of the Romanian government and its role in designing and fostering an emigration policy, and so on, the main problem comes with the general view on emigration as a practice to be honored, and not a policy to be reconsidered and critically assessed as it aimed but for the destruction of the group<sup>4</sup>.

On their turn, Western historians only rarely address emigration, with the issue being equally under-researched and treated as a "footnote" to other issues, such as *Romanianization* of property, deportation, and repatriation from Transnistria<sup>5</sup>, or the desperate need for foreign currency of a corruption moderated

<sup>1</sup> Carol IANCU, *Alexandru Șafran, o viață de luptă, o rază de lumină*, Romanian transl. by Ticu Goldstein, Hasefer, București, 2008, p. 176. See also Dinu C. GIURESCU, *România în al doilea război mondial*, Editura ALL, București, 1999, p. 160. From March 1941 to August 1944 only 17 ships with 4 600 Jewish emigrants left Romanian harbors for Palestine.

<sup>2</sup> Bela VAGO, "The Destruction of Romanian Jewry in Romanian Historiography", in Yisrael GUTMAN, Gideon GREIF (eds.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 405-406, 411, 415. See also Gheorghe ZAHARIA, Nicolae COPOIU, "The Situation of the Jews of Romania, 1938-1944, as Reflected in Romanian Historiography", in *Ibidem*, p. 427.

<sup>3</sup> See Ion CALAFETEANU, Nicolae DINU, Teodor GHEORGHE, *Emigrarea populației evreiești din România în anii 1940-1944*, Silex, București, 1993; D. ȘANDRU, A. KARETZKI, I. SAIZU, "Dificultăți în 'colaborarea' româno-germană (1940-1944)", *Anuarul Institutului de istorie și arheologie A. D. Xenopol*, XXIII, Iași, 1996; Alex Mihai STOENESCU, *Istoria loviturilor de stat în România. Cele trei dictaturi*, RAO, București, 2002, pp. 456-457.

<sup>4</sup> Dennis DELETANT, *Aliatul uitat al lui Hitler. Ion Antonescu și regimul său, 1940-1944*, Romanian transl. by Delia Răzdolescu, Humanitas, București, 2008, pp. 287-288.

<sup>5</sup> Radu IOANID, *Evreii sub regimul Antonescu*, Editura Hasefer, București, 1998, pp. 340-341, 391.

anti-Semitic regime, abruptly and enthusiastically converted to emigration<sup>1</sup>. Scattered throughout the saga of the Romanian Holocaust, making a good introduction to the issue of ransoming the Romanian Jews in the aftermath of the war, with Communists succeeding where fascists failed<sup>2</sup>, emigration is approached as less relevant in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The explanation might be that from a distance, and when compared with other more important issues, it looks like a detail, a figure on the macabre statistic of the Romanian, not to say Continent wide Holocaust<sup>3</sup>. Much too ambiguous and ambivalent, the topic of emigration might have turned most Western historians cautious, not to say reluctant to research it in depth.

Israeli historians, starting with Arie Steinberg<sup>4</sup>, are an exception in this sense, paying more, unusual to others, attention to emigration. Dalia Ofer who examined "the roots and evolution of Romania's emigration policy in the larger context of the ideologies, policies, and predicaments of the Holocaust period" pointed out that with the late 1930s the Romanian government considered emigration as an alternative for solving the "Jewish" problem, echoing international plans for the mass settlement of Jews in areas outside of Europe. Moreover, she stresses the fact that although in the period ranging from June 1941 to September 1942 Romania's policy toward Jews set out on more radical paths, emigration was never eliminated as an option. The case of Struma illustrates this point and also underlines the Romanian government's refusal to comply with German requests that the Jews be deported to the death camps in Poland. While pointing out that Jewish emigration was a growing source of profit for Romanian transport companies and bureaucrats, Dalia Ofer views Romania's delay and subsequent cancellation of deportations of Jews to Belzec as "a manifestation of Romania's quest for autonomy in policymaking", and "a sign of sovereignty"<sup>5</sup>.

Recently, British historian Dennis Deletant made considerable room to the issue, presenting it in relation to the issues of the Jewish deportees returning from Transnistria, and Jewish refugees flying Hungary in 1944, and concludes that emigration was a solution fostered by the Romanian government, with 1943, on political and less humanitarian grounds, as to prevent further deportation and killings<sup>6</sup>. And so does French historian Carol Iancu, presenting the complex motivations of the Romanian government to return to emigration, a Nazi policy as well up to 1941, as a solution (achieving ethnic purification by less risky means, improving

<sup>1</sup> Robert S. WISTRICH, *Hitler and the Holocaust*, A Modern Library Chronicles Book, New York, 2003, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> See Radu IOANID, *The Ransom of the Jews: The Story of the Extraordinary Secret Bargain Between Romania and Israel*, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Armin HEINEN, *Rumänien, der Holocaust und die Logik der Gewalt*, Südosteuropäische Arbeiten, 2007, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Arie STEINBERG, *History and Voices of the Tragedy in Romania and Transnistria. The International Aspects of Jewish Emigration From and Through Transnistria (1938-1947)*, a PhD thesis submitted at the University of Haifa in 1948, is among the first comprehensive and illustrative historical accounts of Jewish emigration from Romania. For a brief presentation of the structure and the main conclusions of this work see <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/c/carmelly-felicia/international-aspects.html> (accessed on 9.02.2009).

<sup>5</sup> Dalia OFER, "Emigration and Immigration: The Changing Role of Romanian Jewry", in Randolph L. BRAHAM (ed.), *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews During the Antonescu Era*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 19-20, 36.

<sup>6</sup> Dennis DELETANT, *Aliatul uitat...cit.*, pp. 228 and the following.

Romania's image in the West, create a new platform for peace negotiations with the Allies after the war), and the difficulties laying behind (raising funds, providing transportation means, finding destinations, facing German and British opposition)<sup>1</sup>. His conclusion is accurate and rightful: though it worked against the Final Solution from 1943, emigration, not an organized policy, was the outcome of eliminationist anti-Semitism, a prelude to the Destruction of the Jewish existence in Romania, and the epilogue to state organized with 1938 terror<sup>2</sup>.

The aim of the present text is not simply to (once again) overcome the myth of a Second World War Romania as a "haven for Jews" and a "gate to safety". Nor is it to downplay the tendency of Romanian historiography to present emigration as a key policy to solve the Jewish Question while turning other policies into mere accidental, as this goal was already achieved<sup>3</sup>. My chief interest is with delineating the reasons and motivations behind the decision of the Romanian government to embrace, abandon, and finally move back to emigration, to understand the twisted and paradoxical decision-making process, and the strategic logic of the perpetrators. Aware of the fact that emigration can be (and should be) better approached from the victims' perspective, and interpreted as a form of resistance, and as a goal for Zionists organizations, I will examine it from the perspective of the top perpetrators and as to understand the metamorphosis of cleansing nation statism, its tapestry and sophistry. Thus, attention is given not only to the Romanian government, but also to the Nazi perspective on emigration, the attitude of the Allies and the neutral countries, and the efforts of the Jewish leadership and international organizations to rescue the remnants of the Jewish community at large. Analyzing the actions and attitudes of the above-mentioned actors in a wider, European context, might shed some light on the controversial issue of Jewish emigration from Romania during the Holocaust.

Long before Bucharest, Berlin decision makers considered emigration as a mean to achieve a *Free of Jews Reich*. Taking advantage from the fact that the world at large considered emigration, deportation, and exchange of populations as "time honored practices"<sup>4</sup>, the Nazis managed to force more than half a million Jews fly from persecutions, segregation, terror, and pogroms. All those refugees were not saved. They were but the first victims of a brand new type of redemptive anti-Semitism, with emigration turned gradually into state policy and envisioned for a short while as *The Solution* to the Jewish Question. However, with the perpetrators looking for efficiency, and overwhelmed by their tasks, somewhere between July and October 1941 they shifted rapidly from emigration and expulsion to physical extermination<sup>5</sup>.

Emigration, soon to be turned into "forced emigration", an euphemisms for expulsion, represented an option only as long as violent policed methods not to

<sup>1</sup> Carol IANCU, *Alexandru Șafran...cit.*, pp. 170-178.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> Tuvia FRILING, Radu IOANID, Mihail IONESCU (eds.), *Final Report. International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, Polirom, Iași, 2005, p. 384.

<sup>4</sup> Michael MANN, *The Dark Side of Democracy. Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...cit.*, p. 424. Emigration was forbidden by October, on orders issued by Heinrich Müller, the head of Gestapo. The same month, even before, the first deportations from Berlin, Vienna, Prague and the overcrowded ghettos of Poland, to the extermination camps started.



say extermination proved to be unpopular and thus met with resistance<sup>1</sup>. It was a kind of Plan A, aiming to achieve total racial cleansing by less risky means<sup>2</sup>, and, up to 1938, but among the several, often contradictory, anti-Jewish "policies", none being officially coordinated by state institutions and agencies<sup>3</sup>. With the party and the government having other priorities, emigration became with 1934 one of the major tasks of the SS, bringing prominence in *Jewish Affairs* to the "black tunics" and playing the role of a spring board to Heinrich Himmler, Adolf Eichmann, and many others. Not a central aim in the first years, emigration followed the simple logic of breaking down assimilationism and turning Jews toward Zionism. Offering and strengthening incentives, a cautious, pragmatic, and instrumental policy, it was first and foremost designed as not to damage the economy and prestige of Germany<sup>4</sup>. Initial plans were devised for 30 years, with the period for completion being subsequently reduced to 15-20, 8-10, and so on, as emigration was turned into an emergency and "contemplated as an orderly exodus"<sup>5</sup>. With the SD in charge with organizing illegal emigration and designing grandiose plans, such as the "Mildenstein Plan", looking for a long term and lasting solution, even cooperation with Zionists was accepted as necessary though unsavory<sup>6</sup>. Recruiting Jews to push for increased emigration, and working with Jewish agencies to open gates and transfer funds, was to downplay any opposition coming from party radicals, as well as from assimilationist Jews, who preferred to endure in desperation than leave to unsafety<sup>7</sup>. This way, Palestine came to be favored by the SD simply because they had Zionist support, and thus could easily reach agreements and make arrangements to finance, organize, ship, and smuggle Jews into a land where they were not welcomed<sup>8</sup>.

However, Palestine as a destination was favored only for a short period. Second thoughts pop up once the "Peel commission" proposed a division of the territory and the creation of the state of Israel. To the ideological dilemma generated by "pro-Zionism", the German Foreign Office experts on Jewish affairs and party radicals added the potential dangers generated by the creation of a Jewish state, and the prospects to alienate the Arabs<sup>9</sup>. Several reports coming from the Foreign Office indicate that altogether emigration was considered as a dangerous solution, with the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine as an outcome being deadly. No matter the number of Jews living there, and the territorial extend of the respective state, the new entity was to offer the 'racial enemy' a basis for future attacks on

<sup>1</sup> Eric D. WEITZ, *A Century of Genocide. Utopias of Race and Nation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2003, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Michael MANN, *The Dark Side of Democracy...cit.*, p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> Karl A. SCHLEUNES, "Retracing the Twisted Road. Nazi Policies Toward German Jews, 1933-1939", in François FURET (ed.), *Unanswered Questions. Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews*, Schocken Books, New York, 1989, p. 56. See also Michael BURLEICH, *The Third Reich. A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2001, pp. 281-316.

<sup>4</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...cit.*, pp. 139-141.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 128, 168-170.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> Michael BURLEICH, *The Third Reich...cit.*, p. 317. See also Heinz HÖHNE, *The Order of the Death's Head. The Story of Hitler's SS*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, pp. 331-332.

<sup>8</sup> Robert S. WISTRICH, *Hitler and the Holocaust*, cit., p. 51. Also Heinz HÖHNE, *The Order of the Death's Head...cit.*, pp. 346-347.

<sup>9</sup> Heinz HÖHNE, *The Order of the Death's Head...cit.*, pp. 334-335, 347. Michael BURLEICH, *The Third Reich...cit.*, p. 317.

Germany, enhance and coordinate Jewish World Power<sup>1</sup>. In other words, a Jewish State would play a role similar to that of Vatican for the Catholic Church, granting protection, legitimacy, and international representation to the Jews.

To some, fostering emigration to other lands was an excellent opportunity to export and foster anti-Semitism – the poorer the Jews the better –, and thus obtain sympathy and legitimacy for Germany. As a result, attempts were made to purchase and/or simply identify other territories (destinations) in South America and Central Africa that could absorb the German Jews<sup>2</sup>. Yet, others, following Alfred Rosenberg vision, were soon to endorse the idea of creating a *Jewish Reservation*, persuading the rest on the necessity to find an "International Solution to the Jewish Question"<sup>3</sup>.

Before 1938, in the absence of a coherent policy, and due to the too many restrictions, the absence of funds, destinations, transportation means, and so on; emigration did not work. Hasty emigration was not favored by the Jews, still hoping at a dignified life in Germany. 37 000 left in 1933, less so in following years; 73% of them moved to other European states, 19% to Palestine, and 8% overseas. Unable to predict the genocide lying ahead, most preferred to endure segregation, humiliation, persecution. Emigration, though possible, meant unbearable costs and moving to uncertainty<sup>4</sup>.

Hitler turned in favor of a more vigorous emigration only with September 1935, and only with September 1936 the idea of a 'complete emigration', compulsory needed be, became a fundamental aim. Due the economic situation, the only problem for the Nazis was how to do it as not to turn Jewish emigration into an extra burden for Germany<sup>5</sup>.

The *Anschluss* was to give emigration a new impulse. A more radical and violent anti-Semitism surfaced, soon sparking into a pogrom presented by the Nazis as an "expression of People anger"<sup>6</sup>. Panicked Jews fled, others were dumped over borders, and some were ransomed for emigration. 100 Jews were killed in the *Kristallnacht*, with another 80 000 being forced into mass flight in the aftermath<sup>7</sup>. Eichmann advocated since 1937 that due to mounting obstacles and as to speed sluggish emigration, violent street attacks on Jews should be perpetrated<sup>8</sup>. Himmler advocated the same. As emigration proved unworkable, with bystander 'greeting the desperate with indifference', moving to ostensibly forced, compulsory emigration, became a must, with other countries forced to lift restriction when facing street violence against Jews<sup>9</sup>.

Moreover, conquered Austria, due the absence of any institutional rivalry, offered the SS and the party radicals the possibility to move to more radical experiments, turning Austria into a laboratory for "new methods"<sup>10</sup>. When it comes to

<sup>1</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...*cit., pp. 237-238.

<sup>2</sup> Karl A. SCHLEUNES, "Retracing the Twisted Road...cit.", p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Yitzhak ARAD, Israel GUTMAN, Abraham MARGALIT (eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust*, University of Nebraska Press, Yad Vashem, Lincoln, Jerusalem, 1999, pp. 126-131.

<sup>4</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...*cit., pp. 61-62.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 224.

<sup>6</sup> Heinz HÖHNE, *The Order of the Death's Head...*cit., pp. 338-345.

<sup>7</sup> Michael MANN, *The Dark Side of Democracy...*cit., p. 194. See also Michael BURLEICH, *The Third Reich...*cit., p. 323.

<sup>8</sup> Ian KERSHAW, *Hitler. 1936-1945: Nemesis*, vol. 2, Penguin Books, London, 2000, p. 136.

<sup>9</sup> Michael BURLEICH, *The Third Reich...*cit., pp. 336-338.

<sup>10</sup> Karl A. SCHLEUNES, "Retracing the Twisted Road...cit.", p. 65.

emigration, the first great success was registered by Eichmann's *Central Office for Jewish Emigration* opened in Vienna in August 1938. In less than 6 months 50 000 Jews were forced into emigration, compared with 150 000-180 000 in the period from 1933 to 1938<sup>1</sup>. Yet, this was of no great significance for the Nazis as with Austria they took under control 183 000 more Jews, more than those who left the Reich since 1933<sup>2</sup>.

What Eichmann's office did was to eliminate barriers and turn emigration from practice into an efficient policy, centralized and supervised by a state agency. Creating opportunities, getting funds, working with Jewish organizations, travel agencies and shipping companies, Eichmann's office proved to be an industrious facilitator<sup>3</sup>. His astonishing result convinced his superiors to open similar offices in Berlin and other German cities, than Prague, furthermore, place the entire operation under Heinrich Muller's, than Reinhardt Heydrich's supervision as to speed it up. Estimates were made that the Reich will be cleansed of Jews in 8-10 years. For the first time it looked like when emigration represented a viable solution, with Rosenberg alluding that no less than 15 million will emigrate in the future. With more lists, more experts, and more offices, organized, forced emigration, as devised by Eichmann, was turned into a 'prototype for SS policies between Kristallnacht and the outbreak of war', when opportunities diminished, forcing the Nazis to move hastily to deportation and expulsion<sup>4</sup>.

With July 1939, the *Reichsvereinigung* (Reich Association of the Jews in Germany; the Romanian *Centrala* was a carbon copy of it), centralizing and controlling the activity of all previous Jewish organizations, had but one major goal: to foster and further emigration, of poor Jews first<sup>5</sup>. With the *Gestapo* in charge as the determining agency, and the *SD* losing independence and initiative, the policy turned more dogmatic and radical. Emigration became an issue of state security, and cooperation with Zionists was brought to an end<sup>6</sup>. Instead of Palestine, European countries, the USA, and Latin America were preferred as destinations, with the *SS* knowing that, in the grip of economic depression, most would refuse impoverished and destitute Jews. The policy was double folded this time: emigration was to help cleanse Germany and make some profit on one hand; to stir up hostility, spark anti-Semitic attitudes, and turn the image of Germany and Nazism from barbaric into a champion and leader, a major political force to solve a paramount problem<sup>7</sup>. The Evian le Bains Conference from 6-13 July 1938, a total failure, was but to encourage them in this sense. With one exception, no country, not even the organizers wanted to take more Jews. USA and Palestine were kept out of the agenda from the start. Jewish emigration was translated in terms of a refugee problem, with a long term international solution being favored by the League of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Michael BURLEICH, *The Third Reich...cit.*, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup> Yitzhak ARAD, Israel GUTMAN, Abraham MARGALIT (eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust*, cit., p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher BROWNING, *The Origins of the Final Solution. The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*, University of Nebraska Press, Yad Vashem, Lincoln, Jerusalem, 2004, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...cit.*, pp. 59, 318-319.

<sup>6</sup> Heinz HÖHNE, *The Order of the Death's Head...cit.*, p. 349.

<sup>7</sup> Robert S. WISTRICH, *Hitler and the Holocaust*, cit., p. 50. See also Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...cit.*, p. 214.



Nations, and an Intergovernmental commission to work it out on the basis of existing laws and practices. Nazi policy was not denounced, not even mentioned, nor were Jews mentioned as victims of a policy of persecution<sup>1</sup>. Hypocrisy and racism coming from bystanders, combined with rage, sorrowness, and frustrations coming from Zionists, facing proposals of "breathtaking cynism"<sup>2</sup>. For Hitler, the outcome represented an opportunity to mock humanitarian pretensions of western democracies, while turning a German domestic issue into an International problem<sup>3</sup>. All in all, UK took some 10 000 children, the famous *Kindertransport*, the Dominican Republic accepted 100 000, and USA 132 000. For the rest, the solution was to look for uncertain refugee in Shanghai, Cuba, Mexico and other places, taking dangerous journeys on rusted ships or by land, "roaming the world with no atom of hope"<sup>4</sup>. Some, like the passengers of St'Louis, returned to Hamburg, found refuge in Holland and France, as to soon be reached by the "shadow of swastika".

Did the others, USA and UK first, fail to understand the centrality of the Jewish Question to the Nazi mind and policy? What is for sure is that they could not foresee the Final Solution, utterly refusing at the time to encourage and reward the existing Nazi policy. Bureaucratic indifference, a tinge of anti-Semitism, other priorities, secrecy, latter on a strategy of global war, and the impossibility to devote to one issue, were but to worse things. "Walls of papers" kept the refugees out, a "proof of inhumanity of a document with a stamp on it"<sup>5</sup>.

British opposition to Jewish emigration became visible with 1937 and turned massive and fierce with 1939, when the *White Paper* turned the emigration solution insoluble for Jewish organization, adding to the fact that most operations were ill prepared, and to the Nazi pressure<sup>6</sup>. Emigration to Palestine became illegal. British policy was that strict when it came to quotas that not even children were allowed to enter, and not even news of mass killing, reaching London by 1942, were to change much of the attitude. Resistance based on the rationale of not turning Arabs to the Axis and protecting British interests in the Middle East counted more on the balance sheet than love, or hate, or compassion<sup>7</sup>. By 1940 Palestine "ruled out as a destination" for Jews<sup>8</sup>. The "doors to safety were slammed in their faces"<sup>9</sup>.

Up to 1944, the logic of winning the war and not saving the Jews prevailed among the Allies, with the situation somewhat changing for the better as the International Red Cross and the War Refugees Board start putting pressure as to forestall extermination, and thus save the remnants, turning emigration into effective rescue<sup>10</sup>. With 1942 USA paid more attention to the Final Solution, launching rescue initiatives and pressuring the UK and others with 1943<sup>11</sup>. In late 1943-early

<sup>1</sup> Yitzhak ARAD, Israel GUTMAN, Abraham MARGALIT (eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust*, cit., pp. 95-97.

<sup>2</sup> Michael BURLEICH, *The Third Reich...* cit., p. 318.

<sup>3</sup> Robert S. WISTRICH, *Hitler and the Holocaust*, cit., pp. 57-58.

<sup>4</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...* cit., p. 87.

<sup>5</sup> See Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...* cit., pp. 84-86, 89-91, 299-305, 314-319.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 88. See also Martin GILBERT, *Holocaust. A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1985, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> Yehuda BAUER, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2001, pp. 214-216.

<sup>8</sup> Michael BURLEICH, *The Third Reich...* cit., p. 591.

<sup>9</sup> Martin GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, Pimlico, London, 2001, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 116, 129, 167-168, 172-173, 177.

<sup>11</sup> Robert S. WISTRICH, *Hitler and the Holocaust*, cit., p. 196.

1944, the British government attempted to contact and negotiate with the German Foreign Office the emigration of 5000 Romanian Jewish children, mainly orphans from Transnistria. As the Germans already had other plans in the Middle East, the British were asked to accept them to Great Britain, with the SS to halt the transport and send the children to the death-factories<sup>1</sup>. A *Kindertransport* was no longer workable and acceptable, like in 1938.

With Evian, emigration was reduced to little more than a trickle, with the Nazis reconsidering and latter on abandoning this policy<sup>2</sup>. German and latter on West European Jews were kept alive, with emigration as a reserve solution only as long as there were hopes to ransom them, or use the hostages as a bargain-cheep to keep the USA out of war<sup>3</sup>. When it came to the rest of the Jews, the Nazis were soon to find out that the protesting democracies were too weak and/or indifferent to harm Germany. Blaming others for failing emigration they moved rapidly to deportation, evacuation, resettlement, as territorial solutions<sup>4</sup>. However, the shift was not that sudden and radical. By January 1939 *RCOJE* was still to further forced emigration of German Jews by all means, turning it into an increasingly brutal evacuation<sup>5</sup>. To some authors, emigration was considered a solution up to August 1941, when the first restrictions were imposed, with Goring still advocating it in May 1941, and others misinterpreting his orders, a matter of wording, context, and Hitler's irrational attitude that echoed in Heydrich's mind<sup>6</sup>. Irrelevant, if we consider that emigration was banned with October 1941, due to the war conditions, financial problems, lack of transportation means, territories, and visas. Inefficient, not even when vigorously pursued, emigration was to be permitted from that moment onward only in special, individual cases, if it was in the interest of the Reich, and with the approval of RSHA<sup>7</sup>. Otherwise, Jews were to be evacuated to the Nisko area in Poland, or Madagascar<sup>8</sup>.

With Poland first, and than the war of annihilation in USSR, the Nazis were to prevent victims from fleeing to safety. Too many and too dangerous to be shipped away, the refugees got trapped as the allies refused any immigrant coming from enemy territories. Communications were interrupted, Zionists moved on the British side, Palestine and other territories were closed. Instead, latently genocidal plans and policies were brought to the table<sup>9</sup>. War brought emigration to an end.

Was emigration ever to work, or was it more of a paper solution, illustrative for the sophistry and tapestry of German redemptive anti-Semitism? In practice,

<sup>1</sup> Andreas HILLGRUBER, *Hitler, Regele Carol...*cit., p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> Ian KERSHAW, *Hitler. 1936-1945: Nemesis*, cit., p. 145. Benjamin A. VALENTINO, *Final Solutions. Genocide and Total War in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Westview Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 251.

<sup>3</sup> Robert S. WISTRICH, *Hitler and the Holocaust*, cit., p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Yitzhak ARAD, Israel GUTMAN, Abraham MARGALOT (eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust*, cit. pp. 118-121.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> Uwe Dietrich ADAM, "Nazi Actions Concerning the Jews Between the Beginning of World War II and the German Attack on the USSR", in François FURET (ed.), *Unanswered Questions...*cit., p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> Yitzhak ARAD, Israel GUTMAN, Abraham MARGALOT (eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust*, cit., p. 153.

<sup>8</sup> Robert S. WISTRICH, *Hitler and the Holocaust*, cit., pp. 99, 103. Also Michael BURLEICH, *The Third Reich...*cit., pp. 472, 589-593, 597; Cristopher BROWNING, *The Origins of the Final Solution...*cit., pp. 81-82, 87.

<sup>9</sup> Ian KERSHAW, *Hitler. 1936-1945: Nemesis*, cit., p. 135.

the Nazis did not do much to foster it. There was never enough money, territories, ships (rather small, carrying on average 50 passengers, with rare cases of ships taking 400 or 500 on board). When they did, with 1938, it was already in vain, with the British patrolling the coasts, sinking boats or confiscating them, and sending the crew to camps, finally putting diplomatic pressure on neutral governments to refuse ships to harbors<sup>1</sup>. As one of Eichmann's memos from December 1940 indicates, only 501 711 Jews emigrated from Germany and German controlled territories, with yet 5.8 million to be transferred to a non-German, to be determined, space<sup>2</sup>.

The case of Romania is, at a first glance, not that different from that of Germany. Emigration was possible, advocated by radical anti-Semites and ultranationalists, and endorsed by the government from 1938 to 1941, at least in theory, as one of the solutions to the *Jewish Question*. Long before the Holocaust, both A.C. Cuza and the *legionari* portrayed the Jewish minority as criminal and dangerous, parasitic and immoral, exploiting the Romanian "proletarian nation", disloyal to the state, therefore an "enemy population" that has to be watched, controlled, deprived of civil and political right and propriety, and whenever possible forced into emigration or simply thrown outside the borders of Romania. Overseas emigration (to Palestine), as well as a territorial solution, the mass resettlement of Jews in a non European land (Uganda or Madagascar), were not new, nor Nazi inspired solutions to those that gradually turned anti-Semitism into a component of the nation's morphology<sup>3</sup>.

With 1938 Romania became a gate for emigration to Palestine, under British mandate, for Jews flying Austria, Hungary, Germany, and other countries. Romanian authorities favored their transit without getting involved. There were no particular restrictions, except cases directly related to regulation concerning the safety of shipping on Danube and the sea. Temporary refuge to harbors, but not Romanian soil, was granted to those already on board of boats ready to take them to Palestine<sup>4</sup>. In other words, extra Jews were not welcomed<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, Romanian Jews were encouraged to 'voluntarily emigrate' by the government, with the new anti-Semitic legislation and policy, deteriorating life conditions, to force many seriously consider the possibility to move to Palestine and /or more civilized and safe West European Countries<sup>6</sup>. To the Romanian authorities, emigration to Palestine represented a solution not only to the *Jewish Question* in itself. It was also to, at least in part, reduce the increasing, with 1937, level of popular anti-Semitism<sup>7</sup>. Even the King was to advocate emigration of Jews to Palestine as an ideal solution, giving some satisfaction to anti-Semites, thus downplaying domestic political tensions. Most Romanian politicians opposed the new anti-Semitic policy and legislation, describing it as a form of madness that would only push Romania to crisis. Yet, their protests had no result. The new anti-Semitic Goga-Cuza government took dispossession, emigration and even expulsion to Palestine that seriously as to turn

<sup>1</sup> Heinz HÖHNE, *The Order of the Death's Head...cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...cit.*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>3</sup> Tuvia FRILING, Radu IOANID, Mihail IONESCU (eds.), *Final Report...cit.*, pp. 28, 102.

<sup>4</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *România în al doilea război mondial*, cit., p. 158.

<sup>5</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>6</sup> Raul HILBERG, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Quadrangle, Chicago, 1961, p. 671.

Also Tuvia FRILING, Radu IOANID, Mihail IONESCU (eds.), *Final Report...cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> Bela VAGO, *Umbra svasticii. Nașterea fascismului și antisemitismului în bazinul Dunării (1936-1939)*, Romanian transl. by Corina Tiron, Curtea Veche, București, 2003, p. 69.

the British diplomats in Bucharest worry. Rushing to temper the new policy, and reduce the number of immigrants as much as possible, they hoped not to further "radicalize" the tense situation, and Arabs discontent<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, British diplomats made efforts not only to halt emigration but also persuade the Romanians to take back the expelled Jews returning from Palestine<sup>2</sup>. The Colonial Office anxiously protested to the 20 000 Jews, out of which 9 000 illegal emigrants, reaching Palestine as from April to September 1939; from July to September, 6 323 on 8 ships, of which 6 left from Romanian harbors, arrived there<sup>3</sup>. Their arguments were right; emigration was to allow Romanians (and others) get rid of undesirables and also make some profit out of it<sup>4</sup>. Lastly, the British were not the only to protest. Up to 1940, German officials also pressured the Romanian government, doing their best to hinder emigration of Jews from territories other than Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate of Bohemia. The scope was to "eliminate competition" as to maximize emigration from Nazi controlled territories, nonetheless control the operation, which to some was "good business", an aspect as relevant at the time as cleansing<sup>5</sup>.

As some documents indicate, the efforts were not in vain, at least when it comes to the British. With January 1940, transiting Romania became increasingly difficult due to the British-Romanian agreement to prevent the emigration of Jews to Palestine. Many of those arriving to Romania were not allowed to land, but kept on ships in terrible conditions, waiting for visas and transfer to bigger ships<sup>6</sup>. Romanian ships were no longer to take part in transports or assist foreign ships carrying Jewish emigrants on board<sup>7</sup>. Turning the Jews into "unwanted refugees", not helping them, Romanians were now working toward the Colonial office and against the Germans. Not fostering emigration, Romanian authorities had only one concern, to inspect the ships technically and see if they could journey safely on sea, as to prevent any implication of Romania in potential international scandals that might have had occurred in case of sinkage.

When it came to Romanian Jews, the Miron Cristea government continued to favor emigration, with destinations to be identified and negotiated through the League of Nations<sup>8</sup>. The Foreign Affairs ministry, A. Petrescu Comnen, moved as far as to propose an international action to relocate all Jews of Central and Eastern Europe<sup>9</sup>, and even discuss with the British and American Ambassadors the issues of an international loan of funds, and of a territory of the British Empire were to create a national homeland for them. The British Ambassador, Reginald Hoare, realized how tense the situation was, and asked London to seriously consider Romanian proposals<sup>10</sup>, with the British government not paying attention, placing Romanian requests on a second plan, as they were busy with Munich, also relaxed once they believed Romanian anti-Semitism was no longer deadly with Codreanu executed and Iron Guard beheaded.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 72-76.

<sup>2</sup> Martin GILBERT, *Holocaust...cit.*, pp. 79-81.

<sup>3</sup> See Dinu C. GIURESCU, *România în al doilea război mondial*, cit., p. 159.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher BROWNING, *The Origins of the Final Solution...cit.*, pp. 195-197.

<sup>6</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Perioada unei mari restriți*, partea a II-a, cit., doc. 625, pp. 377-378.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 626, p. 379.

<sup>8</sup> Bela VAGO, *Umbra svasticii...cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79.

Between October 1938 and December 1941 some 4346 Jewish emigrants from Central Europe transited Romania on their way to Palestine. To say that Carol II dictatorship was less anti-Semitic than the Nazis, moderated and influenced by the context is pointless. What rests is that it paved the way to the Holocaust. This "milded" policy marked the beginning of a process that brought the Romanian state, moving from emigration to a territorial solution, Transnistria, closer and closer to Nazi Germany<sup>1</sup>. By late 1941, the Struma case, was indicative not only for the problems generated by emigration, but also for the desperate and deplorable condition of the Romanian Jews, living a country of pogroms, mass killings, ghettos, and deportation<sup>2</sup>.

In the aftermath of the 1940 territorial rapt, the Romanian government came to the conclusion that, one way or another, the *Jewish Question* has to be solved. The government started working on a new, radical version of *We the People*, taking the Nazi anti-Semitic legislation as both a juridical and political role model, in a pursuit of a not yet transcendental but definitely cleansing nation-statism by means of law<sup>3</sup>. The ideal "Romania for the Romanians" was reiterated, and so was "ethnic purification", with deprivation of rights, emigration, and border exchanges of population as "civilized means" to achieve it<sup>4</sup>. With September 6, 1940 the authoritarian, quasi-fascist government headed by Ion Antonescu, turned the "liberation from the yoke of foreign exploiters (i.e. Jews)", "vital to the Romanian people", into a goal of the new Romanian Order. Excluding, at least in theory and declarations, any violent means, the cleansing policy had to be progressive and methodical as not to jeopardize the existing economic order, and offend the dignity and morality of the Romanians<sup>5</sup>. With Antonescu in favor of state authority, it was not to exceed confiscation of Jewish rural properties, concentration of Jews in urban areas, emigration whenever possible<sup>6</sup>. By October 1940, with Ion Antonescu in favor of emigration, the issue was discussed with several prominent Zionist leaders, such as L. Mizrahi and S. Singer<sup>7</sup>. Joint efforts by government and Zionists were to accelerate and ease emigration operations, also reduce abuses, and risks. For the unprotected, persecuted, segregated, still undecided Jews, the message was clear: there were no good prospects for them lying ahead. They had no future in Romania, with legislation, dispossession, confiscation, fascist violence and dictatorial terror to constantly remind them they were unwanted. As a result, more than 2 000 Jews emigrated within the first two months of the *national-legionar* governance.

A memorandum advanced by A. Zissu to Ion Antonescu in December, introduced the dictator with a six years plan for Jewish emigration organized by the Zionists with Jewish money resulting from Romanianized Jewish properties. Due the new context, the eliminated from the society, ruined economically, and living in deplorable conditions Jews, would be easy to persuade as to accept the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 80-82.

<sup>2</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...* cit, pp. 329-330. Also Raul HILBERG, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, cit., p. 692; Martin GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, cit., pp. 22-25, 36-38, 75-80.

<sup>3</sup> Lya BENJAMIN, *Legislația anti-evreiască*, Editura Hasefer, București, 1993, doc. 4, pp. 51-54.

<sup>4</sup> ANIC, Fond PCM, dosar 327/1940, file 31-32.

<sup>5</sup> ANIC, fond PCM, CM, dosar 1770/1940, vol. 2, file 783-784.

<sup>6</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Documente. Comisia internațională pentru studierea Holocaustului în România*, Polirom, Iași, 2005, pp. 111-112.

<sup>7</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *România în al doilea război mondial*, cit., p. 159.



state supervised emigration to Palestine. Moreover, as Zissu put it, they would leave with the impression of being liberated, not expelled. The preparations were to fall on the responsibility of a Jewish organization working under state authority to solve all problems of the Jews, mainly of poor Jews, with regard money, visas, taxes, subsistence for several month and insertion in the country of destination<sup>1</sup>. The problem was, and Zissu knew it, that Romanian authorities wanted Jews leave over-night, abandoning all goods and possessions behind, with yet the war to make the process slow and painful.

In response, by late December, the government was to create a special Direction for Jewish Emigration, working under the supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The new agency was to ease and accelerate the prioritized process of emigration as to ethnically cleanse Romania. Both legal and illegal emigration were to be favored, passport and visas to be issued, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to contact other governments as to identify destinations and ensure passage and entry visas. As Zionist organizations lacked funds for emigration related taxes (130 USD per person), the Ministry of Economy was to work the problem out<sup>2</sup>. However, up to December 1941 the Direction did nothing to foster emigration.

Ion Antonescu himself was to favor emigration, presenting it as a solution to the *Jewish Question*, and a state priority. Romanian and other Jews were allowed to leave to Palestine and USA, via Italy. His only concern was with reducing risks and costs to a minimum<sup>3</sup>. He simply translated swift emigration in terms of "soft" disposal of Jews<sup>4</sup>. Moving hastily from reluctance and non-involvement to policy, the much too cautious and greedy Romanian authorities slightly gave emigration a chance. With war expending, and restrictions and problems mounting, emigration turned into a mere paper solution. As to worse things out, during the Iron Guard rebellion of January 21-23 1941 most of the Zionist leaders were killed by the *legionari*, thus hindering plans and preparations for further operations.

On February 19, 1941, *Darrien* left Constantza with 522 on board to Haifa. Other small ships carrying tens of refugees left from March to May<sup>5</sup>. Soon, the situation changed dramatically. With June, up to November 1941, the Romanian government abandoned plans of emigration in favor of mass killings and deportations to Transnistria<sup>6</sup>. The issue was reopened in the aftermath of the Romanian "harvest festival", with the government to accept the emigration of 30 000 Romanian Jews from the Old Kingdom. However, plans of emigration were shortly pushed to a new dead lock: should other Jews benefit from emigration?; how to deal with British opposition and US protests and interventions?; who would cover the costs and take the risks?; what to do with the closely watching Nazi ally, except for keeping a low profile? Emigration (for Old Kingdom Jews only, as those from Bessarabia and Bukovina were to be all deported) was domestically profitable, reducing the number of undesirables and facilitating the Romanianization

<sup>1</sup> ANIC, fond PCM, dosar 267/1941.

<sup>2</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Perioada unei mari restriști*, partea a II-a, cit., doc. 629, pp. 381-383.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 630, pp. 383-384.

<sup>4</sup> ANIC, fond PCM, dosar 21/1940, file 2-7.

<sup>5</sup> Dinu C. GIURESCU, *România în al doilea război mondial*, cit., p. 159. See also Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Perioada unei mari restriști*, partea a II-a, cit., doc. 647, pp. 377-378.

<sup>6</sup> Mihai CHIOVEANU, "The Harvest of Anger: Politics of Salvation and Ethnic Cleansing in 1940s Romania", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. VII, no. 2, 2007, pp. 294-311.

process. It was somewhat internationally dangerous in terms of propaganda, and information delivered by the emigrants to the enemy, though the threat was not unbearable. The Army and the Ministry of Internal Affairs expressed in favor of emigration, with the Foreign Affairs Ministry to discuss the issue with the Germans, test the reaction, and thus avoid any potential conflicts over visions, plans and policies<sup>1</sup>. The German response was blunt. With emigration prohibited since October 1941, Gustav Richter protested to Romanian proposals and present arguments against emigration, and the fact that media was still advertising it in Romania<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, he managed to make Mihai Antonescu promise that Romania will go in line with Germany. At the same time, in March 1942, and as to deceive opponents, Richter moved to inform Zionist leaders in Bucharest that the Reich was not against emigration, with the exception of Palestine, which, according to the Fuhrer, was an Arab land<sup>3</sup>.

Meanwhile, in December 1941, the Ministry of Finances issued a memo to endorse a state organized policy of emigration, up to turning it into a state monopoly. For the experts of that ministry the case of *Struma*, with a private agency making 150 million profit with minimum investments, in the absence of any insurance, taking minimal risks while using cheap, old, rusty vessels was illustrative. The Romanian state could do the same while using bigger, as old, unused and unsafe ships, such as *Alba Iulia*, with a capacity of 2000 passengers<sup>4</sup>. In other words, a tragedy was turned into a lesson of how to make good money out of people's despair. Yet, the Navy was of a different opinion. Emigration was to create too many problems in the context of war. Therefore, it was better to postpone it to the aftermath of the conflict, as not to turn it unsafe and dangerous (treating people as merchandise, breaking international legislation concerning navigation, and so on), and thus damage Romania's image and prestige, as the *Struma* tragedy did<sup>5</sup>.

Contrary to the new policy of the government, and the existing agreement between Romania and Germany to deport Romanian Jews to Lublin, and in spite of numerous German protests, emigration, both legal and illegal, continued even after the *Struma* episode, with bribed authorities closing an eye, and Jews being ferried to Istanbul on yachts and wood made vessels. The new business looked too profitable to be abandoned. Even Mihai Antonescu decided to continue consider emigration as a solution, asking in February 1942 the Ministries of Finances, Internal Affairs and Justice to work together as to come out with practical solutions against obstacles to it<sup>6</sup>. A decree law project was advanced, though only in June, as to regulate Jewish emigration, and centralize efforts under the supervision of one agency. The goal was to facilitate the emigration of as many as possible Jews without endangering the economy. A taxation of 40% of each emigrant assets was introduced, and further regulation concerning the liquidation of Jewish property as well. The *Centrala* was put in charge with organizing transports and making lists,

<sup>1</sup> ANIC, fond PCM, dosar 166/1940, fila 45.

<sup>2</sup> Jean ANCEL (ed.), *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust*, vol III, New York-Jerusalem, 1985-1986, doc. 310, pp. 493-497.

<sup>3</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Perioada unei mari restriți*, partea a II-a, cit., doc. 651, p. 410.

<sup>4</sup> Ottmar TRASCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich și Holocaustul din România. 1940-1944. Documente din arhivele germane*, Editura INSHR "Elie Wiesel", București, 2007, doc. 189,190, pp. 763, 766-767.

<sup>5</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Perioada unei mari restriți*, partea a II-a, cit., doc. 644, pp. 400-402.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 650, p. 408.

the Ministry of Finances was to collect the resulting funds, and one private society to provide transportation means<sup>1</sup>. Zionist organizations were allowed to organize training camps for emigrants, with the program expanding to most cities in Romania<sup>2</sup>. Ships continued to leave, yet the results are hardly noticeable. In practice, emigration was incoherent, much too cautious, and dominated by greed and corruption. From the point of view of Romania's image it was good. When it came to making profit it was irrelevant. With regard cleansing it was too slow. No surprise that by mid 1942 the government start reconsidering the German offer to deport Romanian Jews to Poland, only to unexpectedly drop it by the end of the same year, returning to and proposing new plans for emigration, that included now tens of thousand of Jews. A less radical and lethal solution, emigration was to help them cleanse Romania of non-Bolshevik Jews. It also looked lucrative for a regime in desperate need for funds. Moreover, soon, not only Romanian but also Hungarian and Polish Jews were allowed to transit Romania, under military escort, on their way to Palestine<sup>3</sup>. This time, money counted less, with Romanians trying to impress the allies, making them aware that Romania, when compared to Hungary (and as to counter the previous Hungarian anti-Romanian propaganda), took a different path.

With 1943 bigger and safer Bulgarian ships such as *Milka* and *Maritza* that could ferry up to 300 emigrants went in use, with the transports being organized by the Red Cross, with Jewish money. Romanian authorities were not doing much. They simply allowed the transports live. The only major change came with the intention to expand the plan as to include some of the Jews already deported to Transnistria – before late 1942 only the Jews of the Old Kingdom were allowed to emigrate. With deportation to an overcrowded Transnistria and the Lublin area halted, the *Centrala* began proposing plans to repatriate the Transnistrian Jews to Romania, as to prepare them for emigration, with the Romanian government initially rejecting the idea. A memoir by Nandor Gingold, dated 19 November 1942, and a report by Radu Lecca from 22 November 1942, indicate emigration as a possible solution to cleanse the territory, with taxes to be paid by emigrants, relatives, and international Jewish organizations<sup>4</sup>.

When it came to Transnistrian Jews the plan proposed the repatriation and then emigration of 5000 "harmless" children, most of them orphans, widows, and invalids<sup>5</sup>. The plan was to be negotiated with German officials in Bucharest, in private meetings, with the Romanians to insist that the argument behind emigration is not humanitarianism, but considerable sums of money to be paid by emigrants, funds the Romanian government very much needed for the war effort and as to

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 652, p. 411.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 653, pp. 412-413.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 656, p. 416.

<sup>4</sup> Radu IOANID, *Evreii sub regimul Antonescu*, cit., p. 340. See also Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Documente. Comisia internațională...cit.*, doc. 221, pp. 467-9. Gingold's plan, advanced to Antonescu, endorse the idea to turn emigration from a private initiative and activity into a state coordinated and controlled policy, and thus a valuable source of money, estimated at approximately 3 billion lei. Unrealistic, as no destination is mentioned, the plan is illustrative for Gingold's, now working toward the Marshall, wishfull thinking to convince the government that emigration represents the solution to the Jewish Question.

<sup>5</sup> Initial plans took into consideration the repatriation and emigration of 15 000 to 40 000 Jews from Transnistria.

preserve the well doing of the Romanian population<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, Romanian officials were to discuss with the British and the American government, and Jewish organizations in Switzerland the issue of financing emigration, and with other agencies plans to clear the path for emigration to Palestine. Yet, the process of taking decisions went rather slow. By may 1943 the Romanians were still negotiating with the Germans, who initially protested openly against emigration "given the impending final solution of the Jewish Question" in Europe, latter postponing, impeding, deceiving the Romanians, the Red Cross, and the Jewish leaders in Bucharest altogether<sup>2</sup>.

With plans of Jewish emigration in exchange for money never totally abandoned<sup>3</sup>, the Romanians were, after Stalingrad, but to openly endorse and favor the policy, going as far as to officially inform both Berlin and the Western allies. By simply reiterating the issue at a time when the Nazis hoped that nothing would provoke a World reaction, allowing them to kill swiftly, the Romanians were taking the secret out<sup>4</sup>. Hard to conclude that the Romanian initiatives with late 1942 to let 70 000 Jews emigrate would have ever succeeded. Nor can one say that the plan failed once the Romanians went disappointed by the allies' initial passivity, or when making the mistake to inform the Germans about their plans<sup>5</sup>. By December 1942, when Radu Lecca informed Killinger on the project to authorize the emigration of up to 80 000 Jews to Palestine in exchange for 16 billion lei (267 million Reich marks), the Berlin Foreign Office could only oppose and protest toward the unrealistic, and indicating the Allies a crack in the Axis policy, plan<sup>6</sup>. However, as Hilberg put it, the Nazis were to worry prematurely, as there were never enough money, ships, destinations, visas, as to turn the Romanian "wishful thinking" plans operational<sup>7</sup>.

A further, in depth and distinct focus on German reports and protest is to indicate if this was one of the main and real causes for a poor emigration from Romania, as it was sometimes stated<sup>8</sup>.

By December 1942, Killinger informed his superiors in Berlin that Ion Antonescu asked Radu Lecca to organize the emigration of up to 80 000 non-communist Jews to Syria and Palestine, with a tax of 200 000 lei to be paid by each emigrant<sup>9</sup>. Immediately, Martin Luther informed Killinger that Berlin is against<sup>10</sup>, as emigration would signal Romania's weakness without improving Romania's image, and indicate a defection within the alliance. The Romanian plan was unacceptable as it was against the new German policy, and had to be stopped as it was to free 80 000 enemies, thus providing the British with more troops, and generating problems with Arabs in Middle East<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, not only the SS and the Foreign Office got worried, but also the Wermacht, fearing that emigration from Romania might lead

<sup>1</sup> Radu IOANID, *Evreii sub regimul Antonescu*, cit., p. 341.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 343. See also Tuvia FRILING, Radu IOANID, Mihail IONESCU (eds.), *Final Report...cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Tuvia FRILING, Radu IOANID, Mihail IONESCU (eds.), *Final Report...cit.*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>4</sup> Martin GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, cit., p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Saul FRIELANDER, *The Years of Extermination...cit.*, p. 594.

<sup>6</sup> Raul HILBERG, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, cit., p. 696.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 697.

<sup>8</sup> Andreas HILLGRUBER, *Hitler, Regele Carol...cit.*, p. 283 and the following.

<sup>9</sup> Ottmar TRĂȘCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich...cit.*, doc. 120, pp. 568-569.

<sup>10</sup> Andreas HILLGRUBER, *Hitler, Regele Carol...cit.*, p. 283.

<sup>11</sup> Ottmar TRĂȘCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich...cit.*, doc. 121, p. 570.

to a drastic drop in ships needed for the war effort. The German military even provided a list of ships that left Romanian harbors, very few, rather small, with tens of emigrants, and the dates of departure. They also explained the procedures. Ships were leaving the harbors, not only Constantza, for Turkish harbors, than, under a neutral flag, to Palestine, were most are confiscated by the British. Others were sunk on purpose, with insurances being paid to owners, and passengers continuing their journey by land. Romanian authorities were greeting permission, the rest being done by the travel agency *Romania*<sup>1</sup>. The Wermacht report was to provide Luther with a new argument against emigration – loosing ships in favor of the enemy<sup>2</sup> –, with desperate Killinger asking for more information (number of ships, tones) as to present the Romanians with solid arguments. Though the famous troubleshooter also realized that not the ships are at stake but Jews fleeing to safety<sup>3</sup>.

Apparently, German efforts were not in vain. With February, Romanian authorities made firm promises to put an end to emigration, as they realized that ships leaving Romanian harbors do not return, being confiscated by the enemy – Radu Lecca informed Gustav Richter, who on his turn informed Eichmann<sup>4</sup>. That was to encourage with the spring of 1943 the SS, as well as the Abwehr and the Foreign Office to keep a close eye on emigration, as to realize that despite their common efforts to prevent it, hundreds of Jews continued to leave Romanian harbors<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, they could not do much about it. They could not insist, and were forced to keep a low profile. Otherwise, too many discussions on this issue would have revealed the Romanians that they are watched, turning them suspicious and offended<sup>6</sup>. At best, what the Germans could expect from the Romanians was to dismiss high rank officers working with private agencies dealing with Jewish emigration and turning it into good business. Otherwise, it remained unclear to them who got the money, if the Romanians really are against emigration or they are simply deceiving them while deposing those suspected of corruption<sup>7</sup>. They continued to issue protests, based on the same set of arguments, and with the same goal: not to let Jews escape. They also continued to collect information on who is involved in the operations, thus proving enmity towards the Reich. They also moved to a higher level, reaching Mihai Antonescu, not knowing that on his turn, the Romanian Prime Minister was misinforming his government, while notifying them that Killinger is cooperative, backing Romania on emigration policy, as he understands the reasons behind it<sup>8</sup>.

As a result, preparations for the emigration of Jewish children from Romania to Palestine continued, this time by land, crossing Bulgaria to reach Turkey<sup>9</sup>, with Berlin continuing to ask their diplomats to protest, threaten, intervene, as to halt it. One of the main concerns was that the emigrants are carrying with them information on the Final Solution – confiscation of documents regarding the Holocaust, not to reach Geneva, became a top priority, as the enemy might have used them to

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 123, pp. 579-584.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 126, p. 588.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 127, p. 590.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 130, p. 597.

<sup>5</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Bilanțul tragediei – renașterea speranței*, cit., doc. 326, 327, pp. 365-366.

<sup>6</sup> Ottmar TRĂȘCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich...cit.*, doc. 133, p. 604.

<sup>7</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Bilanțul tragediei – renașterea speranței*, cit., doc. 329, p. 367.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 328, p. 366.

<sup>9</sup> Ottmar TRĂȘCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich...cit.*, doc. 136, p. 610.



foster anti-German propaganda<sup>1</sup>. Second, emigration was dangerous as it could help the allies realize the conflicting visions and policies between Germany and its collaborators<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, what the long serie of interventions and reports indicates is that, with the SS not being the determining agency in the case of allied countries, experts on Jewish matters, such as Franz Rademacher, working for the Foreign Ministry, were as radical, determined and pushy in their work "toward the Führer". No Jew, not even children (as most reports refer to them, and the efforts to smuggle them from Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria to Palestine, by hundreds at best) were to escape<sup>3</sup>.

The task for German Diplomats in Bucharest was not easy as one hand they were pressured from Berlin, with the Foreign Office adopting a rigid stance on emigration, and on the other hand were introduced by the Romanians with plans to continue it, insuring them that the Führer agreed on Antonescu's new policy, therefore protesting against German actions to stop the operations<sup>4</sup>. Hands tight, they could operate at the lower level, reaching Lecca, Mihai Antonescu at best, yet, never, Ion Antonescu. Not in a position to give orders, they used the best prerogative at hand: to postpone, never give a clear answer, state repeatedly that Germany was not in favor of emigration, which was also not in the interest of Romania, with the matter to be re-discussed and reexamined<sup>5</sup>. Another strategy was to accept the proposals but include conditions that would render them impossible – Eichmann accepted the emigration of 5000 Jews in exchange for 20 000 German males under 40, to emigrate from Allied controlled territories to the Reich<sup>6</sup>. The initiative for further discussions with the allies was left to the Romanians, who did nothing. With emigration illegal, from Romania, and to Palestine, Romanian authorities opted for another strategy. Taking no direct implication, they allowed Jewish organizations, the Red Cross, and travel agencies to deal with visas, passports, funds to reimburse the costs for shipment, and so on<sup>7</sup>.

With the pressured by the USA British authorities turning more opened<sup>8</sup>, emigration from Romania continued, with the Romanian authorities negotiating through Swiss diplomats. The plans soon expanded as to include thousands of children from Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Holland, and Denmark. Moreover, as German reports indicate, Romanians also negotiated with the International Red Cross, with the two Antonescu's in favor of emigration of Jews from overcrowded Transnistria, as to get rid of them, with the only debatable issue being whether Romanian or Red Cross ships to be used in the operation<sup>9</sup>. Exasperated Germans were to make one last attempted to persuade the Romanians to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 139, pp. 616-617.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 137, pp. 612-613.

<sup>3</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Bilanțul tragediei – renașterea speranței*, cit., doc. 330, pp. 367-368.

<sup>4</sup> Ottmar TRĂȘCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich...cit.*, doc. 147, pp. 649-650.

<sup>5</sup> Andreas HILLGRUBER, *Hitler, Regele Carol...cit.*, pp. 283-284. In April 1943, in Klessheim, Ion Antonescu requested a clear answer, and approval, from Ribbentrop with regard the plan to ship 7000 children to Palestine, mostly orphans. Only in February 1944 Ribbentrop made his position clear to Ion Antonescu.

<sup>6</sup> Ottmar TRĂȘCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich...cit.*, doc. 152, 153, 154, pp. 665, 666, 669-672.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 148, pp. 651-656.

<sup>8</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Bilanțul tragediei – renașterea speranței*, cit., doc. 340, pp. 377-378.

<sup>9</sup> Ottmar TRĂȘCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich...cit.*, doc. 155, p. 674.

hand out the Jews for deportation to the East (Poland) instead of allowing them to emigrate<sup>1</sup>. Also, this time without informing the Romanians, they were doing their best to capture and/or sunk the ships, giving explicit orders to the German Navy how to proceed as to put an end to emigration<sup>2</sup>. Though, they were soon to realize that moving from diplomacy to military action is risky, to offend the Romanians, and, as some military reports indicate, rather unworkable<sup>3</sup>.

By spring 1944, it was still unclear to the Germans what the Romanian official position was. Emigration was illegal, not a state coordinated and sponsored policy, and yet, with the Romanians asking them to facilitate the departure of ships to Istanbul. Ion Antonescu delayed his answer for months, the same way the Germans did it before<sup>4</sup>. A report by Killinger, dated July 17, 1944 shows that by early June Mihai Antonescu was "in charge" with organizing emigration, yet no consequences followed<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, ships continued to live harbors to Palestine, with no possibility for the German navy to block them<sup>6</sup>. Even Hungarian Jews were included in transports, with now the Hungarian government to complain to the Germans, as the Romanians did before, that the Jewish Question is approached differently by the Romanians<sup>7</sup>.

In July 1944, not long before being arrested, Mihai Antonescu presented his cabinet with the results of emigration, taking credits for endorsing the policy. Writing for the future, less about the past, he presented his efforts, his openness toward the allies, deflecting all failure to German opposition, often offending him and the Romanian government<sup>8</sup>. However, throughout the war, Romanian authorities were not doing much to support emigration in real terms. Taking as few risks as possible, being evasive and afraid not to trigger German reactions, they were theoretically advocating in favor of emigration as an "International Solution to the Jewish Question", only to remind others, Germans included, of Romania's independence. Endorsing emigration, the Romanians also signaled with March 1943 that they are no longer in favor of a radical solution. Otherwise, the Romanian government could not find the way out from the labyrinth generated by the logic and context of war. No real progress was achieved, and no firm policy came out of the many projects to turn emigration more vigorous and articulated<sup>9</sup>. Following the logic of cleansing, not saving or protecting, with Jews to leave as never to return<sup>10</sup>, no less anti-Semitic and suspicious toward the enemy population<sup>11</sup>, the Romanian government was mainly concerned with taking advantage out of the fact that in midst of a continent wide genocide many came to accept and advocate

<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 158, p. 681.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 156, pp. 676-677.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 173, p. 720.

<sup>4</sup> Andreas HILLGRUBER, *Hitler, Regele Carol...cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 285.

<sup>6</sup> See Martin GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, cit., pp. 186, 189, 201, 294, 295, 332. 3000 children left Romania in 1944 with Bulgarian and Turkish ships: *Maritza* 244, *Milca* 250, *Bella Cita* 150, *Morina* 308, *Bülbiül* 390, *Mefkure* 320, *Kazbek* 752, *Toros* 980 (from April to December 1944).

<sup>7</sup> Andreas HILLGRUBER, *Hitler, Regele Carol...cit.*, p. 286.

<sup>8</sup> Raul HILBERG, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, cit., pp. 701-702. Also Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Bilanțul tragediei – renașterea speranței*, cit., doc. 342, 346, 347, pp. 379, 382-385.

<sup>9</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Bilanțul tragediei – renașterea speranței*, cit., doc. 339, 341, pp. 376-378.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 344, p. 381.

<sup>11</sup> Ottmar TRĂȘCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich...cit.*, doc. 176, pp. 726-727.

emigration as a practice<sup>1</sup>. Moving back and forth, at a time when Romania became a battlefield for *pro* and *con* interventions, halting as to reorganize, postponing emigration for the aftermath of the war, as some were to "take advantage of the suffering of the Jews, with Romania to pay the bill"<sup>2</sup>, the government decided only with June-July, under massive pressure from the allies<sup>3</sup>, to be part of the process and turn emigration into a state supervised practice. An Office for Jewish emigration was created to organize transports, issue lists with emigrants, and establish priorities (orphans from Transnistria, Hungarian refugees, other Jews), procure visas and distribute funds, as to turn emigration efficient and eliminate corruption<sup>4</sup>. More cautious and wiser in the new context, departing the Germans as to approach the allies, the Romanians decided too late to move from emigration to organized emigration. Or, better say, from the perspective of victims, and when considering the coercion exercised by pogroms, deportations, and the presence of Germans, forced emigration, which is but part of the endless serie of policies that altogether make the Holocaust.

With situational pressure turning coercive, Romanians moved back to emigration, a different mean to cleanse, not save<sup>5</sup>. The disposition to kill diminished; the hostile imagination rested the same. The explanation for the dynamic of the Romanian policy stays with the capacity of a non-fascist, authoritarian regime to compromise, with conventional morality and pragmatism counting more than the historical need to cleanse "by all means and at all costs"<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Lya BENJAMIN (ed.), *Bilanțul tragediei – renașterea speranței*, cit., doc. 343, p. 380.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 353, 358, pp. 390-391, 396-397.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 357, pp. 395-396.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 366, p. 403.

<sup>5</sup> Ottmar TRĂȘCĂ, Dennis DELETANT (eds.), *Al III-lea Reich...cit.*, p. 43. No document explicitly indicates, by any mean, the intention of the Romanian government to save Jews.

<sup>6</sup> Michael MANN, *The Dark Side of Democracy...cit.*, pp. 193-195.