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## NEW DATA ON THE HISTORY OF JEWS FROM ROMANIA

Anca OLTEAN\*

**Abstract:** *The present paper brings new information about the situation of Jews of Romania in the time of Holocaust and its aftermath (the years of transition to communism and the first years after the setting of communism). It appears that the Jews from Transnistria were deprived by their fundamental rights under the leadership of Ion Antonescu and many of them were killed in their interaction with Romanian military forces. After the war, the surviving Jews have the right to adjust to the communist regime, and to integrate in the communist state, but they have to close their organizations and the ties with Israel were considered as dangerous, although they continued to dream and search ways for emigration.*

**Keywords:** *Jews, Transnistria, rights, fascism, communism, exodus*

An exhaustive paper is the book of Pavel Câmpeanu, *Ceaușescu, anii numărătorii inverse* (*Ceaușescu, the years of inverse counting*). (Câmpeanu, 2002) From the point of view of the themes approached by me, the history of Jews from Romania and Hungary during communist period, we are interested in the chapter referring to the case of Ana Pauker. (Câmpeanu, 2002: 151-195) Although she had spent a lot of time in Russia (the first half of the years 1930s), she returned in country and, after she was imprisoned by the government Antonescu, only at a half from the initial period of condemnation, she received the approval to return in USSR. So, at only three years after the execution of her husband by NKDV, Ana Pauker came back to Moscow. After the starting of anti-Sovietic war, she really became the leader of emigration of Romanian Communist Party (PCR) in USSR. (Câmpeanu, 2002: 152) In the group of Romanian communists who took refuge to Moscow, there were Leonte Răutu și Valter Roman. After August 23, 1944, with the consent of the Soviets, Ana Pauker returned in Romania, under the secret surveillance of Russian communists. Although helped in secret by Moscow, she was not accepted as leader of the party, because it never fulfilled this role, and she did not enjoy such a prestige in the country also, because she was suspected by the communist leaders from Romania that she makes the games of the Soviets.<sup>1</sup> Once with the returning of Ana Pauker, it was

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 154. The author (Pavel Câmpeanu) explains in an extremely relevant passage her failure to become a leader of PCR: “Differently from Gottwald, or in a certain extent by Rákosi, (...) Ana Pauker was not sent at home in order to take her place in front of the party, but also to make herself accepted in this role, which she never fulfilled in the past. Her incapacity to justify this pretention through the invocation of a respected authority by future partners of discussions in the country, makes that the first obstacle with which she is confronted in the execution of its mission to reside even in the way of how it was presented: the anonym character of authorities in the name of whose is she talking. Based on a very fragile basis, her initial success will be a short time one (she will remain in front of the party only for a year), owned mainly to the military context”. (transl.)

persistant the problem of whom will possess the political power: the former prisoners from the interior of Romania or the former emigrants in Soviet Union. After the dismissal of the provisory party leadership, Ana Pauker is imposed for a year to power and, after that, even she proposes, that the power of secretary general of the party to pass to Romanian communist Gheorghiu-Dej. The opinion of the author is that, during seven years, Ana Pauker tried to take the effective power from Gheorghiu-Dej and to let him only a formal power, fact that will conduce to her dismissal from Central Committee in 1952. (Câmpeanu, 2002: 164) A severe illness of which she found out in 1950 culminated with her dismissal from power in 1952. What is to be reproached to Ana Pauker was her right wing deviation of taking the land of peasants by the state through collectivization. She tried to respond to the accusations without confessing that she was ill. Not only her was accused by right wing deviation, but also the other political adversaries of the president, Dej. Last, but not least, the author Pavel Câmpeanu wonders if Ana Pauker was not a victim of anti-Semitism. Quoting Robert Levy, Pavel Câmpeanu agrees that the key to Ana Pauker's decline is to be found in the politics started by Stalin against the Jews, which took place in the last years of his life in all the Sovietic block<sup>2</sup>. In order to give an example in order to demonstrate that the victims of Dej were the Jewish communists, Pavel Câmpeanu talks about the process of Pătrășcanu who imposed also the problem of other Jews from the superiour levels of the party<sup>3</sup>.

In the work *Contribuția evreilor din România la cultură și civilizație* (*Contribution of the Jews of Romania to culture and civiisation*), acad. Nicolae Cajal and dr. Harry Kuller, a chapter is dedicated to the Jewish press from the Old Kingdom of Romania and Transylvania in the XIX<sup>th</sup> and XX<sup>th</sup> century. Stopping on the period that folowed after the Second World War, the author notices the presence that is very high of Jewish journalists in the Romanian Press. The author describes this fact, in principle, as dued by two causes: “the rapid publication of the press of all colors and all kinds that followed to the act of August 23, 1944” (Cajal & Kuller, 1996: 410) and “the step by step dissapearance (and, sometimes, for a long time) from the journals' and magazines' columns of many compromised names by active collaboration – often in the top of the job sector – to direct fascist press, sometimes only fascizant, and in several occasions simply kind – favorizing the Antonescian regime”. (transl) (Cajal & Kuler, 1996: 410) It was opening now, in the 2-3 years that have been necessary to the instauration of communism, a freedom of words and a chance of the Jews to say the truth about the Holocaust. This press campaign against the collaborators of Antonescu's regime was gradually pursued with arguments, not in a revengeful way, shows the authors, this unveiling being a current of the respective epoch, not only a Jewish counter- reaction. Nicolae Cajal and Harry Kuller remarked a very important fact, and, namely, that it existed a few years of liberty of the press between August 23 1944 and December 30, 1947. During this period, there were present on the market journals such as “Adevărul”, “Jurnalul de dimineață”, “Semnalul”, “Aurora”, “Lupta”, “Tribuna poporului”, “Victoria”, “Informația”. Among the Jewish journalists of the time, I record B. Brănișteanu, Emil D. Fagure, Liviu Floda, J.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 180. Apud Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker, The rise and fall of a Jewish Communist*, The California University Press, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Pavel Câmpeanu asserts that: “Besides Koffler that had the same destiny, besides his wife, Hertha, besides his versatile friend Belu Silber, in the process of Pătrășcanu were involved the folclorist Harry Brauner, the engineer Emil Calmanovici, suicided by hungriness, and others. Not being able to modify the origine of the main accused, the trial of so called “national treason” brings in front of the jury as accused, a group made up by numerous Jews” (transl.), p. 185.

Lespezeanu, S. Semilian, Horia Verzeanu, Azra Bercovici, Camil Ring, Sebastian Șerbescu, Marius Mircu, I. Isaia, L. Marvall, Jack Berariu, Sergiu Milorian, S. Massler, Teșu Milcoveanu, Ioan Massoff, S. Alterescu, Liana Maxy, Valentin Silvestru, I. Felea, Ștefan Tita, G. Spina, George Silviu, Adrian Rogoz, Arthur și Alfons Vogel, Ionel Bistrițeanu, F. Brunea – Fox, I. Brucăr, Vlademir Colin, Sandu Koller, Aurel Dumbrăveanu, I. Florin, Scarlat Froda, Ion Golea, Alex. Gruia, Silvian Iosifescu, Ionel Jianu, I. Negel, Sandu Naumescu, Iacob Nedeleanu, A.P. Samson, Eugen Schileru, S. Săveanu, I. G. Severin, Lascăr Sebastian. (Cajal & Kuller, 1996: 411) Nicolae Cajal and Harry Kuller dedicates a chapter to the participation of the Jews to the development of industry in interwar period. After the First World War, the Jews obtained in Romania the right to citizenship. An ascendent evolution until 1938 marked the participation of Jewry to economic life of the Kingdom of Romania. So, according to the census from 1930, they (the Jews) were in number of 728 000, and, in 1938, cca. 850.000. (Cajal & Kuller, 1996: 456) The great number of Jewish employees in the industrial sector (cca. 19 000 at the beginning of XXth century) and of Jewish private firms existent on the market, as it results from the figures of the selling exhibition opened in Bucharest in 1921, shows the important role which the Jews had played in economy<sup>4</sup>. Among the Jewish business men of the time, we remember jews such as Eugen Reisman, Sig. L. Berman, Mohnblatt Brothers, Dr. Hain, Z. Esmansky, Izrael Meyrovitz, Friedman, Leb and Grosz, Grünfeld Armin, Neuberger Brothers, Glück Ignat, Herzfeld Ladislau, Gidali Iosif, Glück Ignat, Herzfeld Ladislau, Gidali Iosif, Glück Rudolf and Ionaș Adolf who detained strong factories on the market in interwar period. (Cajal & Kuller, 1996: 458) Nicolae Cajal and Harry Kuller certifies the participation of the Jews to the societies of actions. Such Jews were: Max Aușnit, O. Kaufmann, Edgar Aușnit, R. Fraenkel, L. Johnson, V. Levy, N.N. Sapira, Mauriciu Blank, Aristide Blank, R. Soepkez, L. Traserson, Osias Nacht, Joseph Nacht, David Schäffer, R. Elias, Jacques Eiser, etc. (Cajal & Kuller, 1996: 459) Among the Jewish bankers of the time we can remember Mauriciu Blank, Aristide Blank, Oscar Kaufmann, N. Ehrenstein, Richard Soepkez, Ardolph Berkovitz, etc. (Cajal & Kuller, 1996: 459) In 1930, 30% from the Jewish population was aggregated in industry. (Cajal & Kuller, 1996: 460) Last but not least, Nicolae Cajal and Harry Kuller make a brief description of Romanian – Israeli diplomatic relations, but also of cultural relations. Official visits of Israeli diplomats to Bucharest took place after the creation of Israelian state and its acknowledgement by the Romanian officials. Among these diplomats we remember: Golda Meir, Abba Eban, Yigal Alon, Menachem Begin, Moshe Dayan, Yitzak Shamir, Shimon Peres. (Cajal and Kuller, 1996: 582) With regard to the cultural relations between Romania and Israel, not only one time left from Romania numerous representations and Romanian singers. These contacts, including the organization of conferences, exhibitions with informations from Romania there were organized, sometimes, conferences, exhibitions with informatios from Romania, there were organized, sometimes, by the Romanian diplomats in Israel, during the communist years. This aspect is proven by the authors that these good relations continued, also, after 1989.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 457. Nicolae Cajal and Harry Kuller said that the number of enterprisers of whose owners were Jews was about 700, in 1930: “After the investigations conducted on each branch of great transformative industry, we evaluate that the number of individual enterprises whose owners were Jews, reached over 700, in the year 1930, representing 29-30% from the total of the entire country; increases over this average they were in Metal industry (45, 5%), in the industry of paper and graphical arts (41%), in the history of glass and ceramics (39%)” (transl.).(p.458).

Paul Lendvai, in his volume *Ungurii (The Hungarians)*, (Lendvai, 2013: 7-570) makes a description of the 1000 of years of existence of Hungarians in Central Europe. We stop on the moment 1867, when through Austrian – Hungarian dualist pact, the Austrians and the Hungarians decide to make together a condominium and thus to lead the Austrian – Hungarian Empire. So the emperor of Austria was also “apostolic king of Hungary”. (Lendvai, 2013: 293) Lendvai describes how that state was functioning<sup>5</sup>. In 1910, shows Paul Lendvai, in Hungary were living 50% of Roman – Catholics, 12, 8% of Orthodox, 11% Greek – Catholics, 14, 2 % Calvinists, 7, 2% evangelists, 5% Orthodox Israelites. It followed a Law on nationalities that was mentioning that all the citizens of Hungary were a nation, but it was admitting such liberties as “the use of non-Hungarian languages at the level of institutions of administration and also from the justice of first instance, it assured to the nationalities the education in their maternal language, the right to create national cultural institutions and Apostolic union and acknowledged the autonomy of national churches (by example the Serbian Orthodox Church and of the Romanian one). The official language was not introduced as an object study not even in the primary schools and medium schools and the non- Hungarian languages were opened free way in the churches”. (transl.) (Lendvai, 2013: 305) The moment 1867 offered to the Jews from Hungary the chance to assimilate in the Hungary of the Hungarian culture in turn of full equality in terms of citizenship and politics with the Hungarian inhabitants. The Jews arrived in Hungary slowly shows Paul Lendvai. So, if in 1787 their number was 80 000, in 1840 their number increased to 238 000, and in 1910 they were already 911 000. (Lendvai, 2013: 341) But the Jews continued to be the target of the Hungarians’ envy becoming, gradually more Magyars and Occidental than before. (Lendvai, 2013: 348) With regard to the Holocaust years, Paul Lendvai is not negating it, he acknowledged the Anti- Semitism rising in Hungary during the years 1940 – 1944, the fact that the fault for Holocaust is collective, it belongs also to Hungarian authorities too.

A very important work are the *memories* of Arnold Schwefelberg, a Jewish intellectual who played an important role in the interwar period and even in the first years after the war, in the years of transition towards the communism. (Schwefelberg, 2000) Being a lawyer, with consistent studies in Romania and abroad, close collaborator with Wilhelm Filderman, leader of Jewish Community from Romania, Arnold Schwefelberg represented with success the prototype of exceptional Jewish intellectual who imposed also in professional plan and, also at the level of community, in the interwar period time. Son of a teacher, Schwefelberg inherited from his family aptitudes for study, having, in the same time, an enterprising spirit and organized spirit, being less a religious Jews, as his father. After exceptional high school studies, once arrived in Bucharest, Schwefelberg studied to *Academy of Commercial and Industrial Studies*, where he has been a excellent student. He took part to the First World’s War, he fought in the first line, obtaining, at the end of the war, Romanian citizenship. He activated as a good Jew among the prominent members of Jewish Communities from Romania, when this community had known also moments of tension starting with 1937, once with the coming to power of the government Goga – Cuza. During the rebellion of the legionaries, Schwefelberg and his family are aggressed by a band

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 295. “It was, in reality, an unusual construction: both halves of the Empire had their bicameral parliaments, their own governments, each had a prime minister and diverse ministers of resort; both have been closely linked their own territorial armed forces (...) and an independent financial administration. Besides these aspects, it existed 3 common Imperial ministers (*k.u.k.*), namely for external affairs, for the army and to cover the costs of common activities (for instance, external policy and defence)”. (transl)

of Iron guards, but escaped alive. Leon Volovici, in his foreword to his volume, makes a brief characterization of the activity of Schwefelberg during the Antonescian dictatorship: "During the war, he has been very active in Jewish organizations of assistance, of the ones left without job after the application of the legislation of Romanization of the personnel from enterprises; of helping the refugees from Czechoslovakia; of families of the victims of the pogrom from Iassy, of the ones deported in Transnistria or returned from deportation; in organization of some emigrations in Palestine; in the salvation of some Jews evadated on the eve of deportation and also refugees in Romania". (transl.) (Schwefelberg, 2000: 14) At the end of the war, Schwefelberg involved in Zionist activities, and supported Jewish emigration in Palestine (Israel) and this is the ground of its arrestment in 1952. After the setting free from the prison, he tried to adjust to the conditions from Romania. He wrote his memories in the years 60' with an ending in 1973, reflecting from these memories a detachment from the life enjoyed by the Jews from Israel and an adaptation to the realities from communist Romania.

The volume of Emil Dorian entitled *Cărțile au rămas neterminate. Jurnal 1945-1948*, (Dorian a., 2006) starts his story at the end of the war, in 1945. His quality of writer which is revealed also with the occasion of this volume, alternates with the one of participants of a political world in continuous change in the life of the Jews, but also of the Romanian ethnics, in general. The work is a picture of the postwar years, of transition to communism. Thus the author describes the state of Jewish Democratic Committee, predicting its end since 1947 which represents the communism and its subversions and not the majority Jewish population more concerned about exodus than by the construction of socialism. Antisemitism grows also in the postbelic world, the idea that the Jews are helped by Americans threatened a lot of people. (Dorian a., 2006: 233) Extremely badly seen is also Joint. The communism is also seen by the author as "a moral capitulation", in the continuation to physical capitulation from Iasi which, again, the Jews had to endure.

The second volume of Emil Dorian, having the title *Cu fir negru de arnici. Jurnal 1949- 1956, / With black wire of arnic. Journal 1949- 1956*, (Dorian b., 2013) describes the life of the author, poet and doctor in communist Romania. In the first years of communism, the poet was activating, as much time as it could, as an employee of Jewish Community from Bucharest. In this quality, he had knew, which have been the problems of the Community, and, of its leaders, and, slowly, the more and more visible communization. The Journal is, in the same time, a literary journal, this *ars poetica* that it had been so dear to him. He appears as a prominent intellectual of those times trying to escape from the censorship of time, maybe also through the fact that he wrote a lot of books for children. It is also, a literary diary, being made often references to the literature of the poet or the universal one, a journal of events talking about the cultural and political events of the time. In time, the Jewish identity of the author, so peculiar in communist Romania, is replaced by the quality of communist writer.

An important contribution to the history of Romania is represented by the two volumes of Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la Istoria României. Problema evreiască 1933- 1944/ Contributions to the history of Romania. The Jewish problem 1933- 1944*, (Ancel a., 2003) and a second omonime volume published at Hasefer Printing House, 2003. (Ancel b., 2003) From volume 1, we remember the chapter *The political and ideological basis of Antonescu's regime*. After the defeat of the rebellion of Iron guards from January 24, 1941, and, after Romania joined Germany's camp in the war against Soviet Union from June 22, 1941, little by little, Romania followed its own anti-Semite politics. The author offers a complex definition of the Antonescian dictatorship which was nor a classic fascist

dictatorship, neither a democratic regime. Thus, the author states: “The understanding and classification of Antonescu’s regime does not represent a simple detail, and this from the cause of ideological contradictions which it summed up and, also, because of the great separations between his regime and other fascist regimes from Europe. Apparently, a regime which destroyed the Parliament, joined the Axis states and to the war against Soviet Union, adopted anti- Semite and racist laws, can be defined as fascist. But a series of facts complicates the question: the Antonescu’s regime came after a dictatorial regime of another kind, although weaker, the dictatorship of king Carol the second; he closed a parliament which was not elected in a democratic way and this not expressed the will of the people; he saved about one half from the number of Jews that were under its control; and his inheritance were the anti- Semite laws as, the Status of the Jews, which were on the basis of his future anti- Semite legislation. Antonescu and his ministers did not call themselves or their regime fascist. This regime sent away with violence the Romanian fascist movement, dissolved its party structure, threw them away, oppressed and arrested its members, condemned his methods of terror and, also, presented it as a servant of Nazis. The political and ideological basis of Antonescu’s regime were put, a long time ago, by some intellectuals of the old right movement, nationalists politicians with hated the democratic system in general and its way of application in Romania, organizations and nationalist parties created in the years 1930 and the king himself, who hated Romanian democracy and her politicians also installed his dictatorship” (transl.). (AnceI a./vol.1, 2013: 8) A lot of them regarded Antonescu as a savior, after the authoritarian regime of Carol the second, especially after the defeat of iron guards’ rebellion from January 24, 1941. The nationalist and anti-Semite ideas of the Antonescian regim, were very well fundamentalized by the nationalist intellectual Nichifor Crainic. The author allocates several chapters to the deportation of Romanian Jews in Bessarabia, Bucovina and Transnistria. Chapter 18 is entitled *Concentration camps and ghettos in Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina, September – November 1941*. Although there were a few written evidence for the deportation of Romanian Jews from the Kingdom of Romania, few documents and short notes are standing as proves nowadays. They prove the implication of Antonescu’s regime in atrocities committed against the Romanian Jews. So, Antonescu knows that in Chişinău were still living 50 000 of Jews, among whom, right at the beginning they were killed 10 000. (AnceI a./vol.1, 2013: 144) In their action of deportation, the Jews were forced to work. (AnceI a./vol.1, 2013: 145) Because of the bad conditions, in their way to Nistru, thousands of Jews died; the women were subjected to the violence of the soldiers, and, when they arrived to Nistru, about 400 of Jews were pushed by Romanian sodiers in water and they got sunk. (AnceI a./vol.1, 2013: 147) In September, 1941, shows the author, it existed several concentration camps and ghettos in Bassarabia, respectively to: Secureni, Edineţ, Limbenii Noi, Răşcani, Răuţel, Vertujeni, Mărculeşti, Chişinău, ghettos and smaller camps from the South of Bessarabia (in Cahul, Chilia, Bolgrad). (AnceI a./vol.1, 2013: 155- 156) These are only a few aspects of the persecution of Jews taken into discussion by the volume.

The second volume of Jean AnceI gathers informations about the situation of Transnistria under the Romanian occupation. Antonescu, although he would have had the possibility to annexate Transnistria, under the influence of Iuliu Maniu he did not annexate it, but he occupied it together with the German troupes. (AnceI b./vol.2, 2013: 7-8) 30% of the Jews from Transnistria were living in Odessa, and the rest in small localities and towns of Transnistria. (AnceI b./vol.2, 2013: 8) The author concludes that the events that happened in Bessarabia and Bucovina repeated also in Transnistria. (AnceI b./vol.2,

2013: 9) The governor of Transnistria was professor Gh. Alexianu, a university professor of Romania, antisemite, who did not hesitate to apply the orders of Antonescu. The writer Jean Ancel, was one of the very few Romanian intellectuals who acknowledged that these deportations happened and took place with the involvement of Romanian administration, showing thus that it existed an Holocaust also in Romania.

The present paper brings together interesting information about the Jews from Romania and Transnistria or the development of the Jewish community in interwar period, but also its temporary evolution and continuity in communist Romania. If we sum up, the sources about the Jews of XX<sup>th</sup> century are more and more visible and outstanding improving the knowledge of whose research was obstructionnated by communist regime.

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