

*Paper prepared for the  
Fourth Euroacademia International Conference  
Re-Inventing Eastern Europe*

*Krakow, 24 – 26 April 2015*

*This paper is a draft*

*Please do not cite*

# **Ethnic heterogeneity of "Greater "Romania**

**The Ethnic element in Romania's Memory and Identity since  
the Second World War to the Post-communist period**

Paper Draft

By: Dr. Ronit Fisher / University of Haifa

:Abstract

This paper looks at how the ethnic heterogeneity of Romanian society during the inter-wars years had affected the development of the "Romanization Policy" by the Romanian government, and how it subsequently appears at the historical .narratives of the Communist and Post-communist research

This paper will analyze the ways in which the Romanian historical research had dealt with the Ethnic heterogeneity of "Greater Romania" after the Second World War during – by focusing on one of the many ethnic groups, which had been subjected to fatal changes by the "Ethnic Policies" of the Romanian Government: The Jewish-Ethnic population. The importance of reviewing this ethnic group lays not only in the horrifying historical events of the World War II and the Holocaust or later-on during the Communist regime, but also in the current significant it has in present-days Romanian Foreign Policy, its acceptance to the EU etc. This paper will analyze the ways in which the Ethnic heterogeneity (and especially the Jewish group) of "Greater Romania" had appeared in the historical research of the Communist period. Then subsequently the article will continue into a comparison- examination of the changes, which occurred in the Post-communist Era and analyze the unique characteristics of the historical research regarding the issue of Romanian Identity after 1989, with

the rebirth of Romanian nationalism and its effects on Romanian place in the  
International community

### Ethnic- Historical background

The young Kingdom of Romania had known many changes during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after being officially recognized as an independent state by the great western powers only in 1878 at the Berlin Conference<sup>1</sup>. These changes in a diversity of layers – territorially, socially, ideologically etc. – have shaped the Romanian modern identity, by constructing and re-constructing its historic narratives. Prior to the First World War, by the "Treaty of Bucharest" in 1913, Romania had gained the territory of Southern Dobrudja from Bulgaria, but its big enlargement was not until the mid-1918. Following World War I, as it is very well known, Romania had acquired broad new territories which were annexed to the "Regat," the historical core areas of Romania: from the USSR (former Czarist Empire)- the region of Bessarabia (April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1918), and from Austro-Hungary empire the regions of Bukovina (November 28, 1918) and Transylvania (December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918).<sup>2</sup> Their annexation of these new territories affected the ethnic composition of the Romanian population, and the country's makeup changed beyond recognition

A great mass of minorities with a feeling of a clear national affiliation — Hungarians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Germans, Russians, and others — were woven into Romania's demographic and ethnic fabric. As noted above, in 1930 Romania's population was slightly over 18,000,000; of these 12,981,300 were

---

Data of the Berlin Treaty : [Modern History Sourcebook: The Treaty of Berlin, 1878 - Excerpts on the Balkans](#), Berlin, 13 July 1878

Lavie, Theodor, (Ed.) Pinkas Hakehillot : Romania – Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities, Yad 2 Vashem, Jerusalem, 1969, Vol. I

Romanians and the remainder, minorities: 1,425,000 Hungarians; over 745,000 Germans; over 756,000 Jews (whether identified by nation, religion, or  
3;(language

The main aspiration of the leadership of "Greater Romania" was to overcome, or in fact: to erase the Ethnical differentiations and manage to create a much more unified "Romanian National Body". That was the declared ambition behind the Romanization process which occurred after "the great Union of 1918" during the .1920's, as part of Romania's National building

This aspiration had been one of Romania's first priorities goal all through the inter-wars period, and at the base of the Romanian Government's Interior, Educational and Cultural Policy, as it was very well expressed in the words of the Romanian Minister :of Education, Constantin Angelescu

*One of the first cultural problems posed immediately after the war was the spiritual " unification of all citizens of this country through [the institution of] the schools, for we must not forget that until the union our school system, four distinct organizations in the four annexed provinces, had been subjected to different cultural influences*

---

As against 240,000 Jews in Romania in 1912, who were 3.3 percent of the population, in 1930 some 3 720,000 Jews constituted 4.2 percent of the population. If we take into account those who were identified as Jews not only according to religion (namely, according to race and/or language), their number reached over 756,000. Their geographic breakdown in 1931 was as follows: in the Regat, approximately 262,400 Jews (3.1 percent of the total population); in Bessarabia, over 206,950 (7.2 percent of the population); in Bukovina, about 93,100 (10.8 percent of the population); and in Transylvania, approximately 193,700 (3.3 percent of the population). See the data in Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*, pp. 7–8 and 535–536, based on Manuilă, "Considerații privind prezentarea grafică a etnografiei României," p. 14. For more information: Fisher, Ronit, "Between Ethnic-Cleansing and Genocide: An Alternative perspective of the Holocaust of Romanian Jews" in *Yad-Vashem Studies*, Jerusalem, 2012, 1/40, pp. 157–196

*that left profound marks on our spiritual structure, marks which, of course,*

*<sup>4</sup>"weakened our national consciousness*

This statement, like many other made by high-rank Romanian Officials, vividly express the great importance that the Romanian regime had attributed to the ethnic motive and to the Romanization process. Another illuminating example that expresses the extremely high importance of the Ethnic motive in the creation of "Romanian Identity" is a large board, which was hanged at the entrance to the

.Romanian pavilion of the New York World's Fair in 1939

The large inscription, on a marble pillar at the main hall, had greeted the visitors at the outmost symbolic way with a very clear message about the ideal "Greater

:<sup>5</sup>"Romania

There is no doubt - This was the Ideal, but the reality, as is well known, was completely different. This complex socio-political situation had a strong influence on these ethnic groups' fate during the interwar period and during the time of World War II. But these events have not only historical significance. They hold a valuable role in the process of recreating the "national narrative" of

.modern Romania – its present and its future

---

Angelescu, Constantin, ***Evoluția***, (Bucharest: Imprimeriile curentului, N.D.), p.10 in: Livezeanu, 4 Irina, Cultural Politics in Greater Romania, Cornell University Press, (Ithaca and London, 1995), p.41

Enciclopedia României, Vol.4, (Bucharest, Imprimeria Națională, 1943), in: Livezeanu, Ibid, p.1 5

## Main Ethnic Changes in the Romanian history

The developments in Romania's Foreign Policy at the end of 1930's and at the beginning of the 1940's have had crucial effects on the lives and destinies of most of Romania's ethnic groups. In fact, these Geo-Political developments were mostly determined by the alliance with Nazi Germany and essentially by Hitler's dictates, executed by Antonescu. Romania was one of the Eastern-European countries who had suffered a large territorial price as part of the

.Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed in 1939

Already in that year the Soviet-Union stipulated its "interest" in the Romanian districts: Bukovina and Bessarabia, but the real outcomes of this German-Soviet agreement, was the severe territorial losses of summer 1940: On June 28 they have rendered the territories of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia because of the Soviet ultimatum with their implied threat of invasion. About a month later, as a result of an Axis arbitration Romania had to surrender much more of its lands: Southern Dobruja was transferred to Bulgaria and finally - on August 30<sup>th</sup> 1940 Romania was compelled to give-up Northern-Transylvania, with its 2.5 million inhabitants to Hungary, which had the most horrifying outcome on

<sup>6</sup>.the Jewish ethnic minority of this region, just few years later

## **Historical Memory and Identity – in Romanian Communist and Post-communist periods of the Jewish-Ethnic group**

The ethnic group which stands at the core of this article is, as mentioned, the Jewish group, not only because of their unique and fatal destiny during the time

---

Radu Ioanid's important book *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), pp. 12-36

of the Holocaust, but more-over because of its high influence on now-days

.Romania's international position

A numerical examination of Romanian policy towards its Jews reveals a large range regarding the estimation of the total number of Jews killed by Romanians, from 280,000 to 420,000.<sup>7</sup> But a deeper examination reveals that the Romanian had implemented towards their Jewish population a differential policy, based on- not Religion, but on Ethnicity as the main criteria. Given Romania's race laws and their implementation on August 8<sup>th</sup> 1940, one might have expected that the authorities would adopt a uniform policy against *all* members of the same racial group, specifically, the deportation of the entire Jewish population from Romania.<sup>8</sup> However, in practice the leadership adopted a differential policy. Against the Jews residing in the new regions who were not ethnically and culturally Romanian, the state operated a policy of deportation and killing, whereas "our Jews" in the Regat were dealt with in a firm and discriminatory manner that did not admit a total extermination policy. This scaled policy demonstrates major differences in relation to the center and the territories, as well as in terms of geographic, ethnic, and cultural factors. Antonescu's deportation policy of the Jews from Romania's new areas was made possible because these Jews could be and were presented as "foreigners." Thus, in Romanian eyes they

---

The numerical data question concerning the Jews who lost their lives in the areas controlled by the Romanian dictatorship is also made conspicuous in a separate chapter in Radu Ioanid's important book *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), pp. 289-295

Fisher, Ronit, "Between Ethnic-Cleansing and Genocide: An Alternative perspective of the Holocaust of Romanian Jews" in *Yad-Vashem Studies*, Jerusalem, 2012, 1/40, p. 162

were the only ones admissible for the Final Solution; the “foreign Jews”’ blood and  
.property were fair game and gain by order and command

In the final analysis, these two distinctions of ethnic and regional criteria  
account for the unique policy of the “not total” extermination of Romanian Jewry.  
Romanian Jews were clearly not murdered because of a religious or racial affiliation,  
.but because of an ethnic, cultural, and/or regional affiliation

The extermination initiative certainly came from Germany: “Der Tod ist ein Meister  
aus Deutschland.”<sup>9</sup> However, the objective was not carried out in a vacuum. In many  
places throughout Europe, both in occupied countries and countries allied with Nazi  
Germany, such as Romania, there were a variety of agencies — whether individuals  
or the establishment — that more or less enthusiastically concurred with the Final  
Solution. From a comparative analysis and extensive examination of all the European  
countries’ contributions to the extermination of Jews, among the independent  
countries, Romania is found to be second in its “achievements”<sup>10</sup> only to Nazi  
Germany in initiating and implementing a copycat policy for the murder of its Jewish  
.subjects

---

Death is a master from Deutschland.” Paul Celan, “Death Fugue,” *Soreg-Safa: Songs and Prose* 9  
*Passages* (Hebrew), annotated by Shimon Sandbank, trans., German into Hebrew (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz  
Hameuhad, 1994), pp. 9–10. English version, Paul Celan, *Poet, Survivor, Jew*, John Felstiner, trans.  
(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995)

Even though our knowledge is not certain, we base this statement on the lower estimate of Jews 10  
.murdered in the areas under Romanian control



Romania emulated the discriminatory, anti-Semitic legislation of Nazi Germany. Its race laws not only rested on the German example, but also on the eugenic, racial research carried out in Romanian institutes and in its intellectual circles. Like Germany and many other European countries, Romania wished to plunder Jewish property, to nationalize it, and to totally remove the Jewish element from “Romania proper.” However, from study of the Romanian legislation and the recurring pattern of passing new, similar laws within the space of several months or a year, one receives the impression that implementation of the original laws failed, a failure that explains the need to push through shortly thereafter further, comparable laws. From a comprehensive perusal of the actual processes, it can be firmly established that a Final Solution policy of Romanian Jewry did exist in the context of the Nazi rise in Germany and under the influence of the eugenic concepts and the racial doctrine coupled with the implementation of economic pressure based on the German model. However, the solution to the Jewish question was carried out in a<sup>11</sup> purely Romanian way based on ethnicity criteria and economic pragmatism

Most importantly, implementation of the Final Solution in Romania shows a structural contradiction in the definitions of the race laws in that they adopt historical, regional priorities: one policy for the Regat Jews, “our Jews,” and another for the Jews of the hinterland. Such prioritizing was impossible in the Nazi racial system.

---

As confirmed in an April 1944 meeting of the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin: “The Jewish 11 problem in Romania was handled only from an economic and general political viewpoint, but the racial and ideological aspect was neglected.” Secret minutes of the Foreign Ministry discussion concerning anti-Semitic and racial propaganda in different countries, April 28, 1944, appearing in Nuremberg document PS-3319 and in Ancel, ed., *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry*, vol. 8, p. 37

The manner of implementation also differed from the German model, because of Romania's uniquely complex ethnic heterogeneity. Indeed, Romania's extermination was neither a hermetic nor a systematic process. The Romanian, unlike the German, mass murder, left opportunities for establishing relations between the oppressed and the local population and allowed social ties to continue, even if not as in normal times, between Jews and their neighbors. The liquidation of Romania's Jews was slow and prolonged, painful and humiliating – targeting the Jews who were deported to Transnistria by their ethnicity and not by religion. Dreadful as it was, the Romanian "Jewish Policy" was not total or genocidal liquidation, hence the number of survivors<sup>12</sup>.in Romania was relatively large

The chapter of World War II in Romanian history have shown the high importance of the "Ethnic element", so, in my opinion it is more accurate to speak of ethnic cleansing, on one hand as applied to the orderly evacuation of the ethnic Germans from Romanian territory, while on the other, by deploying barbaric, murderous violence against the Jewish element thus cleansing Romania principally of the Jews, "the foreigners," scattered around its frontiers. In the ethnic policy of cleansing the "foreign Jews" in northeast Romania, their dual "otherness" made it possible to persecute them both on the pretext of their religion and race, like all the Jews, but also for their ethnic and cultural differences. Additionally, the regional remoteness of these Jews afforded Romania isolation to shield its crimes from world

---

Fisher, Ronit, "Transnistria," in Friedman, J., *The Routledge History of the Holocaust* 12  
.,(Routledge Publishing House, NY, 2011), pp. 277–290

opinion. While these motifs made the Romanian Holocaust unique, they were also conducive to a porous Final Solution, closer to ethnic cleansing than to genocide

## Re-constructing the Romanian history and Identity

Until recently the Romanian society had avoided any genuine confrontation with its own culpability for their discriminatory policy of ethnic minorities in the past, including the Anti-Semitic conduct towards the Jewish minority of the different ethnic groups and the murder of Jews in Romania and in Soviet territory under Romanian occupation.<sup>13</sup> For decades Romanians have sought to negate their own role in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews. The social, eugenic-racial, and ethnic-psychological basis of these processes is extremely important not only because of their contribution to a deeper understanding of the past, but also because of their centrality in the way the Romanian nation today perceives its historic responsibility

<sup>14</sup>.for its conduct in that period

Romania began re-examining its actions and responsibility for the persecution of Jews in World War II as a condition for joining the European Union. Post-communist

---

Felicia Waldman and Mihai Chioveanu, "Public Perception of the Holocaust in Post-Communist 13 Romania", in: John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic, *Bringing the dark past to light – The Reception of the Holocaust in Post-Communist Europe*, (University Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 2013), pp.451-486

For more detailed discussion of trends in the post-communist Romanian attitude to the Holocaust 14 period in the context of the development of different trends in the countries of the former Communist Bloc, see Michael Shafir, *Between Denial and “Comparative Trivialization”: Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe* (Jerusalem: The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the .(Study of Anti-Semitism , 2002

Romania, unlike Poland, had no scholar similar to Jan Tomasz Gross already at the 1990th.<sup>15</sup> To the contrary, with the end of the “age of silence” in which World War II was studied within the Soviet paradigm, the fall of the communist regime in Romania<sup>16</sup> brought nationalist and revisionist voices to the fore. Consequently, the figures for Jewish victims of the Holocaust period in Romania were reduced, the Legionnaires (the Romanian Fascists) were declared innocent and praises were showered on the great dictator, Antonescu.<sup>17</sup> From 2001 this trend became increasingly extreme and the statements were ever more vociferous. Thus, for instance, a conference was convened in Bucharest in July 2001 to clarify if the Holocaust even occurred in Romania and in the summer of 2003 the government and

---

See Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* 15 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). It should be noted that Gross’ book quickly raised a public and academic storm in various circles of Polish society. In light of the serious opposition to Gross’s findings, the Polish Institute of National Remembrance launched an investigation of the events, which ultimately supported Gross’s conclusions. From among the serious claims made against Gross, I will cite in particular those of Norman Finkelstein and Norman Davies. For a version of the article published by Finkelstein in the Polish newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*, January 20, 2001, see Norman G. Finkelstein, “Goldhagen for Beginners: A Comment on Jan T. Gross’ *Neighbors*,”

<http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?og=3&ar=7>

On Davies’ claims, see Norman Davies, “‘Strach’ to nie analyze, lecz publicystyka,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 21, 2008. See also <http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/search-all/classroom/J/Mach.html>. The uproar raised by Gross’s book rapidly extended beyond Poland’s public and academic debate into a broader dialog that spread to the academic community in the Western world, above all in the U.S., as seen for instance in these two books, principally in the first — Joanna B. Michlic and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Joanna B. Michlic, *Poland’s Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008

The term ‘age of silence’ well characterizes the way Romania contended in the Communist period 16 with the events of the Holocaust on its soil, as can be seen for instance in Vladimir Solonari’s article, which focuses on this issue in Moldovan historiography. Solonari, “From Silence to Justification? Moldovan Historians on the Holocaust of Bessarabian and Transnistrian Jews,” *Nationalities Papers*, .vol. 30, no. 3 (2002), pp. 435–457

These historians include academics and elected representatives such as Radu Campeanu, Chairman 17 of the National Liberal Party, the historian Gheorghe Buzatu, and the philologist and politician Ion Coja. For full details, see the final report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (see below), [http://www.inshr-ew.ro/pdf/Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.inshr-ew.ro/pdf/Final_Report.pdf) , pp. 26–30. The report was also published in a book: Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, and Michael E. Ionescu, eds., *International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, Final Report* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2004), pp. 26–30

President Ion Iliescu seriously alleged that “the Holocaust did not occur in Romania.”<sup>18</sup> These egregious expressions apparently derived from the tension between the conservative forces and the winds of change emanating from the Eastern European political arena of the late 1990s.<sup>19</sup> They provoked acute reactions and public agitation, inflamed Jewish community opinion, aroused reactions among Holocaust scholars and political bodies at the international level<sup>20</sup>, and led to the creation of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, announced at the end of July 2003, "to investigate all aspects of the Holocaust period in Romania."<sup>21</sup> The commission submitted its final report to the Romanian president on November 11, 2004. Its main assertion was that “the number of Jews murdered in the Holocaust in the areas under Romanian control is not known for certain,” but the Commission concluded that between 280,000 and 420,000 Romanian and Ukrainian

---

On June 13, 2003, the Romanian government declared that within the borders of Romania no 18 Holocaust occurred between 1940 and 1945. On June 18, Romanian President Ion Iliescu criticized this declaration, but added that although certain Romanians participated in the Holocaust, the persecution of the Jews in Romania did not approach their persecution in Germany. These statements by the Romanian President and his government aroused a wave of reactions among official bodies in Israel and around the world. On June 15, the Israeli government protested to Romania’s ambassador in Israel on the Romanian declarations, which contradicted the historic truth. See *Final Report*, or the detailed summary of the report, [http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/presentations/features/details/2005-03-10/pdf/english/executive\\_summary.pdf](http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/presentations/features/details/2005-03-10/pdf/english/executive_summary.pdf)

For a comprehensive and exhaustive review of the forces of change and of continuity that appeared 19 in Eastern European politics after the fall of Communism, see Rafael Vago, “Continuity versus Change in Political Parties and Movements in Eastern Europe” (Hebrew), *Zemanim*, vol. 37 (Spring 1991), pp. 74–81

Following the statement made by President Ion Iliescu on July 27, 2003, that he "does not see the 20 Holocaust of European Jewry as a unique issue" - the Romanian Ambassador in Israel, Valeria Stoica, was immediately summoned that day to the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem. In that meeting the - Foreign Ministry Deputy Director General for Central Europe and Eurasia, David Peleg conveyed to the ambassador a stern protest, stated that Israel takes a grave view of President Iliescu's statement - :which constitutes a form of Holocaust denial. For more information, see the Israeli Foreign Ministry <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2003/Pages/Israel%20summons%20Romanian%20Ambassador%20to%20Foreign%20Mini.aspx>

Jews- mostly from the new districts of Bessarabia and Bukovina, were murdered or

<sup>22</sup>.died during the Holocaust in Romania and in areas under its control

In my opinion, ethnic affiliation of these victims is highly significant in the

actions (or lack of them) made by the Romanian ruling elite in re-shaping the historical Narrative in the process of re-construction of Romanian Identity during the first decade after the fall of Communism. Iliescu's statements and those of other public opinion shapers in Romania at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century can be perceived as a blatant negation of Romania's responsibility for the deaths of thousands of Jews – of different ethnic groups, who were part of the heterogenic Romanian society until the Second World War.<sup>23</sup> Also, they express the absence of a concept of "historic responsibility" in the collective memory of the Post-Communist

---

The problematic aspect of the establishment of the International Commission on the Holocaust in 21 Romania is evident from the difference between the various public declarations. Following the statement by Romanian President Ion Iliescu, Yad Vashem published an official notice in the *Ha'aretz* newspaper on July 27, 2003, announcing that the Holocaust Authority's Chairman Avner Shalev decided "to request the establishment of an international commission of historians to investigate all aspects of the Holocaust period in Romania." Conversely, the introduction to the *Final Report* attributes the initiative for the commission to President Iliescu, with the opening words, "On the initiative of Mr. Iliescu, the President of Romania, the Commission on the Holocaust in Romania was .(created on October 22, 2003 (*Final Report*, p. 1

*Final Report*, pp. 179, 381–382. As can be seen, the considerable variations in the numerical 22 data emerging from the commission's report are one of the clear symptoms testifying to the complexity of Holocaust research in Romania. Also the issue of numerical data of victims chapter in Radu Ioanid's important book *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the .Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), pp. 289–295

These figures appear in the statistical data chapter in Jean Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in 23 Romania* (Jerusalem and Lincoln, NE: Yad Vashem and University of Nebraska Press, 2011), pp. 561–562, and are based on reports, censuses, and data from diverse sources, supplied by the Romanian .government and army and reports from Romanian Jewish communities In 1930 over 756,000 Jews lived in Romania, constituting 4.2 percent of the population of Greater Romania, that then numbered 18,000,000, *ibid.*, pp. 535–536. Ancel bases himself on the data of the National Institute of Statistics census carried out throughout Greater Romania in 1930, and the findings in 1939 in an official publication of the Romanian Academy edited by Dr. Sabin Manuilă, "Considerații privind prezentarea grafică a etnografiei României," *Academia Română, Memoriile .secției istorice, Seira III, vol. XXI* (1939), p. 14

Romanian nation, known for its profoundly intense and deep-rooted anti-Semitism  
.throughout the modern period

It is extremely important to investigate, and even not too much deeper for

Iliescu's real motivation behind his accepts to the creation of this international  
commission such a short time after acting against the historic truth<sup>24</sup>. It is essential that

we also take into consideration that these were the exact years in which the

International organizations – NATO and the EU were considering Romania's  
nomination to become a member.<sup>25</sup> It was very well understood by the Romanian  
Government that any form of taking responsibility to their wrong deeds in their past  
and admitting of their discriminative policies towards ethnic minority groups, were

.the least they were expected to do

Compering the Romanian to other Eastern-European countries in the post-  
communist era, we might find different approaches to creating their nation's Identity  
by referring to their historic discriminatory policies and actions during the Second  
World War<sup>26</sup>. Some nations, like Poland, as mentioned above, have faced up, in  
recent years to their responsibility for the events that occurred in the Holocaust on  
their soil. The fact that others have done so makes the Romanian president's  
statements even more disturbing. Such statements underscore the direct continuity

---

In this context, I point out that Ancel's decision to devote a whole chapter to statistical data only  
emphasizes the complexity of one of the most loaded issues touching on the Holocaust of Romanian  
Jewry. The numerical data question concerning the Jews who lost their lives in the areas controlled by  
the Romanian dictatorship is also made conspicuous in a separate chapter in Radu Ioanid's important  
book *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime,  
.1940–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), pp. 289–295

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/restoring-romania-s-erased-memory-1.96175> 24

between the Romanian establishment's official dogmatic position in the Communist period and its deep revisionist tendency in the post-Communist era. Both trends have influenced the developments in Romanian historiography of the interwar period and

<sup>27</sup>.the Holocaust from the late twentieth century onwards

These contemporary trends in the Romanian dialogue surrounding the investigation of the Jewish past point to the justification for re-examining Romanian Holocaust history and the need for a comprehensive clarification of the Romanians'

---

Romania indeed was accepted to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April the 2<sup>nd</sup> 25 2004 (together with some other Eastern European countries). See: "NATO welcomes seven new members", in: NATO Update of April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004 at: <http://www.nat.int/docu/update/2004/04-april/e0402a.htm> In January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 Romania had become a full-fledged member in the EU, after a long process and deep examination by several commissions of the organization. About the Romanian road to the EU, see: [http://www.mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/userfiles/file/pdf/chronology\\_romania\\_ue.pdf](http://www.mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/userfiles/file/pdf/chronology_romania_ue.pdf)

John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic, *Bringing the dark past to light – The Reception of the 26 (Holocaust in Post-Communist Europe*, (University Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 2013

First and importantly, I wish to draw attention to several new studies by Romanian historians that 27 present other interesting perspectives of the period, e.g., Vladimir Solonari's already cited article, "From Silence to Justification" that focuses on the Moldovan historiography of the Holocaust in Romania and Mihai Chioveanu's articles that focus on the interwar years in relation to Romanian fascism. See Chioveanu, "Istoricii si Politica în România Interbelica," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A.D. Xenopol*, vol. 39 (March 2002), pp. 596–612; idem, "Cariera Unui Subiect Incomod: Marile Paradigme in Studiarea Fascismului," *ibid.*, vol. 41 (January 2004), pp. 529–549. Also note Raphael Vago's important, all-inclusive review of developments in the interpretation of the Holocaust of Romanian Jewry in Romanian historiography: Vago, "Antisemitism and Politics in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe," in Dina Porat and Roni Stauber, eds., *Antisemitism and Terror* (Tel Aviv: The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism, Tel Aviv University, 2003), pp. 86–98. For an understanding of analytical-comparative processes of the "Jewish problem" in contemporary Romanian history, see Gheorghe Platon, "Pentru o metodologie a analizei 'problemei evereiesti' în secolul al XIX-lea," *Studia et Acta Historiae Iudaerum Romaniae*, vol. 2 (1997), pp. 28–47; and Zvi Hartman, ed., *Antisemitism in Romania: The Image of the Jew in the Romanian Society — Bibliography* (Tel Aviv: Goldstein-Goren Centre for the History of the Jews in Romania, Diaspora Research Institute, Tel Aviv University, 1993). All the sources are discussed extensively in a comprehensive historiographical analysis in Fisher, "Between Ethnic Cleansing and ".Final Solution



attitude toward the Jews — at both the official level and that of the “simple people,”  
.the neighbors of the Jews

Indeed, the appearance of apologetic and revisionist trends in the beginning of  
the post-communist age and the silence and silencing of historical writing in the  
communist period demonstrate tension between the evolution of a nation toward true  
and full democracy and its political maturity, capacity, and readiness to come to terms  
with its responsibility for the grave events of its past.<sup>28</sup> This interplay was reflected in  
the public and academic dialog that surfaced following Romanian President Ion

<sup>29</sup>.Iliescu’s alarming statements in 2003 and 2004

On November 12, 2004, the President accepted the conclusions of the  
International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania. This, in itself, if only  
theoretically, demonstrates that the Romanian leadership assumes responsibility for  
the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews and tens of thousands of Roma on  
Romanian soil during World War II. More-over, based on Illiescu's attempts in 2003-  
2004 – the Romanian Education Minister Alexandru Athanasiu will visit Israel in  
October to examine Holocaust study programs for his country's schools<sup>30</sup>, and the

---

Michael Shafir, "From Historical to "Dialectical" Populism: The case of Post-Communist 28  
Romania", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol.50, No.3/4, (Sept.-Dec.2008), pp.425-470

On various aspects of Romanian recognition of the historic events of the Holocaust, see Leon 29  
Volovici, “The Report on the Romanian Chapter of the Holocaust and its Consequences,” *Antisemitism  
International*, vols. 3–4 (2006), pp. 103–111

Adar Primor, Restoring Romania's erased memory, in Haaretz, August 4, 2003, See: 30  
<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/restoring-romania-s-erased-memory-1.96175>

Romanian Government had declared a "national day of remembrance" for victims of

<sup>31</sup> the Holocaust

In conclusion : I would like to argue that if we accept Romania's new approaches literally and turn a blind eye to the Romanian president's international interests, an important turning point can be seen in Romania's handling of its responsibility for its past actions

However, I consider that Romania's reaction must be examined in the context of the international political processes — the fall of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Communist bloc — that redefined the gap between its deep discriminatory attitude to all ethnic minorities and mostly its Anti-Semitic traditions — as opposed to the new 21<sup>st</sup> Century's liberal trends in Europe in the final decades of <sup>32</sup>the twentieth century

Examining from this perspective, it is clear to my mind that Romania evaded taking responsibility for its past actions. Instead, Iliescu paid lip service to public outrage, understanding the requirements of international political correctness, and accepted some measure of responsibility for Romania's deeds in World War II. The Romanian leadership's sharp reversal from its flat denial of responsibility for past transgressions further underscores the need for extensive investigation and

---

The First "National Remembrance day" to the victims of the Holocaust was held in Romania on 31 October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004, See: Story from BBC NEWS <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/3736864.stm>

32

For a comprehensive review of the Western anti-Semitic trends in the late twentieth century, see Moshe Zimmerman, "Anti-Semitism Today," in Yfaat Weiss and Gilad Margalit, eds., *Memory and Amnesia: Germany and the Holocaust* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2005), pp. 444–457, especially pp. 450–451

clarification of these inter-Ethnical relations in Romanian Past, which still have strong  
.influence on its present, and probably on its future