

Anti-Semitism in Romania 2002 Report

by **Marco Maximillian KATZ**

Co participants

Prof-Engineer Ozy Lazar

The President of Bucharest Jewish Community

Dr. Alexandru Florian

Doctor in Sociology

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 2 of 24

Introduction-----	3
Politics -----	3
Religion -----	3
Education and Social-ethnic tolerance -----	4
Today’s Jewish Community -----	4
Holocaust -----	5
Jewish-related developments post-1989 -----	5
Anti-Semitism -----	6
Anti-Semitic Incidents in 2002-----	7
Government’s attitude towards the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism----	7
The “Romania Mare” Party -----	9
Holocaust deniers in Romania – reality and not fiction -----	10
Combating Holocaust Deniers and Protecting Jewish Memory -----	11
Jewish Life in 2002 Romania-----	20
Conclusion -----	23

Introduction

MCA Romania was established in May 2002. The need for such an organization was identified after observing the general direction that Romanian society was taking in the post-1989 period; the year when the communist regime ended in Romania. MCA Romania is a non-profit and non-governmental Romanian legal entity which is still struggling for acceptance and consideration from Romanian officials whose general premise is that Romania is free of anti-Semitism and as such there is no requirement for an organization such as MCA Romania. This premise highlights the rooted reluctance to deal with the problems created by anti-Semitism in a realistic and socially correct manner.

Politics

Romania is the largest country in South-East Europe with a population of 22 million inhabitants. Between 1948 and 1989 Romania was governed by a communist regime.

In 1989 Romania, along with the other former Eastern-bloc countries, renounced communism and began its very long transition towards democracy.

In November 2002 Romania was invited to start negotiations for its permanent entrance to NATO. In December 2002 Romania was given a roadmap for joining the European Union in 2007.

As presented in reports released by the Transparency International, World Bank and Open Society Institute, Romania is undergoing a serious increase in the phenomenon of corruption which has to be eradicated before Romania can become a permanent member of NATO and the EU. According to some of the reports there are allegations that some members of the current Romanian Government are themselves deeply engaged in corrupt practices.

Religion

The major religion in Romania is Christian Orthodox affiliated – with the Greek Orthodox Church. There is no clear division between Church and State . Moreover, after 50 years of religious restrictions imposed by the communist regime there is strong movement encouraging religious revitalization. The Romanian Constitution clearly affirms the right of all minorities in Romania to

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 4 of 24

practice their religions freely. However, there is a clear powerful and significant influence of the Romania Orthodox Church in each and every aspect of daily life in Romania.

The religious importance and influence that governs all the aspects of life in Romania is emphasized by the prominent display of the Orthodox Cross in the Romanian Parliament. The Cross is flanked by two Romanian flags, and is positioned on the wall behind the speakers and the seat of the Parliament Chairman.

Education and Social-ethnic tolerance

The concept of “social and ethnic tolerance” is widely known, particularly by Romanians living in urban environments. However the application of this concept as a part of daily life is not yet a reality, as xenophobic attitudes are still very strongly held within Romanian society. At a time when the subject of tolerance is either avoided or tackled in a perfunctory manner in the speeches of Romanian officials at official events in Romania and abroad, there are no structured educational programs designed and implemented to reduce xenophobia and increase tolerance towards minorities.

Today’s Jewish Community

Before WWII the Jewish Community in Romania stood at 800,000 Jews. At the end of the WWII only 400,000 Jews remained in Romania. Of those remaining Jews, more than 350,000 Romanian Jews immigrated to Israel in 1950’s and 1960’s. Today there are only about 7,000 – 9,000 Jews left in Romania, most of them elderly. Most members of the Jewish Community live in Bucharest and are in need of social assistance, usually provided by the Joint Distribution Committee though the Federation of the Romanian Jewish Communities in Romania.

There are more than 700 Jewish cemeteries in Romania. Most of them are located in remote villages and small provincial cities where Jewish communities were extinguished a long time ago. Many old synagogues and Jewish establishments can be found in these same remote locations. These reminders of what once were vivid and flourishing Jewish communities are today either used by the local authorities for other purposes or, because of a lack of funding, are closed and deteriorating from day to day. Since 1989 to this date, the process of returning Jewish property to its proper owners has not shown

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 5 of 24

significant progress. The slow pace is reflective of different political agendas, and as a result, depending on political expediency, this process is either expedited or hindered, taken forward or reversed depending on the current situation.

Holocaust

As mentioned previously, the official number of Romanian Jews exterminated during WWII stands at 400,000. The military ruler of Romania during the first years of WWII, Marshal Ion Antonescu, a loyal supporter of Hitler and a fierce opponent of the expansion of Soviet Communism. Antonescu viewed the Romanian Jewish population as “Judeo-Bolshevik” and with this image in the mind of average Romanians, had a free hand to put in motion his plans to kill as many Jews as possible, through forced labor camps .

Antonescu, was eventually removed from power and executed, and under the Communist regime he was declared a war criminal. For some anticommunist activists (the “dissidents”) his persona was transformed into that of a martyr and national patriot.

The communist regime which ruled Romania for 50 years did its best to ignore Romania’s responsibility towards the suffering of its Jewish minority.

In order to avoid potential problems created by their Jewish origins many Romanian Jews who chose to remain in post-WWII Romania Romanized their Jewish names. Those that did not do so were suspected of not being loyal to Romania.

Jewish-related developments post-1989

In 1989, immediately after the fall of the communist regime, a national ad-hoc movement started to act to rehabilitate Antonescu’s memory and name.

Since 1989 various small nationalistic, neo-Nazi factions and groups have formed within Romania and abroad. It is estimated that at this time, in the absence of proper effective legislation, about 28 such factions and groups are now conducting nationalistic activities with a xenophobic and anti-Semitic character.

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania

Page 6 of 24

Old intellectual dissidents, senior officers of the Romanian army, university professors and judges are among those that seek to rehabilitate Antonescu's image into that of a national patriot, a hero of the Romanian nation.

Most of these supporters deliberately ignore the crimes committed under the direct command of Antonescu against the Romanian Jewish population. Indeed, Antonescu's supporters openly dispute the official numbers of Jews that were exterminated. Several claim that Antonescu actually saved the Romanian Jewish population from total extermination. Using pseudo-scientific explanations they point to the fact that Romania is the Eastern European country with the highest percentage of WWII Jewish survivors. In their opinion this "fact" makes the numbers attributed to the dead Jewish population in Romania "acceptable" when compared against the numbers of Jews exterminated in Hungary and other countries.

Until the summer of 2002, numerous streets and public squares were named after Marshal Ion Antonescu. His statues were displayed in public places.

Also, until the summer of 2002, those downplaying the numbers of Romanian Jews killed in the Holocaust, or denying any Romanian responsibility for Jewish deaths in those years, could regularly be heard on radio and TV stations as well upon the open stages of the Romanian Academy.

Anti-Semitism

In today's Romania beliefs such as "The Jews are behind the death of Jesus", "The Jews are ruling the world through financial manipulations", are still very widely-held, particularly within the older population of the country.

The results of a national wide published survey conducted in October 2002 demonstrate that the majority of Romania's population believes that Romanian Jews are in better financial shape than the rest of the population. The same survey pointed out that a greater part of the Romanian population believes that the model of the "Jewish businessman" should be adopted in order to improve the poor Romanian economic situation.

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 7 of 24

Even the “pro-Jewish” attitude adopted by many Romanian officials is often based on the simplistic belief that the Jews control world politics and finance and Jewish favour can bring benefits to Romania.

There is no doubt that just as in other countries, in Romania anti-Semitism and anti-Israel feelings are mixed and linked. However, in Romania, virulent anti-Israel sentiment is less pronounced, and does not seem to feed anti-Semitic sentiments.

Anti-Semitic Incidents in 2002

In 2002 major incidents with an anti-Semitic character were reported;

- 1) Falticeni Synagogue is broken in **(May 2002)**
- 2) Vatra Dornei Synagogue is broken in **(June 2002)**
- 3) Hateful anti-Semitic graffiti on Bucharest Jewish Theatre **(Oct 2002)**
- 4) Hateful anti-Semitic graffiti on condominiums in Cluj **(Oct 2002)**

To date, there is little to no information on any police investigations into these incidents.

Government’s attitude towards the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism

The present Government came to power in November 2000. The Government is formed mainly from members of the PSD (Romanian Social Democrat Party, former PDSR). The Romanian President, Mr. Ion Iliescu, is the leader of the PSD.

When the PSD came to power in November 2000, after 4 years as the main opposition party, the primary objective of the new leadership was to ensure that Romania would be invited to start negotiations in 2002 to permanently join NATO. A previously unheard of PR and image-improvement campaign began to promote Romania’s interests. A multitude of official visits to countries considered as strategic for this purpose were conducted.

Entry into NATO was to be, and has been, presented to the Romanian population as a historical political achievement. It has become a campaign tool in efforts to gain re-election for the Government in 2004.

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania

Page 8 of 24

Being aware that without the full support of the US Government, Senate and Congress this goal would not be achieved, leaders of Romania focused exclusively, beginning January 2001, on putting together a public relations effort which would convince the United States that NATO needs Romania more than Romania needs NATO.

The Romanian Government's public relations campaign targeted American Jewish organizations, based on deeply-rooted and questionable assumptions about the power and influence of the U.S. Jewish community. This extensive PR effort, targeted entities within the US and Israel (government and non governmental organizations) that they believed could offer their support to Romanian efforts to enter into NATO.

In June 2001, as a part of these efforts, a large Governmental delegation led by the Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Nastase visited Israel. In November 2001, another delegation led by Mr. Nastase visited the US and met leaders of the American Jewish community.

The Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gioana, also made a special effort to win Jewish support on the behalf of Romanian desire to join NATO. Mr. Gioana, who was a successful Ambassador of Romania in Washington, is familiar with the U.S. Jewish community.

More meetings with Jewish personalities took place during the visits Romanian officials made to the US in late January and early February 2002.

In March 2002 a delegation led by Rabbi Andrew Baker of the American Jewish Committee was invited to take part in a high-profile conference in which leaders of nations wishing to join NATO participated. The conference took place in Bucharest.

During these meeting with Jewish community officials, Romanian officials were asked to firmly and immediately deal with Romania's responsibility towards the memory of the Jewish population.

Government officials were faced with repeated questions on the measures being taken to prevent the nationalist veneration of Marshal Ion Antonescu.

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 9 of 24

The groups also requested the adoption of laws to ensure the return of Jewish property, seized by the communists, to the rightful legal owners.

Romanian leaders were also asked to adopt proper legislation to counter anti-Semitic speech and prosecute those engaged in anti-Jewish acts.

In March 2002, as a result of international pressures the Prime Minister, Mr. Nastase, initiated the Emergency Governmental Ordinance 31 (or OUG 31). This is the first legislative document released by any Romanian Government which has tried to define the phenomena of xenophobia and anti-Semitism as socially unacceptable crimes that have to be countered and that will be punished if committed.

The “Romania Mare” Party

The semi-official visit of legendary Holocaust survivor, human rights activist and writer Elie Wiesel came during this period of NATO-campaigning. Those familiar with the Romanian political agenda were not surprised by the exposure this visit had within Romania. Wiesel, who was born in Romania, spoke directly of Romania’s responsibility towards the suffering of Romania’s Jewish population. His statements triggered a vehement anti-Semitic and anti-Holocaust reaction from the “Romania Mare” (Greater Romania) party. The most distressing outcome of these attacks is that Vadim was not condemned by the Romanian Government leadership who had invited Wiesel to visit.

The post – 1989 “Romania Mare” party was revived and is led by Cornel Vadim Tudor, a man who, before becoming a nationalist, was a loyal communist well known for his poems written as eulogies to Nicolae Ceausescu, the former communist dictator of Romania.

It is widely accepted that Tudor is a very eloquent intellectual who does not miss any opportunity to demonstrate his vast intellectual capacity. It is also widely accepted that Tudor is a man whose personal charisma makes him appear, to a large segment of the population, as the right leader who will bring the current high levels of institutionalized corruption to an end. Many also believe that he is the person who can restore the “lost” national pride of Romania.

Tudor is a member of the Romanian Parliament, as are several other members of his party. Former and present high-ranking officers of the Romanian Army, as well as artists and writers are members of this controversial party which, unfortunately, has become a part of the Romanian political scene.

The “Romania Mare” party has a continuous history of denying the atrocities committed against the Romanian Jewish population during WWII.

The “Romanian Mare” party has its own publication named *Romania Mare* which is a widely read publication, due primarily to the publication’s attacks against corruption within the Government. However the same publication contains many articles expressing blatant anti-Semitism and unacceptable xenophobia.

Why is the “Romania Mare” party tolerated? It is tolerated first and foremost because of its widespread popularity with the electorate. This is not a small isolated party. This is a party that appeals to the large masses of the poor population of Romania.

An active and vocal “Romania Mare” party also serves the interests of the current leading political class. As long as the threat the extreme “Romania Mare” party represents to the weak Romanian democracy is kept in the headlines the current leadership, no matter how weak, will be the preferred political choice among moderates and foreign leaders,

The fact that Tudor has for year and years, been an “honourable” member of the Romania Senate, the fact that he is still a member of the Romanian delegation to the EU Parliament, raises serious questions regarding the commitment of the Romanian political leadership to seriously countering xenophobia and anti-Semitism in Romania.

Holocaust deniers in Romania – reality and not fiction

Following pressures made from abroad, the possibility of excluding Cornel Vadim Tudor from the above mentioned delegation to EU is checked. This process still goes on and there is no certainty that the exclusion will be finalized.

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 11 of 24

One of the discussed possible replacements for Tudor is Professor Gheorghe Buzatu. However, such a replacement is far from an improvement.

Professor Gheorghe Buzatu, is a much respected historian among the supporters of “Romania Mare” party, and is the country’s leading Holocaust denier.

Professor Buzatu is also one of the leaders behind the “Ion Antonescu” foundation which is active in promoting the image of Marshal Ion Antonescu as a national hero .

Combating Holocaust Deniers and Protecting Jewish Memory

Unfortunately most Romanian have very little knowledge of the history of the Jewish community in Romania. Among Jews, the generation that witnessed the atrocities is slowly disappearing. Those that are alive are tired and afraid to “make waves” or they just want to forget what they went through. Most Jews of Romanian origin left the country many, years ago.

The present leaders of the small Jewish community: Professor Doctor Nicolae Cajal (The Jewish Federation President), Adv Sorin Iulian (The General Secretary of the Jewish Federation) ,Prof. Ing, Ozy Lazar (The Bucharest Jewish Community President) , together with Jewish historians like Mrs Lia Benjamin and Prof Harry Culer are those who are faced, on a regular basis, with the challenges raised by the harsh task of defending the memory of what once was the Romanian Jewish Community.

Unfortunately the younger generation in the Jewish community is not interested in taking on this fight, or in making the effort efficiently monitor and combat the anti-Semitism in Romania.

The Emergency Ordinance No. 31 of 2002

Evaluation Report by **Dr Alexandru Florian**, Doctor in Sociology, for MCA Romania

In March 2002 the Government of Romania issued the Emergency Ordinance No. 31/2002 “regarding the prohibition of organizations and symbols with a fascist, racial or xenophobic character and the promotion of cult of persons guilty of committing offences against peace and the human race”. This is the

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 12 of 24

first Governmental legislation since 1989 that aims to rid society of extremism
The Ordinance has two objectives:

- a. The elimination from public life of the cult of Marshal Antonescu, the leader of the totalitarian state in the period 1940-1944, who was subsequently sentenced to death and executed in 1946 as a war criminal. Marshal Antonescu was responsible for the death of at least 250,000 Jews throughout the territory of Romania, Basarabia, Bucovina and Transnistria.
- b. The prohibition of manifestations of anti-Semitism and of the denial of the Holocaust.

The Emergency Ordinance is an expression of the political will of the party in power, the Social Democrat Party, to limit manifestations of extremism in the Romanian society. The Government adopted this Ordinance also as a consequence of the pressures exercised for more than 10 years by western governments, in particular the U.S. , and by American and international Jewish organizations.

Some of the provisions of this Ordinance are ambiguous. Thus, in chapter 2, article 4, paragraph 3, it is mentioned that the dissemination, sale or manufacturing of fascist, racial or xenophobic symbols, and respectively their use in public, is not an offence “*if it is committed in the interest of art, science, research or education.*” Such a formulation encourages the dissemination in schools and other public spaces of fascist, racial or xenophobic symbols and the cult of persons condemned for war crimes under the pretext of science, art or education. Therefore paragraph 3 effectively annuls the impact of this Ordinance, as any public gathering or cultural work deemed to have scientific, educational or artist merit may be organized to promote extremist values.

Article 6, Chapter 2, regarding the contesting or denial of the Holocaust, raised heated reactions and disputes amongst politicians and members of civil society seeking the definition of the Holocaust and even determining whether there was a Holocaust in Romania. In the end the judicial commission of the Senate formulated an extremely restrictive definition of the Holocaust, which was to be defined solely as the extermination of Jews in the gas chambers. Thus excluded from among the victims of the Nazi genocide the many other categories of citizens who were exterminated in the concentration camps. This

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 13 of 24

definition of the Holocaust artificially restricts the genocide – contrary to the facts that occurred in World War II – only to the gas chambers. Pursuant to this definition, in Romania or in the territories controlled by the Romanian administration and army, there was no Holocaust. The Emergency Ordinance with such a definition of the Holocaust annuls the very reason it was developed.

In the 9 months since this Ordinance was issued there have been both positive and negative developments.

Good news:

1. Central and local administrations began to take down, one by one the busts of the dictator Ion Antonescu, situated in the public domain or within public institutions.
2. In mid-August the Prime Minister, Adrian Nastase, announced that 25 roads had been identified that held the name of “Marshal Ion Antonescu” throughout the country. Ten roads had their names changed by decisions of the local councils and soon the names of the other ones will be changed as well.

Bad news:

Anonymous anti-Semitism, extremist or mainstream, continued to manifest itself without legal action taken by the State or condemnation by civil society. I will offer just a few examples:

1. The “Curentul” daily newspaper of August 7 reports: “*The Mayor of Flamanzi wants Antonescu in front of the Village Council*”. The mayor, a member of the National Liberal Party, states that “*even in 10 years from now I will have the same ideas. I will say the same things. Antonescu should be built a golden bust and we should kiss it every day...*”
2. On the night of October 11-12, notorious and well-known German slogans were written on the walls of the Jewish Theatre, recalling the extermination camp at Auschwitz. On October 15th a TV channel reported on anti-Semitic slogans written on the walls of an apartment block in Cluj. To this day the perpetrators have not been caught. In the summer of 2002 a synagogue from Falticeni was desecrated, followed by another in Vatra Dornei. The perpetrators remain unknown.

3. Shortly after the executive power issued the Ordinance an exhibition of painted portraits was organized within the Government Palace. Marshall Antonescu's portrait was amongst those displayed on the walls.
4. In the courtyard of the Jilava Penitentiary, where Antonescu was executed, a monument dedicated to his memory was raised after 1990. It remains to this day.
5. In the hall of the teacher's entrance to the Iulia Hasdeu High School, Bucharest there is a memorial plaque that commemorates the participation of the King (Mihai I), the ruler of the state (Marshal Ion Antonescu), and the Minister of National Culture (Ion Petrovici) at the inauguration of the new school building in 1942.
6. Once in Parliament the Emergency Ordinance raised so much discontent that it has yet to be approved by the judicial commission. The commission got tied up at the definition of the Holocaust. Was there or was there not a Holocaust in Romania? The members of the Parliament cannot decide. Not only did politicians well known for their populist nationalism have contradictory reactions, so did politicians that appeared to be on the side of democratic values. The negation of the Holocaust in Romania by Senator Mircea Ionescu Quintus, for example, was a complete surprise.

These politicians would rather opt for the variant that there was no Holocaust in Romania and that Antonescu's regime participated in the Holocaust only in the territories occupied by Romania. This is also the version of history supported by the Minister of Culture and Cults, Academic Razvan Teodorescu, who initiated the Emergency Ordinance. This assertion was made on the occasion of a scientific session dedicated to a debate on the Holocaust issue, held at the Romanian Academy in June 2002. The reasoning is weak. Basarabia and Bucovina were occupied by the Romanian army in the summer of 1941 because they were former Romanian territories that were surrendered in the summer of 1940 to The USSR, pursuant to the Ribentrop-Molotov agreement from 1939. This was the pretext for which Antonescu ordered the crossing of the Prut, and for which Romania entered into an alliance with the Nazi Germany. To admit that only in these territories did the Romanian state massacre Jews, as some politicians try to suggest today in contradiction to the reality of the history, would mean that Basarabia and Bucovina became Romanian territories only after they were "cleaned" of Jews. This is typical of attempts at minimizing

nationalism by pushing the Holocaust to the periphery, beyond the boundaries of Romania prior to its entrance into the war.

7. Emergency Ordinance No. 31/2002 lies forgotten in the drawers of the Parliament commissions. It was not raised for discussion following the summer vacation of Parliament.
8. The Vice President of the Senate, University Professor Gheorghe Buzatu, is a member of the Greater Romania Party and President of the Marshal Ion Antonescu League. He is also a proponent of the nationalist view of Romanian Holocaust historiography. In his capacity as president of the Marshal Ion Antonescu League he initiated the erection of Antonescu's statue in the courtyard of the "Sfintii Constantin si Elena" Church of Bucharest.

The appearance of the Emergency Ordinance did not change, in any way, his position in the Senate of Romania or the existence of the civil association which he continues to lead.

Anti-Semitic Rhetoric:

1. **C.V. Tudor and the Romania Mare Party:** The most violent and primitive attacks took place in the months of July and September. They were expressed by C.V. Tudor, the leader of the Romania Mare Party, and were spread both by the party's official gazette, the Romania Mare weekly newspaper, and by the OTV television channel. Some of these messages were read verbatim from the tribune of the Senate of Romania, without allowing for any reaction from those present in the meeting room. Beyond the vulgarities issued against some persons of Jewish nationality, C.V. Tudor, with the ability of any right extreme leader, masters almost all the anti-Semitic canons. Here are some anti-Semitic themes from his recent speeches.

The minimizing and denial of the Holocaust: *"Between you and me, the Holocaust got to be more important than a religion: if somebody denies God, nothing happens to him, if he denies the Holocaust, he risks to suffer a criminal sentence, like the great French philosopher Roger Garaudy, or even to be set to prison. This is too much. No normal person can deny the Holocaust, which was a tragic reality of the humanity, but, for God's sake, we entered the third millennium, let's start thinking of the future, let's get*

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 16 of 24

out of the prison of the past darkness!” (Declaration issued in the plenum of the Senate of Romania and broadcast by OTV on Monday, September 9, 2002).

Quoting R. Garaudy, the well-known Holocaust Denier, in order to increase the credibility of his anti-Semitic message, Tudor cites Norman Finkelstein, the highly controversial critic of what he calls the "Holocaust industry": *“In this case allow me to doubt the number of 6 million Jews who, some people claim, would have been the victims of the Holocaust. There were victims, but not 6 million, and this was demonstrated by the Jews themselves.”* (July 31, OTV, during the live broadcast of Dan Diaconescu).

Zionism – the main danger of the contemporary world: In the same broadcast the Greater Romania Party Senator unleashed an unbridled attack against Elie Wiesel, pointing out the root of all evils in the present world. *“... we are not at their mercy and we are not one of their colonies, of the worldwide Zionist mafia.”*

The veneration of Antonescu and accusations against Jews for provoking persecution and genocide: On April 2nd, C.V. Tudor held a speech in the plenum of the Senate meant to condemn the initiative of the Nastase Government to prohibit the veneration of Antonescu, in which he denied the Holocaust and asked for the reconsideration of the marshal as a hero of the Romanian nation. Following which he developed the pro-Antonescu theme in the OTV broadcast referred to previously. The matter became absurd after it developed into an inversion of relations between the marshal and the Jews *“The Jews should erect statues (to Antonescu – our note) themselves... Marshal Antonescu saved the Jews and we shall continue to defend his traces that still exist in the country at present...”*

Although he denies that there is anti-Semitism in Romania today, C.V. Tudor finds its cause. To summarize his views: the Jews, Romanian or Israeli citizens, aim to get rich to the detriment of the Romanians. They ask assiduously for the restitution of community properties or undertake dubious business, and in order to “cover” this behaviour harmful for Romania, the GRP Senator suggests, they resort to accusing Romanians of anti-Semitism. *“The issue of the Jew properties in Romania, here, dear*

telev viewers, is the root, the spring, the explanation of this campaign of blaming the Romanian people... All big delinquents give the bigshots of tens and even hundreds and millions of dollars, after which they disappear in only one direction, in Israel” (the same OTV broadcast of July 31).

Senator C.V. Tudor denies the authority of Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002: *“What law? There is no such law! There is an Ordinance... What Ordinance, sir? ... The Parliament was working, the Government is not allowed to issue a hail of ordinances as long as the Parliament is working, sir!... The Ordinance was blocked in the Senate” (the same OTV broadcast of July 31).*

In October the OTV channel was suspended. One of the reasons behind this decision of the National Council of the Audiovisual was the anti-Semitic message of the Senator C.V. Tudor broadcast, more than once, by this television channel. Unexpectedly, the situation created around the OTV channel was a good pretext for exculpating, once again, the anti-Semitism of some of the members of the intellectual elite.

- 2. Paul Goma:** The extreme anti-Semitism represented in the politics of the GRP and C.V. Tudor is also to be found in the cultural anti-Semitism of Paul Goma. Goma, a former dissident during the Ceausescu epoch, exiled in Paris, published in two issues of *Vatra* review, nos. 3-4 and 5-6/2002, an article entitled “Bessarabia and the ‘Problem’” - a text of the same ferocious and hateful anti-Semitism as Vadim’s speeches. Paul Goma proves to be a radical negativist. His primitive and violent anti-Semitism combines themes from the inter-war period with current anti-Semitism, and Islamic fundamentalism, blaming the Israeli people for being criminals in the treatment of the Palestinians.

Among his statements: *“ the falsity, the stupidity of the ‘anti-Semitic’ term, when Semites are also the Maltese and the Berbers and the Arabs and, who would believe it!, today, in Israel: the Palestinians!” (Vatra, no. 3-4/2002, p. 35).* At the same time, **the Jews are guilty of the Holocaust:** *“What could have happened in only one week: June 28 – July 2, 1940, that the Romanians had gone crazy, had gone mad, asking, promising – the*

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 18 of 24

Romanians – revenge against the Jews, according to the Lex Talionis, that asks for «an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth»?” (idem, p. 34).

Paul Goma resorts to negative, deeply trivial characterizations addressed to the Jews. Thus the Jews who do not admit that they were the first cause of the pogroms “*ignore with an inadmissible (and illiterate, too – do they really do this only because of illiteracy, they, the People of the Book?) race superiority, the chronological, historic truth, that says that ... the aggression of the Jews during the evacuation of the Romanians from the abandoned territories signified the Eye – the first one – and what happened after one year – inadmissible, reprehensible, criminal – was, alas!, an answer to aggression, ‘the Eye’ cut out for ‘the Eye’ that had been cut out – it was the revenge of the Romanian against the Jew”.* (idem, p. 35).

Paul Goma blames the Israeli people for being the criminals in their treatment of the Palestinians. “*It is difficult, very difficult for the Jews, installed for two millenniums in the status of victims, in the culture of the unique genocide: Shoah, to admit the historic truth, saying that: the genocide is declined, unfortunately, at the plural. Imposing the monopoly on the sufferings caused by the persecutions they were victims of more than half a century ago, and at the same time denying, making relative, forbidding to be taken into discussion other mass liquidations, other innocent victims, other martyred communities than theirs – proves insolence, ethnic indifference and, paradoxically: lack of intelligence. But even more difficult for the Jews is to admit that even they were executioners for other communities – and they continue to be, today, in Palestine.”.* (Vatra, nos. 5-6/2002, p. 37).

I do not think that there exists, in the production of the cultural post-communist elite, any writings that could be compared with the tireless hate of this former dissident.

- 3. Nicolae Manolescu:** Mircea Mihaes, an Romanian contemporan writer, in his editorial “Anti-Semitism without Anti-Semites”, from Romania Literara no. 38, September 18-24, 2002, applies a strategy that finally diminishes the intensity of the message. He condemns the violent anti-Semitism of C.V. Tudor but at the end of the editorial vehemently rejects the existence

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 19 of 24

of the moderate anti-Semitism of some prestigious Romanian intellectuals. The effect, aimed at drawing the attention of the civil society to Tudor's extremism, is diluted. A typical case of mainstream moderate anti-Semitism that Mihaes tries to exculpate is the one illustrated by the literary critic Nicolae Manolescu, the director of the cultural review *Romania Literara* and a member of the cultural and civic elite of Romania. What M. Mihaes seems not to understand is that civic or political determination to combat rightist extremism does not excuse, in any way, the silence when anti-Semitism or other discriminatory messages find shelter in the speeches of the intellectual elite. I do not think that we have to stay *silent* at the negativism of N. Manolescu only because Vadim's message is worse. One evil does not exclude the other.

N. Manolescu is inclined to make things relative and to use nuances that dilute the contents of anti-Semitism or of the Holocaust. In articles written a few years ago he considered that M. Eliade only “*flirted with legionaries*” (*Romania literara*, May 20, 1998), he did not find anything fascist in Maurice Papon's defence (*Romania literara*, August 12, 1998). Obsessively preoccupied by the idea that the evil of the communism was greater than the evil of the fascism, he paradoxically, as did Vadim and Goma, defended the revisionist Garaudy, the author of the “*Founding Myths of the Israeli Politics*”, a book that established his anti-Semitic attitude. For Manolescu, Garaudy is the most convenient witness in order to demonstrate that Jews do not accept any other genocide besides the Holocaust. A reason for which the literary critic found the saving explanation, the gulag would not have the place it deserves in history. “*Is somebody afraid of losing the monopoly of revealing the crimes against humanity? An indirect proof in support of my guess is the trial against Garaudy in France, who had said that there had been no Holocaust, but a terrible lobby was made around him. Well, even the loss of the monopoly on this type of lobby seems to worry some people.*” (*Romania literara*, March 11, 1998).

In the spring of 2002 N. Manolescu together with other colleagues reacted in two cases to minimize in principle the adhesion of Eliade and Cioran to legionarism, once even before reading the book of A. Laignel-Lavastine, “*Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco: L'oubli du fascisme*”, published in Paris.

To invoke a tougher, more aggressive anti-Semitism, as M. Mihaes does, in order to deny an anti-Semitism more hidden that arises out of a cultivated

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 20 of 24

spirit albeit not deprived of prejudices, only complicates the debates about anti-Semitism in Romania. It must not be forgotten, I think, the fact that any hypostasis of anti-Semitism has its own audience. The very spirit of the Emergency Ordinance No. 31/2002 is to hinder the spreading of any negative message, either moderate or radical. The supposition of the Ordinance, which we consider to be correct, is that there are facts in history whose interpretation, by making them seem relative or too shaded, may easily result in turning them into appearing less culpable.

In conclusion, as evidenced by the above examples, to date, the Ordinance does not function as hoped. It was used only when the central or local administration had a direct interest in it; such as in the demolishing of Ion Antonescu's statues.

Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002 cannot change mentalities. However, it does represent a possible instrument, which if used together with others, will help create a democratic, tolerant civic environment, open to dialogue and also to assuming responsibility for our own history. But if there is no political will to finalize the legislative measure, to improve the contents of its provisions and to transform it into a law, Emergency Ordinance No. 31/2002 will remain the expression of a speculative action. Until now the main result is only one of political record.

Jewish Life in 2002 Romania

By **Ozy Lazar**, the President of the Bucharest Jewish Community for MCA Romania

In the last year the situation of the Romanian Jews corresponded to general developments in the country. The objectives of the Euro-Atlantic integration, assumed by all political forces of the country, underscored the need for commonality in an open and democratic system: equality as to the law is accompanied by the right to difference in culture and beliefs. At the level of official discourse, the Jewish minority is respected and defended when there are attempts to discredit it (by words or deeds). In contrast with countries with a much older democratic tradition, the policy of Israel is examined with lucidity, depending on the specific conditions, and the loyalty of the Romanian citizens of Mosaic religion is not put under the question mark. The terrorist attacks are extremely painful for the entire country, especially when among the victims there are Romanian citizens, working in Israel.

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 21 of 24

The incidents in which Jewish institutions are involved can be divided into two categories: the ones with an overt anti-Semitic character, such as the inscriptions appeared overnight on the external walls of the Jewish State Theatre, the threats against the Jews written on the walls of a building from Cluj, ; and those which are anti-religious in nature, and not specifically anti-Jewish, in which synagogues or Jewish cemeteries are desecrated along with religious sites of other faiths. In all these cases the authorities were informed and they publicly condemned themselves from the explicit or implicit message of these manifestations, began investigations. However no perpetrators were found. The absence of the guilty ones favours exaggerated interpretations and are diminishes the meaning of such events.

The Emergency Ordinance issued this year, whereby the Romanian Government ended the use of symbols with a fascist, racial, xenophobic character and the promoting of the veneration persons guilty of crimes against humanity, had significant echoes in the public debate, echoes that had a connection with the past and the present of the Jews from Romania. Personalities of the National Liberal Party attacked the Ordinance in the Senate, asking for a “definition of the Holocaust”, stating that by certain wording, it attacks the “right to free opinion”. This position found supporters in the debates of a private television channel, OTV, where there were reiterated the arguments according to which Marshal Antonescu actually “saved” the Jews from Romania, Transnistria being a kind of vacation colony, and that the Jews thus rescued, instead of being grateful, brought the communism in Romania and contributed to the physical elimination of the political and cultural elite of Romania. The National Council of the Audiovisual registered these assertions, considered them to be in conflict with the law and suspended the said television channel. In its defence came Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the leader of the extremist Romania Mare party, well-known for his anti-Semitic attitudes. It has to be mentioned the fact that, on the same channel, Elie Wiesel was slandered injuriously, as, while visiting Romania, he accused the Antonescian regime of a policy of discrimination and extermination of the Jews from Romania.

We found out that this visit had echoes from another point of view, too: a leader of the Civic Alliance, a union of the democratic opposition, reproached the Nobel for not visiting the Sighet memorial dedicated to the anti-communist resistance from Romania. Thus, there is reiterated the dispute that occupies

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for RomaniaPage 22 of 24

many pages in the Romanian cultural press regarding the role of the Iron-guards in the anti-communist fight and that of the Jews in the installation of the communism in Romania, regarding the equivalencies between Holocaust and Gulag. We consider that such debates are as only through open discussions can the truth be found and, therefore, we appreciate the interventions of the intellectuals – Jews or not – who approach the reality of the facts without any prejudices. As long as the debate maintains itself in the parameters of the intellectual dialogue we consider that it is useful both to the reconstruction of the past and to the present democracy. We follow attentively all these evolutions and strive, on the one hand, to intervene (by addressing ourselves to the competent authorities in order to solve certain concrete situations), and, on the other hand, to contribute to the printing and spreading of the documents that can give a realistic ground to this debate. Thus, the international symposium organized by the Goethe Institute from Bucharest having as a theme Jewish identity and anti-Semitism in the Central and South-Eastern Europe occasioned a meeting of a high level where the problems that worry us were examined without passion and prejudices. It deserves to be mentioned the fact that within this meeting there was obtained a consensus between the leaders of the Civic Alliance and the historians of the Holocaust, thus removing ill feeling from the Wiesel visit.

To promote greater understanding of Jews in Romania, the documents published by the Jewish History Center and the memorials published by the Hasefer Publishing House are of great value. Greater support for these institutions could help create better understanding in the country.

Of course, there exist die-hard anti-Semites, and they cannot be convinced with any argument. However, the important thing is to act for those – and they represent the majority – who do not know very much about the past (neither about Holocaust, nor about Gulag, but the experience of the communist dictatorship is closer in time than the experience of the Jewish extermination) as they can be influenced by knowledge. At the same time, we must ensure that in schools, at history classes, true information is taught about the presence of the Jews on the Romanian territory and about Holocaust.

To the same effect, we are preoccupied with the groups of pupils that visit the Holocaust Museum from Bucharest, the ones that visit the Coral Temple and try to give them explanations suitable for their age about the Judaic religion, about the Jewish holidays, and answer their questions, thus directly fighting

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 23 of 24

the lies spread by anti-Semitic propaganda. We wish that the image of the Jews were not reduced to the persecuted one, to the eternal victim, but to a celebration of their community and individual contributions to the ideas and culture patrimony of the mankind. The presence of the non-Jewish guests (men of science and letters, representatives of the authorities and leaders of the civil society, high officials, or, in the province – representatives of the local authorities) at our holidays and events – conferences, performances of the six artistic groups – assure a normal circulation of the information between the two communities. Through all these activities we wish to complete and diversify the image the majority population may have due to some superficial or partial information. We could find out that, after the above-mentioned visits, the pupils adopted our point of view and transmitted it further on, in their families, to their colleagues, etc. This action is reinforced by our active presence at related events of the Romanian national and international scientific community, as it was, in 2002, the International Symposium called “The Jews Identity and the Anti-Semitism in Central and South-Eastern Europe” organized by the Goethe Institute and having as partners – *inter alia* – The Federation of the Jewish Communities of Romania and the Hebraic Studies Centre “Goldstein-Goren” from the University of Bucharest.

Conclusion

Anti-Semitism is alive in Romania. At a time when Romania should not be classified as an anti-Semitic country, the existence of anti-Semitic incidents in a country where the Jewish population is almost nonexistent is a worrying trend, as is the widespread denial of the existence of anti-Semitism and any Romanian involvement/responsibility in the Holocaust.

Following the trend that was rooted long before the 1989 anti-communist revolution, the present leadership still believes that by ignoring the existing Anti-Semitism and the xenophobic sentiments, such manifestations will either not be noticed or if noticed then minimized and dismissed.

We would like to hear more of the declarations made by Mr. Ion Iliescu, The Romanian President, against these phenomena.

We would like to see politicians, members of the Government, members of the police and the army forces, academicians and other public figures debating this issue with responsibility and in a language that will allow the population to

Anti-Semitism 2002 Report for Romania
Page 24 of 24

learn and to understand the great suffering of the Romanian Jewish community.

We would like to see a sustained appreciation by Romanian officials, for the Romanian Jewish heritage which, in present, is pulled from the dusty national memory randomly, superficially and only for serving political interests.

This will not be possible without a full, dignifying recognition, by the Romanian Government and the Romanian society, of the history of the Jewish people suffered in Romania.

End of report