

2016

# The History of the Holocaust in Romania

Jean Ancel

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples>

---

Ancel, Jean, "The History of the Holocaust in Romania" (2016). *University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters*. 350.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples/350>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Nebraska Press at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN ROMANIA

[Buy the Book](#)

# THE COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST

## EDITORIAL BOARD

David Bankier (1947–2010)	Dan Michman
Yehuda Bauer	Dina Porat
Yoav Gelber	Renée Poznanski
Israel Gutman	Avner Shalev
Bella Gutterman	

*Yad Vashem initiated the Comprehensive History of the Holocaust project together with historians from a number of universities and research institutes. The project seeks to summarize research findings on the Holocaust during the generations following the war.*

FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS

*Series Editor*

Alan E. Steinweis, *University of Vermont*

*Associate Editors*

Doris L. Bergen, *University of Toronto*

David Engel, *New York University*

Peter Hayes, *Northwestern University*

Susannah Heschel, *Dartmouth College*

Michael R. Marrus, *University of Toronto*

# THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN ROMANIA

---

JEAN ANCEL

*Translated by* Yaffah Murciano

*Edited by* Leon Volovici

*With the assistance of* Miriam Caloianu

*Published by the*

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS, *Lincoln*

*and* YAD VASHEM, *Jerusalem*



[Buy the Book](#)

© 2011 by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust  
Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority,  
Jerusalem, Israel

Map adapted from the original at the U.S.  
Holocaust Memorial Museum.

All rights reserved  
Manufactured in the United States of America



Library of Congress  
Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Ancel, Jean.  
[Toldot ha-Sho'ah. English]  
The history of the Holocaust in Romania /  
Jean Ancel; translated by Yaffah Murciano;  
edited by Leon Volovici with the assistance of  
Miriam Caloianu.

p. cm. — (The comprehensive  
history of the Holocaust)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8032-2064-5 (cloth: alk. paper)

ISBN 978-0-8032-9061-7 (paper: alk. paper)

1. Jews — Persecutions — Romania — History.
2. Holocaust, Jewish (1939–1945) — Romania.
3. Antisemitism — Romania. 4. Jews —  
Romania — History — 20th century.
5. Romania — Ethnic relations. I. Title.

DS135.R7A719813 2011

940.53'1809498—dc23

2011030180

Set in Ehrhardt by Kim Essman.  
Designed by Richard Hendel.

*The publication of this series was made possible by the generous gift of the Ike and Roz Friedman Family Foundation, in loving memory of Ike Friedman and Janis Friedman Yale and all those who perished in the Holocaust.*

*Publication of this series has also been supported by a grant from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.*



Claims Conference ועידת התביעות  
The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany



# Contents

List of Illustrations *ix*

Foreword to the Hebrew Edition *xi*

Editors' Note *xv*

Introduction *1*

1. The Goga Government: Europe's Second Antisemitic Government,  
28 December 1937–10 February 1938 *25*
2. King Carol II's Dictatorship and Its Policy toward the Jews,  
February 1938–August 1940 *39*
3. The Rhinocerization of the Romanian Intelligentsia *51*
4. The Romanian Orthodox Church and Its Attitude toward  
the "Jewish Problem" *56*
5. The Nazi Influence on Romanian Political Life and Its Effect  
on the Situation of the Jews *61*
6. Pogroms and Persecutions in the Summer of 1940 *71*
7. The National-Legionary State *89*
8. Romanization *106*
9. Legionary Terror *119*
10. The Confrontation between Antonescu and the Legionnaires  
and Its Impact on the Situation of the Jews *137*
11. The Legionnaires' Rebellion and the Bucharest Pogrom,  
21–23 January 1941 *149*
12. The Jewish Leadership under the National-Legionary Regime *165*
13. The Political and Ideological Foundations of the Antonescu Regime *173*
14. The Government's Attitude toward the Jews *179*
15. Romanization (II) *195*
16. The Antonescu Regime and the Final Solution, 1941–42 *204*

17. The Romanian Solution to the Jewish Problem in Bessarabia  
and Bukovina, June–July 1941 217
18. The Camps and Ghettos in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina,  
September–November 1941 233
19. The Kishinev Ghetto 258
20. Czernowitz 270
21. Southern Bukovina 289
22. The Dorohoi District 298
23. The National Bank of Romania 306
24. Transnistria under Romanian Occupation 315
25. The Arrest and Deportation of Jews in Transnistria 327
26. “The Kingdom of Death” 334
27. Odessa 353
28. The Berezovka District 379
29. The Typhus Epidemic 395
30. The Hunt for Residents of Jewish Blood 417
31. The Romanian Church and the Christianization Campaign 430
32. The Degradation of Judaism and Jews 436
33. The Iași Pogrom, 29 June 1941 445
34. The Antonescu Regime and the Final Solution in the Regat  
and Southern Transylvania 457
35. Toward the Implementation of the Final Solution 470
36. The Postponement of the Nazi Final Solution 486
37. The Jews of the Regat and Southern Transylvania in the Shadow  
of the Final Solution 510
38. Statistical Data on the Holocaust in Romania 535

Notes 563

Bibliography 671

Index 681

# Illustrations

## CHARTS

1. “Cleansing the ground” operational hierarchy 225
2. Chain of command for the internment of Jews 241
3. Structure of the Transnistrian administration 318
4. Chain of command for reprisals against the Jews of Odessa 357

## MAPS

1. Romania, 1942 24

## TABLES

1. Jewish population in the Regat 8
2. The Jewish workforce in Romania, 15 May 1941 199
3. Number of workers and clerks in privately owned factories,  
November 1940–March 1943 200
4. Statistical data on Romanian Jews, by district 231
5. Camps and ghettos in Bessarabia, September 1941 238
6. Jewish population of southern Bukovina 290
7. Jews in the Dorohoi district, 1930–42 305
8. Evacuation of Jews from the Regat and southern Bukovina,  
June–July 1941 511
9. Evacuation of Jews from southern Transylvania, June–July 1941 514
10. Detention camps in southern Romania, August 1941 522
11. Forced payments imposed by Ion Antonescu 528
12. Income from property expropriated from Jews 530
13. Jews of Romania in the official censuses 536
14. Jews in the camps of Bessarabia, August–September 1941 537
15. Number of Jews in the province of Bukovina 539
16. Number of Jews evacuated from Bessarabia 540

17. Number of deportees to Transnistria, late 1941 541
18. Deportation of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina,  
spring–summer 1942 542
19. Jews deported to Transnistria in September 1942 543
20. Comparison of reports on the number of deportees 544
21. Number of deportees according to other sources 545
22. Deportees from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and the Dorohoi district,  
December 1941 546
23. Decline in the number of Jews in Transnistria 549
24. Number of Jews evacuated from Transnistria 553
25. Concentration of Jews in the Kingdom of Death and in the  
Berezovka district 554
26. Jews killed by order of the Romanian state 558
27. Natural increase of the Jewish population, 1940–43 560
28. Comparison between the census of residents of Jewish blood  
and the Siguranța statistics 561

## Foreword to the Hebrew Edition

The purpose of the Holocaust History Project, launched by Yad Vashem in the late 1970s, was to summarize the achievements of the first generation of academic Holocaust research. It soon transpired that this aim was too ambitious and that several countries, including Romania, lacked even the most basic research infrastructure. Clearly, there was a need for primary research in these countries.

Although in the interwar period Romania boasted the second largest Jewish community in Europe after Poland, it has been awarded a relatively marginal position in Holocaust research in Israel and abroad. The history of Romanian Jewry, from Romania's establishment after the Berlin Congress in 1878 until the Holocaust, has not been adequately researched either.

As in other countries, the monstrous dimensions of the Holocaust in Romania sprang from the encounter of popular and traditional antisemitism rooted in ancient and deep-seated religious sentiments, on the one hand, with socio-economic considerations, the power of the modern state, and the tools at its disposal, on the other. The Germans' preoccupation with precision and fastidiousness engendered a need for a "workforce" that would carry out their dirty work for them. This workforce was made up of their allies and the occupied nations of Eastern Europe. The riots and pogroms that had been, and in some places still were, an integral part of Jewish life could never have reached the monstrous proportions of the Holocaust without the meticulous planning, systematic implementation, and dedication that were the hallmark of Nazi ideology and German resolve.

In most Eastern European countries during the Holocaust, therefore, historical Eastern European antisemitism operated alongside Nazi ideology and power. The Nazis exploited popular anti-Jewish sentiments and channeled them to serve the modern liquidation factory that was erected during the war. Romania was unusual in that it was the Romanian, not the German, regime that operated the death machine that butchered Romanian Jewry, at its own initiative and under its own free will. Germany's involvement was secondary only.

The Holocaust in Romania, therefore, took place within a dual context: (1) the context of the religious, national, and socioeconomic antisemitism that had typified Romania since its establishment as a sovereign state, and (2) the context of the Second World War, which served as a convenient backdrop to the annihilation of European Jewry by the Nazis, their satellites, and their collaborators.

Although part of the Holocaust of European Jewry, the Holocaust in Romania was primarily Romanian. As Dr. Ancel has shown so clearly in his research, the Holocaust in Romania was the result of ideological stereotypes that Romanian intellectuals and politicians, with the backing or tacit consent of large sections of Romanian society, created in Romania after its independence, especially in the interwar period. The entire apparatus of the Romanian regime—government ministries, the various security services (the army, gendarmerie, and police), the civil administration in the occupied territories, the national bank, and district and local authorities—participated in this crime.

The fact that the Holocaust in Romania was initiated and implemented by Romanians explains both its savagery and its incompleteness. Their *modus operandi*, as indicated by the horrific descriptions Ancel brings into his research, was often unusually cruel, primitive, contemptible, and depraved. On the other hand, they were far less efficient than the Germans. This, no doubt, explains why there were people left to tell the tale.

Unlike the Germans, the Romanians, and other nations in and outside the Balkans, drew a distinction between “their” Jews and other Jews and related to the two groups differently. “Other Jews” includes Jews in the districts that were annexed to Romania after the First World War and in areas that were occupied and annexed to the Romanian military administration after the Soviet invasion in June 1941. The Jews of the Regat, the core Romanian principality, may have suffered pogroms, decrees, and degradation, but on the whole they survived the Holocaust. Nevertheless, as Ancel shows, there were several moments during the war when it seemed as if they too were about to suffer the same fate as their brethren. There is ample evidence that the Romanian government was preparing itself for such an eventuality.

Jean Ancel’s research offers one of the most detailed, or possibly the most detailed, accounts written so far of the history of the Holocaust. Although details as a rule can be tiring, they have a power of their own, and it is this that makes this work so special. Ancel does not gloss over any place, person, organization, or unit connected with the massacre of Jews in Romania and Transnistria, from head of state to the most lowly sergeant and gendarme. Despite his concern for detail and accuracy, Ancel still manages to present us with a full picture of events. He also provides us with a comprehensive and accurate analysis of Romanian society, its motives and behavior, on the one hand, and of Jewish society and its modes of operation and responses, on the other.

In this work, Ancel makes use of an immense and varied corpus of sources, such as archival documents, all shades of the Romanian press, numerous survivor testimonies, and statements by defendants in the war criminals’ trials held in

Romania after its defeat. The archival material includes an impressive amount of official, semiofficial, and even private Romanian documents; Soviet documents that have become available in recent years; and German political, military, and administrative documents, as well as Jewish documents of the community and its institutions and of parties and organizations. The memorial literature as well as the many testimonies assembled immediately after the war and published in the communities' Black Books, or later by Yad Vashem, add a moving and more immediate personal dimension that the archival material lacks.

Many of the above sources were hidden until the downfall of Ceaușescu's regime in the late 1980s. The strong affiliation and partial overlap between the fascist regime of wartime Romania and the subsequent Communist regime, which absorbed many high-ranking officials from the fascist regime after they were ideologically reprogrammed, led to the suppression of many files that contradicted the official version of Romanian historiography—a version that downplayed the role played by the Romanians in the annihilation of Romanian Jewry and placed most of the blame on the Germans.

The author, therefore, faced two challenges: (1) to reconstruct, describe, and analyze the Holocaust in Romania, and (2) to refute the standard theses that guided Romanian historiography under Communist rule and influenced all academic research on the subject outside Romania. His critical approach led him to uncover many cases of documents that were forged in order to hide events or conceal responsibility for them or that were “fabricated” in order to deliberately deceive officials, opponents, or critics at the time, as well as future researchers.

As one who has followed the vicissitudes of this work for many years, I can testify that the author has put his whole heart into the enterprise. He has presented us with a monumental research project, the fruit of many years of work that demanded an immense psychological investment. This highly admirable work will also serve as a springboard for monographs on specific issues relating to the Holocaust of Romanian Jewry that deserve further study. Although it sometimes seemed as if Jean Ancel's intense involvement might interfere with the objectivity required of an academic researcher, he always managed to pull himself together in time and exercise caution and restraint. The result is a book that combines scholarship and feeling, description and analysis, empathy and detachment. This is a monumental and, as far as one can tell, also definitive work.

*Yoav Gelber*



## Editors' Note

This English edition of Jean Ancel's *The History of the Holocaust: Romania* is a revised version of the original Hebrew book, published in two volumes in 2002 by Yad Vashem. Dr. Ancel undertook various revisions to the English edition, based on suggestions from the University of Nebraska Press's peer reviewers. Unfortunately, Dr. Ancel died on 30 April 2008 after a long illness, before he could revise the manuscript. These revisions, including bibliographical corrections and updates, were done by the editors based on the detailed correspondence on this subject between the author and the University of Nebraska Press in 2007. The final touches were by the editors, but the work and the spirit are those of Jean Ancel.



# THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN ROMANIA

[Buy the Book](#)



## Introduction

It has taken me over sixteen years (1984–2000) to prepare this study on the Holocaust of Romanian Jewry, and I owe the reader an explanation as to why this is so. The first version of this book was completed in 1990. It was based on copious documentation that I had collected over a decade and that, with the generous assistance of the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, was published in twelve volumes in 1986. After the collapse of the Communist regimes, the East European archives suddenly became available. Between 1992 and 1997, at Yad Vashem's behest and also independently, I visited the Ukraine, Russia, and Moldova (former Romanian Bessarabia), with stays in Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Nikolayev, Kherson, and Kishinev. From 1994 on, I also visited the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, which began amassing important collections of documents that came from Romanian archives. After my first visit to Moscow, and especially after four repeat visits to Odessa and Nikolayev that lasted over half a year, I realized that my book was deficient. The inaccessibility of the archives in Romania and the former Soviet Union had led to substantial errors in my understanding of Antonescu's regime, its objectives, its modus operandi, the role antisemitism played in its considerations, the extent of its participation in the liquidation of the Jews, and especially the kind of relationship it had with the Third Reich. I had to choose between publishing the book as it was, with updates and additions, or rewriting it almost from scratch. I chose the latter course.

Despite the size of this book (the result of an attempt to write an integral history of Romanian Jewry during the Holocaust based on primary sources), I have omitted several themes I originally intended to include. Nevertheless, I think I can state with some satisfaction that all issues relating to the Holocaust of Romanian Jewry have been covered. One major chapter of this book, dealing with the pogrom in Iași and the survivors (chap. 33), has become a book in its own right. This is *Hakdamah leretsah: Peraot Yasi, 29 beyuni 1941* (Prelude to murder: The pogrom in Jassy, 29 June 1941) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003). The current work includes an abridged account of the pogrom in Iași. The Romanian

translation of *Hakdamah leretsah* was published in Romania in 2005: *Preludiu la asasinat: Pogromul de la Iași, 29 iunie 1941*.

This work is the culmination of years of collecting Jewish sources, especially the testimonies of survivors of the mass liquidation operations. I believe that a history of the Jewish people in the Holocaust cannot rely only on the documentation left behind by the murderers and their accomplices; it must also invoke Jewish sources where they exist, provided they are reliable. After many years of considerable effort, I managed to track down several survivors of the genocide operations perpetrated by the Romanians in Transnistria. Their accounts breathe life into the dry documents I came across in the Ukrainian archives.

Romania joined the war Nazi Germany declared on the Jews and launched a campaign of mass destruction and deportation in the “liberated territories” —Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. Under the new situation that was emerging in Europe, Antonescu’s regime sought to implement what I have called the Romanian antisemitic dream, namely, the desire to rid the country of Jews. Already in the autumn of 1941 Antonescu’s regime wished to purge the Regat of Jews, and it was only the intervention of the German Foreign Ministry and the Reich Central Security Office (RSHA, the security department of the Nazi Third Reich), which were reluctant to overburden the murderers of Einsatzgruppe D, that averted this plan at such an early stage of the Holocaust. The antisemitic ideology of Antonescu’s regime, which drove it to participate in the plan to liquidate the Jews, was based on local antisemitism as it had evolved over a century, especially A. C. Cuza’s classic version and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu’s fascist version, and not on the Nazi racist version. It was not by chance that the looting of Jewish property was termed *Romanization* rather than *Aryanization*. The death camps and the ghettos of Transnistria were intended as transit camps pending the transfer of the deportees to German occupied territory for liquidation.

The participation by Romanians in the liquidation of the Jewish people was, therefore, predicated on an antisemitic ideology that preceded Nazi racism and was the result of free choice, not German pressure or coercion. Indeed, when Marshal Ion Antonescu reached the conclusion that the liquidation of the Jews who remained in his territory no longer served Romania’s national interests as he defined them, he stopped the liquidation, despite German pressure. The plan to deport the Romanian Jews to the Bełżec death camp in occupied Poland was put on hold by the Antonescu regime in early October 1942, that is, before Stalingrad and with no direct connection to it.<sup>1</sup>

The Romanian soldiers, gendarmes, and policemen who were ordered to “cleanse the ground” (the Romanian equivalent of the Final Solution) worked for, and were equipped and rewarded by, the Romanian state, and they carried

out orders they received in Romanian from Bucharest, not Berlin. Nor were they content with merely obeying orders. There were soldiers in uniform and civilians who carried out acts of murder and looting at their own initiative to satisfy their own base instincts, in the atmosphere created by the regime in which the Jews were no longer considered human beings and in which it was permitted to cast off the shackles of humanity. It is important, however, to bear in mind that although the “evil” was of Romanian origin, without Germany’s domination of Europe and help in freeing its Romanian allies from their complexes it would not have amounted to much. Romania’s democratic legacy was nothing to boast of, and no opposition worthy of the name emerged that might have prevented or at least openly condemned the murder and looting of the Jews perpetrated by Antonescu’s regime and the majority of the Romanian people. The royal family was no exception, while the Romanian Orthodox Church, which supported the regime throughout, provided it with a Christian justification for its dastardly acts.

The new German and Romanian documentation that I obtained revealed the surprising fact that the Antonescu regime had its own plan to deport most of Romanian Jewry to Transnistria in the second half of 1942. Again, as in 1941, it was only the intervention of the German Foreign Ministry, which wished to dispatch all Jews to the death camps and receive sole credit for their liquidation, that prevented the implementation of this plan. One final fact deserves emphasis: at no point in the decision-making processes affecting the Jews did the Romanian administration ever entertain humanitarian considerations or consider the genocide of Jews a crime against humanity.

The cross-fertilization of old and new documentation, particularly the files of the Securitate (Romanian Information Service during the Communist regime), the heir to the Siguranța (Romanian Security Police), enabled me to clarify the role of the Jewish leadership in organizing Jewish life during the period under review, its abortive attempt to prevent the deportation of the survivors of the first wave of destruction to the camps of Transnistria, and especially its successful struggle to prevent the deportation of the Jews of the Old Kingdom and southern Transylvania to the death camps in occupied Poland. The documentation confirms the major role played by the Jewish leader Wilhelm Filderman (1882–1963) in the struggle to save Romanian Jewry from destruction, his understanding of the dangers awaiting the Jews already in the autumn of 1941, and his ties with the leader of the opposition and with Antonescu and his ministers. It also shows that neither the Zionist movement nor Rabbi Alexandru Safran (1910–2006), the chief rabbi in Romania from 1939 to 1948, had any real part in thwarting the plan to liquidate the Jews.

I would like to thank Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, who sponsored the publication

of the collection of documents on the fate of Romanian Jewry in the Holocaust and chose me for the task; the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, which, on a number of occasions, allowed me to study and copy numerous documents; the Rosenzweig Family Fellowship for the Study of the Fate of Jews in Transnistria; Dr. Michael Berenbaum, former director of the Holocaust Museum Research Institute, Dr. Paul Shapiro, its current director, Henry Mayer, director of the Museum Archives, and Dr. Vassily Fisher, head of the museum's PR department; my colleague Dr. Radu Ioanid, who did his utmost to obtain copies of numerous documents from Romanian archives; Yad Vashem, for the fellowship from the International Institute for Holocaust Research; Esther Aran, Dr. Tikva Fatal, and the late Esther Hako, former coordinators of the Holocaust History Project; special thanks to Dr. Bella Guterman, Yad Vashem's director of publications, who swiftly and skillfully oversaw publication of the book; Dr. Yosef Govrin, Israel's ambassador to Romania from 1985 to 1989, for supporting, encouraging, and believing in me, and his wife, Hanna; Abraham Ben Amitai, the editor of the Hebrew version of the book, who worked alongside me for over ten years, improving the book's style and catching many errors; and Mr. Felix Dan, the printer, who also printed my first contribution to the study of Romanian Jewry, thirty-three years ago.

I would also like to thank Professor Yehuda Bauer, who read my work and made valuable comments; Professor Israel Guttman, who promoted its publication in the later stages; and Mr. Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate. It is thanks to them that this book has been published in its present form.

This work has benefited from the guidance and active support of Professor Yoav Gelber of Haifa University, who not only stood by me as I wrote the book but also encouraged me to broaden and deepen the scope of the research. I cannot thank him enough. Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife, Susanna. The research and effort that went into the writing of this book, which sapped most of my energy and time for many years, would never have been possible without her support and help.

I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of my father, Shmuel Ben Chanoch Halevi, may he rest in peace.

“The L—d has chastened me sore; but he hath not given me over unto death” (Psalms 118:18).

*Jean Ancel*  
*Jerusalem, May 2002*