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# Assimilation, Segregation, Integration: State Control on Minority Policies in Modern Romania (1918-2007)

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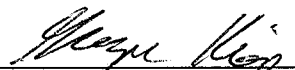
**Assimilation, Segregation, Integration: State Control on Minority Policies in  
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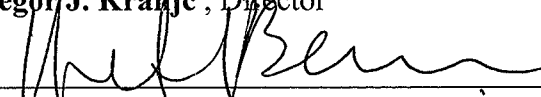
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in History from  
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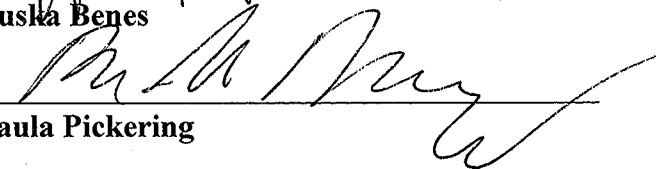
by

Doina Anca Cretu

Accepted for HONORS  
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

  
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## Introduction

Looking back across Romania's twentieth century, Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran once said: "Some countries are blessed with a sort of grace: everything works for them, even their misfortunes and their catastrophes. There are others for whom nothing succeeds and whose very triumphs are but failures. When they try to assert themselves and take a step forward, some external fate intervenes to break their momentum and return them to their starting point."<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, this particular concept of *fate* has always been part of socio-political discourse in Romania. Often times the focus shifted towards the benefits of a *suprastate*, mirrored by what is often called a Romanian inability for decision-making. The idea of the impossibility for Romanians to make their own decisions and determine their own fate has, in fact, become a national cliché as of late. What many call the tragedy of the Romanian people in the twentieth century has more often than not been used either as a scapegoat or as a political tool.<sup>2</sup> Without a doubt, the need for legitimization within a specific foreign political context has been crucial for Romanian governments. However, it is false to assume that external factors (League of Nations, Nazi Germany, Soviet Union or the European Community) have managed to *dictate* or have a decisive role when it comes to the framing of the minority policies in Romania.

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<sup>1</sup> E.M. Cioran, "Petite Théorie du Destin" (from *La Tentation d'Exister*), *Oeuvres*, p. 850. The French original reads: "Il y a des pays qui jouissent d'une espèce de bénédiction, de grâce: tout leur réussit, même leurs malheurs, même leurs catastrophes; il y en a d'autres qui ne peuvent aboutir, et dont les triomphes équivalent à des échecs. Quand ils veulent s'affirmer, et qu'ils font un bond en avant, une fatalité extérieure intervient pour briser leur ressort et pour les ramener à leur point de départ."

<sup>2</sup> Traian Basescu has been reelected as president in 2008, despite the poor economic and social performance. The campaign discourse often related to the relationship between the Social Democrats and Communists, as a large number of the old guard of the party was made of reformed communists. Opposition media often criticized Basescu for using elements of the past in his discourse and thus, taking away the focus from the precarious state of Romania in 2008. His re-election finally led to controversial comments, particularly from popular media figures (e.g. Mircea Badea), about the ability of the Romanian electorate to separate from its past and focus on the future.

The legitimate impetus for policies vis-à-vis ethnic minorities has come from within the state, whereas the external factor has been mostly reactionary to the historical context. Hence, this study will emphasize a series of internal elements that have had a fundamental role in the drafting of minority policies, shadowing the potential external pressure between 1918 and 2007. For example, during the interwar period minority policies were a large part of the nation-building strategies, whereas political interests of the state leaders were crucial for the period between 1938 and 1989. Romania went through a long period of authoritarianism that started with King Carol II, continued with Marshal Ion Antonescu, followed by a communist period which reached its epitome during Nicolae Ceausescu's rule. Throughout these periods the minority policies were consequences of power centralization, but socio-economic benefits played an important part as well. In the post-1989 era there is a clear attention given to domestic legitimization<sup>3</sup> particularly in the period between 1990 and 1995. However, international legitimization<sup>4</sup> that would lead for internal development became an important incentive for state reforms, which included a series of policies that targeted minorities.

There has been much research on causes and effects of minority politics in Romania in the twentieth century. Unsurprisingly, the heavy focus has been on the post-1918 Unification, the starting point of this thesis, when the Old Kingdom made of Moldova and Wallachia, unified with Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia, ultimately gaining a large number of minorities. The arguments concerning the existence of direct pressure exercised by the League of Nations are scarce, largely due to its failure of implementing the Minority Treaties or the Wilsonian principle of "self-determination." There is also a tendency to

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<sup>3</sup> I define "domestic legitimization" the vote of trust given by the population of the country.

<sup>4</sup> I define "international legitimization" the international recognition of the main powers in a specific time frame.

dismiss the process of assimilation that the Romanian governments imposed during the interwar period. This can be largely seen in reports of human rights organizations, which mention the fact that Romanian governments *ignored* the ethnic minorities. However, historian Irina Livezeanu, for example, in her book *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania* offers a particularly insightful perspective on the process of cultural assimilation during this period. Furthermore, Maria Bucur in *Eugenists and Modernization in Interwar Period* draws on the racial politics that emerged at the end of the 1930s, an element of important influence on the relationship between state and minorities.

Nevertheless, it seems that scholars have been more interested in the authoritarian regimes of Romania. Even so, the historiography on King Carol II has been relatively weak. Therefore, my analysis is largely centered on his published daily notes, which demonstrate an acute interest in centralization of power in the style of Hitler or Mussolini. However, his successor, Marshal Ion Antonescu, has been the object of intense analysis. Nonetheless, in his case, the politics behind historiography played an important role in the building of the “Antonescu controversy.” During the communist period, Romanian historiography on the Holocaust was extremely weak, leading post-communist analysts to conclude that this was a period of rehabilitation of Antonescu’s image. In fact, the bulk of the analyses concerning Antonescu came after 1989, particularly after 1995. This was largely due to the fact that up until 1995 there was a sense of approval of Antonescu as a great patriot who was forced to preserve national unity and integrity. Historians Jean Ancel and Dennis Deletant offer a more objective perspective on Antonescu’s rule. Their interpretations differ however: Ancel in his study *Antonescu and the Jews* emphasizes the internal impetuses for minority policies versus Hitler’s pressure, whereas Deletant in *Hitler’s Forgotten Ally* focuses more on the

relationship between Hitler and Antonescu as an element of influence in the shaping of these policies. The debates centered on Antonescu's political figure beg for analyses of primary sources. Hence, in this study I will attempt to shed light on the real impetuses behind his minority policies by using monographs, letters, stenograms and reform points.

The fascist period however has not been analyzed to the extent of the communist period. Social anthropologist Katherine Verdery in her study *National Ideology under Socialism* particularly emphasizes one of the central points of this thesis: the emergence of nationalist communism, which strongly influenced the minority policies of the time. In fact, it seems that the majority of analyses when it comes to minority issues during the communist period seem to come from foreign scholars. In the case of the Magyar population for example, there have been extensive studies carried by Hungarian scholars, such as Ferenc Glatz or Laszlo Antal. While their studies could make a case for an underlying interest in the Hungarian Diaspora, these analyses have a high degree of objectivity.

The last chapter of this thesis focuses on the relevance of the more imposing external factors in the relationship between government and ethnic minorities. With the emergence of the importance of the European Union, there have been a number of enthusiasts such as Martin Brusis or Laurence Whitehead who largely emphasized the crucial and singular role of this international organization. However, the degree of pressure of the EU in the case of the minority politics in Romania is greatly debatable, as seen in a series of analyses from political scientists such as Judith Kelley or Peter Vermeersch. Other scholars, such as Milada Anna Vachudova attempt to find explanations that touch on the continuous dynamics between policies in Eastern European states in general and the EU.

Considering the large differentiation in analyses, it is my belief that there needs to be

a study of recurrent points for policies vis-à-vis ethnic minorities. The aim of this study is to uncover *common patterns in minority policies* throughout the twentieth century. This is a peculiar and often ignored aspect of the Romanian history, considering that since 1918 until the EU accession in 2007 Romania went from a liberal monarchy to a royal dictatorship to a fascist state, continuing with a communist regime and finally reaching the status of democracy. By separating these phases in chronological order, I am creating a general image of specific minority policies in Romania and their main causes.

Internal factors created the major impetuses in the drafting and implementation of these policies. This analysis dismisses the belief that twentieth century external pressure has been fundamental in this case. In fact, it seems that the policy drafting of Romanian governments could largely be described as simply *reactionary* to the historical context. In essence, external factors influenced minority policies in Romania, but did *not* pressure and thus, did not have a decisive role. By ultimately defining external pressure as exertion of direct constraints or forceful impositions of various treaties and criteria, I finally argue that when it comes to its minorities, Romania was, in fact, able to determine its own fate.

## Chapter 1

### The Interwar Period and Politics of *Romanianization*: 1918-1938

Ever since the 1848 European Revolution, Romanians created an ideal of a unitary and ethnically homogeneous nation. At the end of the nineteenth century, Romania defined itself in ethnic terms. In fact, the ethnic conceptualization grew in popularity. It was believed that after World War I, and the ultimate fall of Empires, the dream of homogeneity and assimilation of non-Romanians would be made real. Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia were the three main provinces that unified with the Old Kingdom, and Greater Romania became larger and far more diverse. How would the ideal nation come to fruition in a context where there was so much political, social, and cultural separation between Romanians and non-Romanians? The initial attempt to reconcile ethnic differences in Eastern Europe came externally, with the formation of the League of Nations and the imposition of the Minority Treaties. However, in essence, while the League of Nations managed to determine the framework under which minority policies were created, their fundamental nature came from the internal needs of Romanian nation- building. The interwar process of Romanianization also argues against the contemporary idea that Romania ignored its minorities during the interwar period.<sup>5</sup> This chapter seeks to analyze the basis of the Romanian Government's national minority policies and the effect of these policies upon the national minorities during the interwar period. In the first part of the analysis, I will focus on the international factors and the importance of their role in the policy structures. In the second part, I will analyze the internal factors and pressures that determined the creation of a series of policies heavily

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<sup>5</sup> This idea is often emphasized by civil society organizations that focus on minority rights, such as Minority Rights Group International.



based on the minority-majority relationship notably Romanian citizenship policies, educational and cultural policies. The third part of this chapter will focus on the Jewish population and policies that were heavily influenced by the radical anti-Semitic trend pushed by the newly formed extremist right wing.

### **1.1. Post World War I Status and the League of Nations**

After World War I Romania emerged as a multiethnic state patched together from pieces of very different European empires. The concept of Greater Romania had originated among the members of the National Liberal Party, most of them being products of the 1848 Revolutions against Turkish, Greek and Russian domination in Moldavia and Wallachia.<sup>6</sup> After the Wars of Independence in 1877-1878, the outcome of the Congress of Berlin and the post-war treaties spurred even more vehemence among the Romanian elite against foreign domination. On 13 July 1878<sup>7</sup> Romania's independence was recognized, but two conditions were set: elimination of all religious restrictions on the exercise of civil and political rights contained in Article 7 of the Constitution of 1866, and acceptance of the return of Southern Bessarabia to Russia.<sup>8</sup> Romania was supposed to receive the Danube Delta, Serpent Island, Dobrogea (Dobrudja) and South Mangalia. Despite officially receiving independence, the Liberals in power<sup>9</sup> believed that it was necessary to have a full unification, which would have

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<sup>6</sup> Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: regionalism, nation-building, and ethnic struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Romania (Moldavia and Wallachia) managed to gain independence after a war against the Ottoman Empire, although they, in essence, secured de facto independent in 1859.

<sup>8</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Romania: 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 50.

<sup>9</sup> The National Liberal Party was in power in the second half of the nineteenth century up until the 1930s. This is the period I will emphasize in the chapter.

included Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia.<sup>10</sup> Even more so, the role of international factors was put under question: how interested were the foreign powers in helping countries in Eastern Europe develop? In fact, the question arose, once again, after World War I.

The implications and reasons behind the involvement of the international community played a crucial role in how they influenced the process of nation building in post-World War I Romania. An important moment was the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, where Ion Brătianu, the Liberal Prime Minister of the time, was received with great hostility from the Western Allies. The Big Four found it necessary to punish Romania for the 1918 capitulation to the Great Powers by not receiving Brătianu as an equal at the negotiation table. Perhaps the most difficult aspect, however, was the fact that they excluded Romanian representatives from two commissions: those dealing with territorial boundaries and minorities.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, Brătianu was fully committed to the idea of Greater Romania, and appeared in front of the Supreme Council, pleading for acceptance of unification. Despite this initial disdain from the Great Powers towards the idea of unification, the mobilized population managed to push forward the creation of Greater Romania. On 1 December 1918, Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia united with the Old Kingdom at the expense of now revolutionary Russia and of defeated Austria-Hungary. The national expansion had serious implications both geographically and demographically, as Romania more than doubled its territory and population after World War I.<sup>12</sup> They added 156,000 square kilometers (in 1919 Romania had 269,000 square kilometers in total) and 8.5 million inhabitants (in 1919, the

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<sup>10</sup>Stephen Fischer-Galati, "Romanian Nationalism" in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Peter Sugar and Ivo Lederer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 389.

<sup>11</sup> Hitchens, 282.

<sup>12</sup> Livezeanu, 8.

population stood at 16,250,000 inhabitants) to the pre-war Old Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> However, while the gains in territory, population and economic capacity were welcome in a country that had suffered a lot of human and economic losses during the war, the acquisition of a substantial number of minorities became an obstacle in the process of creating the long-desired homogeneous Greater Romania. In the interwar period, the most important minorities were the Magyars, Jews, Ukrainians and Germans:

	Number	Percentage of total
Romanians	12,981,324	71.9
Hungarians	1,425,507	7.9
Germans	745,421	4.1
Jews	728,115	4.0
Ukrainians	594,571	3.3
Russians	409,150	2.3
Bulgarians	366,384	2.0
Roma	262,501	1.5
Others	544,055	3.0

*Table: The population of Greater Romania, by ethnicity, 1930<sup>14</sup>*

With a country as ethnically diverse as Romania, a balanced source of decision-making was imperative. It was thus expected that the several treaties concluded after World War I would have an important influence on the protection of minorities, which were placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations.

The League of Nations defined minorities as “groups of persons who differ in race, religion or language from the majority of the inhabitants of the country.”<sup>15</sup> The principle that

<sup>13</sup> Hitchins, 290.

<sup>14</sup> “Institutul central de statistica,” *Anuarul statistic al Romaniei 1937 si 1938*, 58-61. Taken from Livezeanu, 10.

underlay the minority issues at the Paris Peace Conference was Woodrow Wilson's idea of self-determination, which gave birth to the independent states of Eastern Europe. However, Romanian policy-makers had to deal with the challenge of reforms that would function for everybody. In Bukovina, the majority of the population was of Ukrainian descent, whereas Russians and Russified Romanians were largely represented in Bessarabia. In Transylvania, the minorities, particularly Hungarians and Germans, were separated from their nations as a result of political settlements, designed to counter German and Hungarian claims. Hungary suffered the most.<sup>16</sup> The Treaty of Trianon of 1920<sup>17</sup> was extremely painful: Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory and approximately 60 percent of its population. Most of the Hungarian population in Romania was based in Transylvania, the largest and most diverse province in the newly formed country.<sup>18</sup> While tagged as national minorities, they were entitled to have separate ethnic identities through guarantees of linguistic, cultural and religious rights. But the shift from ruling nation status to national minority was difficult for Hungarians. The subsequent policies brought a systemized differentiation in terms of political, social and economic systems. The Treaty of Trianon and the negative public response of the Hungarians played an important role in the bilateral relationship between Romania and Hungary. The instability in foreign affairs between losers and winners however was just one part of the failure of the League of Nations and its direct impact on Romanian minority policies.

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<sup>15</sup> Helmer Rosting, "Protection of Minorities by the League of Nations," *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 17, No.4 (Oct., 1923), 641.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas D. Musgrave, *Self-determination and national minorities* (Oxford: Clarendon press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 37-38.

<sup>17</sup> "Treaty of Peace Between The Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary And Protocol and Declaration, Signed at Trianon June 4, 1920," *The American Journal of International Law* 15, No. 1 (January 1921), 1-4.

<sup>18</sup> Sharon L. Wolchik and Jane L. Curry, eds. *Central and East European Politics: From Communism to Democracy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 9.

The initial methods of the League of Nations in operating with the minority protection were extremely vague, if not non-existent. This can be clearly seen in the 1919 Treaty of Minorities.<sup>19</sup> The treaty itself emphasizes a series of state policies that needed to be implemented, including citizenship, educational and cultural policies, all leading to levels of autonomy for the new ethnic minorities.<sup>20</sup> The Committee on New States was the institution that was designed to ensure the good functioning of the new system on minorities. It was assumed at the time that this system would ensure impartiality due to its juridical profile.<sup>21</sup> However, the only role the League of Nations had in policing the treaty was as a potential mediator and conflict resolving party. In essence, minority issues were not a matter of international scrutiny, leaving a lot of freedom to the successor states. International monitoring was surprisingly weak. Thus, the influence of the League was extremely limited in the upcoming state policies concerning minorities.<sup>22</sup> Considering that Romania was a non-communist and pro-status quo state, the attitude of the international community proves its unwillingness to get fully involved in the Romanian domestic turmoil. Besides the general requirements, the local governments determined the policies. The internal need to create a strong nation is what triggered Romania's particular minority policies during the interwar period. The League of Nations and the other Western democracies were not as involved as expected, the local government being forced to push for reformist policies that would clarify the minority status at political and social levels.

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<sup>19</sup> "Minoritățile Naționale din România. 1918-1925," *Documente*, 174-178.

<sup>20</sup> Seen in Article 4,9,10,11 in the Minority Treaty of December 9, 1919

<sup>21</sup> *La société des Nations et de la protection des minorités de race de langue et de religion* (Geneve :Société des Nations, 1927), 10.

<sup>22</sup> Jennifer Jackson Preece, *National Minorities and the European Nation-States System* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 90-91.

## 1.2. Citizenship

Since external involvement was scarce, the minorities' solution had to come internally. This pushed the political institutions and elites to create a framework for assimilation, based on the notion of Romanianization. First, they needed to clarify the concept of citizenship and what it actually meant within the Romanian legislature; secondly, there was a need for a bottom-up approach, focusing on education and training as ways to engineer the idea of Romanianness.

The main features of Romanian citizenship in the interwar period were chiefly determined by the idea of national identity. It is by policies of citizenship that ethno-national structures could have been defined more clearly. In this context, it was assumed that clarification of citizenship would imply social stability.

World War I determined a radical liberalization of access to Romanian citizenship.<sup>23</sup> The first important law, "The Law on Acquiring and Losing Romanian Citizenship," was established on 23 February 1924.<sup>24</sup> It was perhaps the most important domestic regulation of what Romanian citizenship meant. It was supposedly decided based on descent (*jus sanguinis*), by marriage or by naturalization. Additionally, the law also granted citizenship to all the inhabitants of Bukovina, Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, Maramureș and Bessarabia.<sup>25</sup> This brought forward an extension of *jus sanguinis*, dismantling the narrowness of laws of citizenship that existed in the Old Kingdom. This particular aspect received a peculiar connotation, especially when compared to the Citizenship Law of 1913

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<sup>23</sup> Constantin Iordachi, "Citizenship and National Identity in Romania. A Historical Overview." *Regio Yearbook* (2003) , 17.

<sup>24</sup> In Romanian: Legea privitoare la dobândirea și pierderea naționalității române; Art. 17-20, Capitolul 2, *Codul Civil al României din 27/07/1993, Versiune Actualizată la data de 02/05/2001* [Civil Code of Romania from 27 July 1993. Updated on 2 May 2001.]

<sup>25</sup> "Constituția din 1923," *Monitorul Oficial* (29 March 1923) [Constitution from 1923]

in Germany, descent being the only way one could acquire German citizenship. The law was in fact yet another step towards the emancipation of non-citizens in Romania, the citizenship being transformed into a “multi-ethnic and multi-confessional community.”<sup>26</sup> When compared to the Romanian Constitution of 1866, which declared that only foreigners of the Christian rite may attain the status of Romanians,<sup>27</sup> it seems that the socio-political upheaval of World War I stirred a liberalization of access to Romanian state citizenship.

### **1.3. Cultural Nationalism**

In order to clarify the problems of nationalism and the concept of nation building in the newly formed Greater Romania, educational and cultural policies became central factors, the government choosing a bottom-up approach. These educational policies were products of a Westernized vision, emphasizing the development within. In essence, as Irina Livezeanu points out, the nation-building concept became a problem of the aspirations of the Romanians themselves.<sup>28</sup> Even more so, the particular national cultural struggles that came with the unification determined an imperative internal, independently developed social solution. Consequently, during the post-war period, government stimulated school reforms that could work towards the creation of a viable national policy. Constantin Angelescu, Liberal Minister of Education in 1919, 1922-1927, and 1933-1937, worked under a National Liberal platform of cultural emphasis. This platform implied the development of an educational network, but most importantly, the unification of four different systems and traditions in the formerly distinct regions. In this context, the Liberal government imposed a policy of education, which

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<sup>26</sup> Iordachi, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Karen Barkey, “Negotiated Paths to Nationhood: a Comparison of Hungary and Romania in the Early Twentieth Century,” *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 14 (2000), 507.

<sup>28</sup> Livezeanu, 25.

was a policy Romanianization that led to critical changes in the lives of national minorities in Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia.

Angelescu, whose discourse was continuously focused on “spiritual unification of all citizens,”<sup>29</sup> promoted reforms in 1924, 1925, and 1928. The primary school reform of 1924 lengthened primary education to seven grades, elementary education became mandatory, and created a number of courses for adult illiterates.<sup>30</sup> The 1928 secondary education bill reduced secondary school from eight to seven grades, created a one-track type of high school and limited numbers in both gymnasium and high school. It was the reform of 1925 however, that directly concerned the minorities and private schooling in languages other than Romanian.<sup>31</sup> For example, schools in which the majority of population was Jewish, the languages used were to be both Romanian and Hebrew.<sup>32</sup> The structure of the educational policies had a unifying goal: creation of a Romanian national consciousness. The policies of centralization however provoked the disgruntlement of many national minorities in all three provinces: Bukovina, Bessarabia and Transylvania.

### 1.3.1. Bukovina

Of the three provinces newly incorporated by Romania in 1918, Bukovina was the least ethnically Romanian. In 1910, the Ukrainians formed the largest group in Bukovina, with 38.4 percent of the population. Ethnic Romanians came second with 34.4 percent, followed

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<sup>29</sup> Livezeanu, 35.

<sup>30</sup>“Ministerul Instrucțiunii.” Taken from Livezeanu, 44.

<sup>31</sup> “Draft of Act Concerning Private Teaching,” *Board of Education* (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Romaneasca, 1927)

<sup>32</sup> “Monitorul Oficial nr. 283 din 22 decembrie 1925,” *Colecția Hamangiu, Codul general al României, legi și regulamente*, Vol. 9-13 (Bucharest, 1926), 582-587.[Hamangiu Collection. General Code of Romania, laws and regulation]



by Jews and German with 12 and 9.3 percent, respectively.<sup>33</sup> In this context, Romanian schools advanced at the expense of other minorities, particularly at the expense of Ukrainians. The educational and cultural policies were aggressively created and used in the direction of Romanianization. This meant an increase in the number of Romanian schools and a decrease of other schools where the language and the student population was largely Ukrainian, German or Polish.<sup>34</sup> As much as Ukrainians protested, their demands of a return to the Ukrainian system of schooling, including use of language, were extensively ignored. Romania reinterpreted, however, the Minority Protection Treaty, by claiming that the Ukrainians were Ruthenized Romanians who needed to be brought back to the original identity.

The experience of Bukovina proves that the post-War Minority Treaties almost had no value when it came to their implementation in the Romanian political culture. Political institutions used a discourse centered on the inability of the international factors to comprehend the domestic context, including who was Romanian and who was not. It can be argued that, they took advantage of the international community's ignorance of Romanian domestic issues and its inhabitants. It would have been difficult to predict how ethnic minorities would have reacted to the unification, even if the Minority Treaties and the platform of the League of Nations had functioned. However, the aggressive Romanian campaign left Bukovina in a civil collapse. This was even more determined by socio-political repression: the gerrymandering of administrative districts and the prohibition of the use of Ukrainian in local government, courts and commerce. The aggressive cultural policies also determined the transfer of teachers from Bukovina to the Old Kingdom. The groups that were

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<sup>33</sup> Livezeanu, 49.

<sup>34</sup> German and Polish populations were not directly targeted because their number was significantly lower than that of the Ukrainians.

supposed to be transferred were mainly Ruthenian teachers who were against these strategies of nation building.<sup>35</sup>

### **1.3.2. Bessarabia**

Bessarabia had been separated for 106 years under Russian rule, before it unified with Romania in 1918. Throughout this time, ethnic and linguistic aspects became inherently different than the Romanian ones. The long processes of Russification after Moldavia's partition in 1812 had been far too invasive, and this became a factor of concern for Romanian authorities. Bessarabia was, in fact, not as connected with the Old Kingdom as Bukovina or Transylvania was. Russian was often considered the proper culture and language, and Romanian was simply disregarded even by the Moldavian elites. Thus, the propaganda and policies that determined the cultural assimilation were extremely difficult to implement.

The school system did not suffer immense transformations, mostly because the Romanian government knew that administrative changes could not have been implemented too suddenly. There was an intrinsic need to get closer to Moldavians through other methods. Thus, the initial policies were designed in order to tackle the language issue: teachers learned the Latin alphabet, studied Romanian grammar, and Romanian history and literature became important subjects that they had to master. The Bessarabian peculiarity, however, was that, unlike Bukovina, the cultural life was mostly designed by activities outside school. In this context, the Department of Extracurricular Activity published and distributed books, pamphlets, calendars, periodicals, pictures, or maps that were designed to support the

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<sup>35</sup> Livezeanu, 74.

campaign of Romanianization.<sup>36</sup> These changes managed to be implemented also due to the initial tolerance of the Moldavians, who did not dismiss the Romanian presence.

However, in almost twenty years of imposed Romanian domination, there had been no crucial changes in schools, Russian remaining the main influence in the educational spectrum. This can be easily interpreted as a failure of the extensive campaign of Romanianization due to the Bessarabians' natural sense of belonging. Even though they did not respond aggressively to the campaigns, they simply did not see themselves culturally speaking as part of Greater Romania. Despite these circumstances, Romanians tried to change this unique cultural autonomy and impose assimilation in an extremely short period of time.<sup>37</sup> In this case, it is difficult to imagine how the implemented cultural policies could have changed in only twenty years certain ways of life and self-definition that had developed over a hundred years.

### **1.3.3. Transylvania**

Transylvania was the largest province to join Romania in 1918. Largely under Austro-Hungarian influence, it had often been subjected to a process of Magyarization in the nineteenth century. Unlike Bessarabians, Transylvanian Romanians had a deep sense of belonging to Romania, which led to clashes with the other ethnic minorities: Magyars, Germans, and Jews. Even today, both Romanians and Hungarians often debate the provisions of the Trianon Treaty. The former believe in its justice, whereas the latter contest its legitimacy.

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<sup>36</sup> Livezeanu, 103.

<sup>37</sup> The loss of Bessarabia will be discussed in the second chapter.

The unification of the educational system was, once again, the main aim. Generally, there was a consensus that the intense Magyar influence required an immediate form of Romanianization. The Romanian state took over the entire primary education system of Hungarian state. In Hungarian districts, the language of instruction in these schools was Hungarian, but they fully became Romanian schools. The state put a lot of pressure especially on confessional schools. This was a process of encroachment, as Romanian was supposed to be taught as a subject. It pressured students into attending schools and prevented persons of Romanian origin, who had been Magyarized before World War I and had lost their mother tongue, from attending Hungarian schools.<sup>38</sup> The Directing Council's Public Education and Religion Department also created new schools. In this context, it organized training courses for minority teachers in order to immerse them in Romanian history, geography and language. The Directing Council signed the first decree on 24 January 1919. It established Romanian as the official language. However, the minority interests were not completely excluded. In state primary schools the language of instruction would be that of the majority of the population in a community. In essence, the Romanian state took over the primary education system of the Hungarian state. In Hungarian districts, in secondary school they would use the language of the majority of population of the county. On the other hand, higher education would be subjected to teaching in the language of the majority population in the whole Transylvanian region.<sup>39</sup>

The minorities in Transylvania, particularly the Magyars, received the educational nationalism policy with suspicion. They had been greatly overrepresented in public secondary and higher education, which now became substantially Romanian. In a

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<sup>38</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 72-73.

<sup>39</sup> Livezeanu, 156-157.

geopolitical sense, they simply refused to accept the fact that they lost a big part of their territory, and immediately after the unification they were still hoping for a diplomatic resolution. In fact, the Hungarian language continued to be heavily present in many towns. But since education was under a strong reformist policy, Hungarian churches and confessional schools became places of autonomy, which heightened their already pervasive ethnic nationalism.<sup>40</sup> Fundamentally, education policies and Romanianization complemented one another.

#### **1.4. The Jews of Greater Romania**

Even before World War I, the Romanian approach to the Jews had had a peculiar trajectory. Romania wanted to maintain a strong political and economic relationship with the West, who pressed for civil rights for Romania's Jews. The Congress of Berlin in July 1878 emphasized, thus, both the independence of Romania, but also Jewish emancipation. However, Romanian authorities refused to agree with the dictate of the Congress and announced that "there were not, and that there never have been, any Romanian Jews; there were merely Jews who had been born in the Principality, but who had never been assimilated, either in speech or in custom, by the Romanian nation."<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, economic dependence played a crucial role in the subsequent developments: the need for Western support led to a compromise. Jews had the possibility of becoming naturalized citizens of Romania, but only individually, based on the qualities of each applicant.<sup>42</sup> From then on, the Jewish population was subjected to a process of social integration, based entirely

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<sup>40</sup> Livezeanu, 177.

<sup>41</sup> Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichroeder, and the Building of the German Empire* (New York, 1977), 385.

<sup>42</sup> Emil Dorian, *The Quality of Witness: A Romanian Diary, 1937-1944* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982), XXV.

on an economic process of *embourgeoisement*. Consequently, a good part of Jews found success in areas such as commerce, industry, medicine, and journalism. In this context, a considerable portion of the Jewish population adopted language and culture of the Romanian middle class of the urban areas.<sup>43</sup> As a result, it can be argued that anti-Semitism and ethnic nationalism were exacerbated by feelings of insecurity among the elite who believed that they were losing control over their own society and institutions.

In the post World War I era, the status of Romania changed dramatically both geographically and ethnically speaking. The Western powers put pressure once again on Romanian officials to grant civil rights to its Jews. Once more, Romanians regarded this as an unfair attitude towards their internal issues. However, on 22 May 1919, the Romanian government promulgated a law granting citizenship to all Jews born in the country, those who held no other citizenship, and those who had served in the army at the front, as well as their families.<sup>44</sup> On the surface, the international leverage determined the policies surrounding the citizenship of the Jewish population. Nevertheless, I argue that the new geographical and ethnic profile led to the necessity of a cohesive population, culturally and linguistically speaking. Therefore, nationalistic aims played a more crucial role in the upgrading of the Jewish population immediately after the Unification of 1918.

The policies around Jews were developed within a context of a poor, agricultural economy, where the process of industrialization had just begun. Furthermore, the conflict between Conservatives and Liberals also had an influence on perceptions and policies concerning Jews. The Liberals, who were in power in the pre-war period, because of their opposition to the Conservatives and their distaste for foreigners, developed a platform mainly

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<sup>43</sup> Dorian, XXVI.

<sup>44</sup> Dorian, XXVII.

focused on the peasantry, heavily ignoring the middle class, including Jews. Finally, the focus on the realm of development in internal affairs and Romanianism took its toll on the Jewish population. If the other minorities became the governmental focus, the Jews became the pariah of the society, the group that did not qualify under the concept of the ideal Romania. Even more so, despite the existence of a Jewish Party during the 1930s, full incorporation of Jews into the political body was never discussed since it was never an option in the minds of Romanian politicians and intellectuals.<sup>45</sup>

Livezeanu points out that the Jews were the “minority most defended by the Western governments and international institutions, and the most urban and most overrepresented minority on Romanian university rolls.”<sup>46</sup> The new cultural policies subjected the Jewish minority to a series of changes that disrupted the social dynamics. If the Jews had had free access to all Austrian schools in Bukovina, they were ghettoized into Jewish schools that were in turn being subjected to the process of Romanization. By the mid-1920s, the Jewish community in Cernăuți<sup>47</sup> was already angry about anti-Semitic measures based on discrimination in education. In essence, Jewish primary and secondary school administrators were being fired or simply underemployed. Moreover, the state did not sustain normal financial support for the reconstruction of Jewish schools and other public buildings. In this context, the Jewish parents had to pay for the construction of Jewish schools, but the Jewish community did not receive its fair share of taxes for rebuilding prayer houses damaged during the war. This basically signaled the end of a period in which, in theory, on a strictly legal level, Jews had enjoyed both equal rights and social privileges.<sup>48</sup> In 1924, the citizenship

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<sup>45</sup> Barkey, 509-510.

<sup>46</sup> Livezeanu, 13.

<sup>47</sup> Cernăuți was the capital of Bukovina.

<sup>48</sup> Livezeanu, 73.

of the “new”<sup>49</sup> Jews was limited by the Romanian parliament, whereas in January 1938, forty percent of the Romanian Jews were deprived of the naturalization right. Writer Emil

Dorian<sup>50</sup> wrote in his diary in 1938:

Of all the steps taken against Jews, none seems to me more insulting and underhanded than the latest decree: to reevaluate their right to citizenship. I never expected persecution to take this form. If the Jews had any courage and dignity left, not a single one would go through with it. Citizenship was granted once and for all. It is an historic act meant for all eternity. How can one conceive such an inept thing as a reevaluation of this law, which created for the Jews moral, political, and socioeconomic realities? (...) What value can be attached to citizenship when it can be withdrawn at any minister’s whim? What guarantee is there that other governments will not imitate this shameful action?<sup>51</sup>

Despite the controversy around xenophobia and anti-Semitism, the initial anti-Jewish measures were far more directed at the assimilation of the other minorities, and to the development of the process of Romanianization. It was the nation-building governmental ideology that lay at the core of the minority treatment. In Bukovina, for example, as Jews played an important role in the elite within the Austrian system, the subsequent unseating of the Jewish population was a symbol of Romanian achievements. It was also a way to involve the other minorities in the elite layer of the society, by giving them new jobs and status previously held by the Jewish population. Anti-Semitism was “in one sense a by-product of Romania’s efforts to assert its interests. It created and supported extreme forms of nationalism, which translated in great tensions both locally and nationally.”<sup>52</sup>

One of the movements that had serious social and political implications was the student movement. Post-war Romania met a dual role of nationalism: on one hand it facilitated the basis of nation-building policies, but on the other hand it facilitated the

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<sup>49</sup> The “new” Jews are the Jews who lived in the newly received territories: Transylvania, Bukovina, Bessarabia.

<sup>50</sup> Emil Dorian was a physician and writer, secretary general, Jewish Community of Bucharest, following World War II; director, Documentary Archives of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania, following World War II.

<sup>51</sup> Dorian, 15-16.

<sup>52</sup> Livezeanu, 78.



emergence of extreme nationalistic social and political groups, such as the Generation 1922 and the Legion of the Archangel Michael or the Iron Guard, with the former being determined by the nationalist student movement. The students often condemned the National Liberal Party for complying with the demands of Minority Treaties by creating the 1923 Constitution. However, this nationalistic group became so radical that even the League of National Christian Defense, a rather conservative party, was not able to cover their demands. Consequently, the conservative wing gained an extremist party, the League of Archangel Michael, led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Fascist ideology became an answer to a period of crisis and ethnic clashes.

Theoretically, Codreanu's ideology was heavily based on the European-wide belief that Jews were connected to Bolshevism. At the same time, the Legion was unusual for Fascism, as it was a religious movement that considered Orthodoxy a way towards validation of beliefs. Its ideology was focused on the creation of the new man, who was to embody Orthodoxy at a moral level.<sup>53</sup> The Legionnaires who died in the Spanish Civil War were generally seen as saints. Thus, Jews were seen as the ultimate evil on an ethnic or religious basis, a foreign corruption poisoning Romania. They were the Antichrist and the future of the nation was defined as a battle against the Bolshevik-Judaic alliance.<sup>54</sup> Scholars such as S.G. Payne have considered Romanian fascist parties as vehemently anti-Semitic as the Germany Nazi Party.<sup>55</sup> It is no mean feat, considering that the Iron Guard, led by Codreanu, in the December 1937 national elections obtained sixteen percent of the popular vote, making it the third strongest party. On the 28 December 1937, an anti-Semitic government was appointed

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<sup>53</sup> James Frusetta and Anca Glonț, "Interwar fascism and the post-1989 radical right: Ideology, opportunism and historical legacy in Bulgaria and Romania," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 42 (December 2009), 555.

<sup>54</sup> Frusetta, 556.

<sup>55</sup> Seen in S.G. Payne, *A History of Fascism* (Madison:1995)

to lead Romania. In one of its first acts, the new government undermined the Jewish minority residing in Romania by banning Jewish newspapers, Jewish public servants, cutting off state aid to Jewish institutions, and invalidating Jewish citizenship documents issued after the start of the World War I. Later on, by King Carol II' s decree,<sup>56</sup> approximately 225,000 Jews or approximately 36 per cent of Romania's Jewish population lost their citizenship.<sup>57</sup>

Policies of eugenics also played an important role in defining the state policies towards minorities in the interwar period, specifically towards Jews, heavily connecting Romania of the second half of the 1930s to Nazi Germany. Eugenists based their policy proposals on discourses of cohesion and homogeneity, on the creation of the "new man" Codreanu was aiming for. In this sense, non-Romanians formed the largest group that became a focus of exclusion from the healthy nation. Several eugenists also focused on defining Romanianness in biological and anthropological terms. Two of the most prominent "scientists" were Sabin Manuilă and Iordache Făcăoaru.<sup>58</sup> In an article published in 1938, Făcăoaru depicted Jews as "dead weight... a mortal danger for the nation." He was specifically aiming towards complete exclusion from society by controlling marriages and by sterilization of the "unwanted population."<sup>59</sup> Sabin Manuilă on the other hand believed that by nature of their cultural and social traditions, Jews had already segregated themselves; hence, they did not pose such a great threat to the Romanian population. In Manuilă's view, the Jewish danger was economic rather than racial. Thus, he believed in the exploitation of these resources for the greater needs of the Romanian state, a measure implemented by the

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<sup>56</sup> This will be extensively discussed in the second chapter.

<sup>57</sup> Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)

<sup>58</sup> Maria Bucur, *Eugenists and Modernization in Interwar Period* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 145.

<sup>59</sup> Bucur, 146.

Antonescu regime after 1940. His discourse was largely based on Nazi ideology, identifying the source of corruption and degeneracy not within the system, but rather in the shape of these “impostors,” who were intoxicating the elite, and the state as a whole.<sup>60</sup>

Fundamentally, the Jews became a growing “problem” for Greater Romania. It seemed that in the second half of the 1930s the Jewish population became the main obstacle for the goals for extreme nationalists. For this reason nationalism played a crucial role vis-à-vis the policies that targeted the Jewish; hence, anti-Semitism and policies surrounding it became elements of social fracture.

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After the First World War, Romania found itself in a peculiar position: the long awaited unification had happened, but the social, economic and political difficulties seemed to overshadow the national enthusiasm. The problems of the minorities in Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia had to be fixed in order for the newly formed country to have a legitimate sense of identity. The Western pressures, created largely under the form of the League of Nations, played a rather weak role in the policy-making process. Despite a series of Minority Treaties, Romanians turned to their own polity and interests, determining the creation of concepts such as Romanianness and Romanianization. In this context, there was a need to clarify what citizenship was and how Romanians and non-Romanians were defined within the new Romanian borders. By opening citizenship to a large percentage of the population, Romanians were re-defining their identity. In this sense, the government took an assimilative approach towards Romanianization, largely focusing on ethno-cultural and

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<sup>60</sup> Bucur, 147.

educational policies, which led to a re-education of students from Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia. However, if Hungarians, Germans, Ukrainians or Russians had largely been under a process of assimilation, the Jews were victims of social segregations.

The status of the Jews within the society and the response of the Romanian population had been debatable ever since the second half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the attempts to define Romanian identity put great pressure on the Jews, who were largely seen as corrupting factors of society. In this context, it was the Romanian extremist nationalism that developed anti-Semitic discourses and policies of eugenics.

Thus, it can be argued that nationalism played a dual role when it comes to the process of nation building in interwar Romania. On one hand, it led to a largely liberal form of integration and even assimilation. On the other hand, it was heavily supporting separation and segregation, as seen in the case of Jews. In essence, while by the end of the 1930s the Nazi vision played an important role in the Romanian policy-making spectrum; it is by the inner-need for security and uncorrupted Romanianness that anti-Semitic policies came to fruition.

## Chapter 2

### Carol II: Between Political Expediency and Nazism: 1938-1940

In the context of an emerging right wing, the status of the monarchy was significantly changing. While Carol II, Ferdinand's nephew, was taking over the power, Codreanu was augmenting the anti-Semitic discourse. But, in fact, most other rightists systematically targeted Jews as the main enemies of Romanians. These rightists saw themselves gravitating towards Carol, who ultimately orchestrated a radical shift to the right in domestic policy and to the pro-German orientation in foreign policy. In the following section, I will be discussing Carol's political expediency as the main engine of the relationship between the state and its minorities.

In standard Romanian history, the era of Carol II is known for its economic development.<sup>61</sup> In comparison to the long Communist period, which receives the bulk of popular disapproval, the Carol era has often been misjudged, especially since 1989, as a comparatively ideal period. However, political extremism and centralization began to take shape, a predicament that Romania struggled with for the next 50 years.

Theoretically, Carol's ideas centered on concepts of what I will call a "quasidictatorship." These ideas came about slowly and they were mostly consequences of his attempts to take Romania closer to Germany and Spain to a certain extent, an idea fully supported by his government. In one of his daily notes, he mentions a dialogue with Constantin Argetoianu, prime-minister during the interwar period:<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> For example, successive Romanian governments used oil to earn as much convertible Western currency as possible. There was a sharp rise in oil exports to Germany in 1935, but it plummeted to the 1929 levels by 1937. Taken from Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-1944* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 26.

<sup>62</sup> Constantin Argetoianu was a Romanian politician and prime-minister in the interwar period.

Argetoianu believes in a tough government, he believes that the dissoluteness so-called democratic is not what the country needs. His solution is that I, personally, take power in hand, some sort of quasidictatorship, with a constitutional change. I was rather impressed by what he said.<sup>63</sup>

His enthusiastic speeches about Hitler, Mussolini or Salazar have forced some assumptions that underlying fascist ideas triggered his policies. Historian Vladimir Solonari, however, argues that he did not like the “revolutionary” dimension of their regimes, but rather the authoritarian style of their government.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, I argue that in Carol’s case, the involvement of the international factors, particularly fascist states and leaders, in the early part of his reign<sup>65</sup> was minimal. The theoretic level of these regimes—authoritarianism, rejuvenation, purity of race—only matched his political personality and self-perception. His reign could easily be described as erratically controlled, focused on the process of centralization and the need to turn himself into the main actor in the decision-making process. This can be clearly seen in the relationship between the Crown and the rest of the Romanian political environment. Purposefully abusing the Constitution, Carol named prime ministers that were mostly flexible and ready to be submissive to his wishes. In fact, there is a belief that Carol could have been easily controlled had his authoritarian tendencies been resisted by Romanian politicians.<sup>66</sup> In fact, this cult of expediency and the impetus to create a great monarchic state from a socio-economic and political standpoint were the elements that determined the policies towards national minorities.

It would be fairly simple to describe Carol’s anti-Semitic politics as being influenced by the Nazis or perhaps forced by the necessity to have an ally. However, the domestic

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<sup>63</sup> Regele Carol al II-lea al României, *Insemnari Zilnice*, Vol. 1 (Bucuresti: Editura Scripta, 1995), 47[King Carol II, *Daily Notes*]

<sup>64</sup> Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 23

<sup>65</sup> Carol II came to power in 1927.

<sup>66</sup> Solonari, 25.

political turmoil and his authoritarian capacities lead to think otherwise. By the end of the 1930s, anti-Semitism was an incredibly popular trend domestically, complying perfectly with the events of the international arena. Furthermore, Carol's popularity plummeted due to his on-going affair with Elena Lupescu, a woman perceived as vulgar and corrupt. However, her main flaw was considered to be the fact that she was born Jewish, a proof of the boiling social anti-Semitism in Romania. Additionally, Romanian political life suffered a crisis moment when the Gheorghe Tatarascu government resigned in December 1937. Carol re-appointed Tatarascu because he embodied everything the King liked in a prime minister: flexibility, submission, and full collaboration. In this context, Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the National Liberal Party and Codreanu signed a nonaggression pact, which reached its immediate result: the government lost the election, for the first time in Romanian history. Consequently, Carol abolished the constitution and established a royal dictatorship between 1938 and 1940. Otherwise, any type of opposition would have been problematic for his power. However, while politically this might have been seen as a direct and obvious victory for Carol, he still had a great problem left in his way to fully attain power: the Jews.<sup>67</sup> This was rather surprising, as he emphasized in his personal notes that anti-Semitism was not to be desired from a government:

With Codreanu it is impossible. He wants to create a full destruction of social order and of our traditional foreign policy. (...) Normally, after the picture of the electoral presence, I should have called Codreanu. Nobody, except for the Legionnaires, would have approved this. To me, it was an impossible issue. The terrorist methods he had adopted, violent anti-Semitism, their ideas obviously radical in foreign policy, the destruction of alliances, the anti-natural desire to approach Germany only, in general in every radical and anti-social methods."<sup>68</sup>

His subsequent policies diminish this initial approach. On 22 January 1938, Carol signed the Decree Law 169 on reviewing Jews' citizenship status. Through this law, all Jews

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<sup>67</sup> Solonari, 47.

<sup>68</sup> Carol al II-lea, 137-138.

who received citizenship after World War I (i.e. a great majority of the Jewish residents of Romania since the 1866 constitution virtually barred them from gaining Romanian citizenship) had to submit their papers for verification within forty days.<sup>69</sup> As a result, approximately 73, 253 Romanian Jewish families, or 225, 220 individual Jews lost their citizenship.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the government adopted other anti-Semitic measures, including shutting down a number of national newspapers that were seen as being controlled by “self-serving Jews.” Jews closed their businesses, stocks plummeted, and Western democratic governments subjected the King to intense diplomatic pressure. Istrate Micescu, the foreign minister who was responsible for leading the campaign to exclude Jewish lawyers from the Bucharest bar, while defending the anti-Semitic programme to the British and French ministers in Bucharest as necessary to avoid an Iron Guard government and promising moderation in its application, was at the same time telling the German counterpart that ‘anti-Semitic measures would be intensified.’<sup>71</sup> The decree was designed to enhance emigration of the Jews, which would have led, in the government’s view, to domestic peace. But, in fact, the country was on the brink of collapse from a civil and economic standpoint.

The way the other minorities were treated questions, once again, the growing Nazi impact on Carol’s regime and the potential goal of population homogeneity. The other minorities were, in fact, treated better than under democracy. For example, their representatives were encouraged to enter the National Renaissance Front (FRN).<sup>72</sup> In 1939, the Ministry of National Economy stipulated that the 1934 Law on the usage of enterprise

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<sup>69</sup> Solonari, 48

<sup>70</sup> Solonari, 50

<sup>71</sup> Dennis Deletant, *Hitler’s Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-1944* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 34-36

<sup>72</sup> Frontul Renasterii Nationale; party created by Carol II, often times considered the first mass-party in Romania.



personnel limited employment of foreign citizens only. The term *Romanian* had to be understood according to constitutional provisions, as being equivalent with that of Romanian citizen.<sup>73</sup> What Carol did when it came to minorities was to continue the same interwar pattern of assimilation vs. segregation. He wanted to centralize his power as much as possible; therefore, the solution seemed easy at the time: anti-Jews policies on one hand, and support of the rest of the minorities on the other. Evidently, this is not a nationalistic attempt to re-inforce the importance of Romanian identity. It is an attempt to augment the legitimacy of the centralized state, a major internal impetus. The change in approach can be considered a form of hypernationalism, his discourse often times being centered on ideas of “tyranny that needed to be destroyed, lack of patriotism, and benefits of the country.”<sup>74</sup> In Carol’s case, nationalism became a tool in the greater plans of personal power. It is also unarguably true that Carol’s concerns about minorities were initially based on what was happening at a domestic level, crises that were deeply rooted in the issues that had transpired during the first decade after unification. But the erratic way of leading the country, all directed for self-purposes, is a basic proof of political and monarchical interest. Carol primarily used political schemes in order to maintain power and this is what led to a foreign policy that was hitched to Nazi Germany.

It was clear by the end of the 1930s that the balance of power in Europe had drastically changed. Carol needed economic links<sup>75</sup> with Germany so that his dream of the greatest monarchy could have been reached. Furthermore, he hoped that Germans would defend Romania against the Soviet threat. Finally, he aimed to convince the Germans to guarantee Romanian territorial integrity, mostly against the Hungarians’ revisionist claims on

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<sup>73</sup> Solonari, 50-51

<sup>74</sup> Carol al II-lea, 138

<sup>75</sup> Great Depression cut access to Western markets. Germany however was willing to increase bilateral trade.

Transylvania.<sup>76</sup> Politically, Romania, a secondary power, was merely reacting to events in the international arena. After the start of World War II, on 26 June 1940, the Soviet Union demanded immediate cession of Bessarabia and Bukovina. Much to Carol's surprise, however, the Germans advised them to concede. The country was left in a deeply rooted crisis at an international level too.

The fear of the Soviets was extremely prevalent domestically. Thus, the Germans were chosen against the Soviets, and not because they put immense pressure at this stage or because of an ideological affinity. On 3 July 1940, Carol named Ion Gigurtu as the new prime-minister. Backing the collective idea that Jews were the allies of the Soviets, Gigurtu Government is known for two crucial anti-Semitic laws of 8 August 1940. The first law introduced the new legal definition of a Jew and severely restricted civil and political rights of thus defined persons. The second law banned marriages between Romanians "by blood" and Jews. Jews who naturalized under the legislation of the Old Kingdom were the least discriminated against, whereas those subjected to the post-1918 naturalization were the most affected. The reasoning behind it was perfectly emphasized in the official expression of the Jewish community's attitude regarding loss of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina:

The Jews in the Old Kingdom-native Romanian Jews-born and raised in generations on the land of Romania, are and remain bound wholeheartedly to the Romanian soil, soil generously watered with the blood of their best sons, fallen in the War of Independence of 1877, in that of 1913, and in the Great War of 1916-1918. Their ideals have always meshed with those of all Romanians, and whatever may happen, and whatever they may endure, as always they are ready to be alongside the Romanian people, in understanding of their destiny which binds them inextricably to this land.<sup>77</sup>

The state was now founded on a new, biological concept of nation.<sup>78</sup> According to Ion V. Gruia, professor of law at University of Bucharest, and one of the promoters of the

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<sup>76</sup> Rebecca Haynes, *Romanian Policy towards Germany, 1936-1940* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 167-169, 177.

<sup>77</sup> *Curierul Israelit*, No. 22 (10 July 1940). Taken from Deletant, 19.

<sup>78</sup> Solonari, 54-55.

two anti-Jews laws, “the nation...had become less of a legal or political community and more of a spiritual and organic community, relying on the law of the blood, from which a hierarchy of political rights stems.”<sup>79</sup>

However, once Hitler started to win territory in Europe, he started pressuring Carol to agree on the “ethnic principle” and start negotiating with Hungary and Bulgaria. The “ethnic principle” was a concept based on the idea that territories and populations would be exchanged, leading to a purification of race. This idea was not particularly hurtful for Romania, since it had to cede 10,000 square kilometers if all ethnic Hungarians would leave the country, or 7,000 square kilometers if only ethnic Hungarians residing in rural areas would have been expelled. Those were low numbers. In a change of action, however, there was to be German-Italian arbitration, the conclusion being: Romania was to cede Hungary 42, 243 square kilometers with a population of 2.6 million of which, according to Romanian data, 1.3 milion were Romanians and 975,000 Hungarians.<sup>80</sup>

It could be argued that, on the surface, it seemed that Romanians indeed were subjected to direct external influences and constraints. However, an alliance with the Nazis and the subsequent “ethnic principle” implications were something that the radical nationalists in the government had sought after since the early 1930s. Mihail Manoilescu, the foreign minister at the time, declared:

Only by moving along this road can one guarantee the preservation and fortification of the thing which is the most precious for a people, namely its ethnic substance...

To bring within the Romanian state all Romanians from outside its borders...so that not even one Romanian is left outside of its frontiers, and to diminish as much as possible the numbers of the [members of] minorities in Romania, constitute two best measures for the attainment of which any effort is welcome and any means is fitting.

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<sup>79</sup> Lya Benjamin and Sergiu Stanciu, *Legislatia antievreeasca, Evreii din Romania intre anii 1940-1944: Izvoare si marturisiri referitoare la evreii din Romania*, Vol.1( Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1993), 39, 51.[Anti-Jewish Legislation. Jews from Romania between 1940-1944: Confessions concerning the Jews in Romania]

<sup>80</sup> Solonari, 59-60.

On the other hand [,]...the country can attain a perfect Romanian homogeneity and Romanians can start feeling themselves...masters in their own home only if the problem of our Jewish element is solved by categorical and determined measures.<sup>81</sup>

No other government had proclaimed such extreme laws concerning minorities beforehand, because, simply put, no extreme nationalists had been in power up to that point. In the end, Carol was surrounded by a great number of right-wingers, who promoted the existence of a racial state. Furthermore, his efforts to create a strong alliance with the Third Reich failed. Finally, he was forced to give up Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union (June 26-28, 1940), northwestern Transylvania to Hungary (The Second Vienna Award-August 30, 1940) and southern Dobroudja to Bulgaria (The Treaty of Craiova-September 8, 1940). As a result, he was forced to abdicate. His son Michael (Mihai) became king and General Ion Antonescu prime minister. In reality, Antonescu became dictator of the country with the title of *Conducator*, Leader, a translation of the German Fuehrer.

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<sup>81</sup> Lya Benjamin, *Problema evreeasca in stenogramele Consiliului de Ministrii. Evreii din Romania intre anii 1940-1944: Izvoare si marturisiri referitoare la evreii din Romania*, Vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Hasefer, 1996), 52-53.[Jewish Problem in the Stenograms of the Council of Ministers. Jews in Romania between 1940-1944]

## Chapter 3

### Ion Antonescu's Racial Romanian State: 1940-1944

By the end of the 1930s, Germany started a new conflict, as Hitler was attempting to impose German hegemony across Europe.<sup>82</sup> It is without doubt that Hitler used an aggressive foreign policy, leading to the debate on the true responsibility for the death of the Jews within the Romanian territory, specifically in Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transnistria.<sup>83</sup> Ion Antonescu's power of decision-making in Romania is unarguable. The quality of his role has been however relatively debatable: on one hand his policies were heavily anti-Semitic and hypernationalist. On the other hand, he contributed decisively to the survival of Jews in Walachia, Moldova and Transylvania due to his 1942 decision to postpone indefinitely the deportation of the Romanian Jews to Poland. During his trial in 1946, Antonescu emphasized that if the Jews of Romania are still alive, this is due to Ion Antonescu.<sup>84</sup> To a certain extent, Antonescu's role in the minority policies of the time has been consistently blurred because of its presence in political and media discourse. Historian Constantin Iordachi identified two trends of interpretation: the *functionalist* trend, which emphasizes the role played by the external factors in the destruction of the Romanian Jews and the *intuitionalist* trend, which focuses on the internal political factors.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, Irina Livezeanu argues that the fall of the Communist regime determined a new interest in the issues associated with the near destruction of Romanian Jews and in Antonescu's role. Due to a

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<sup>82</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: Norton, 1999), 422 - 423 and Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, (New York: Harcourt, 1974), 367.

<sup>83</sup> A strip of land between the Dniester River and the eastern border of Moldova with Ukraine.

<sup>84</sup> "Procesul Marii Tradari Nationale: Stenograma debaterilor de la Tribunalul Poporului asupra Guvernului Antonescu" (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1946), 71. [The Trial of the Great National Treason: Stenogram of Debates at the People's Court on the Antonescu Government]

<sup>85</sup> Constantin Iordachi and Viorel Achim, *Romania si Transnistria: Problema Holocaustului. Perspective istorice si comparative* (Bucuresti: Editura Curtea Veche, 2004), 75-76

post-Ceausescu resurgence of nationalism, there has been an attempt to minimize the role of Ion Antonescu in his anti-Jewish policy.<sup>86</sup> Romanian Holocaust and Antonescu became focuses of political rhetoric in the post-1945 period.

### **3.1. Antonescu's Anti-Jewish Policies: Defending the Sacred Space**

At the beginning of the 1940s Romania had already been going through a phase of extreme political centralization due to Carol's Royal Dictatorship (1938-1940). In essence, Ion Antonescu came to power in a time of crisis. Theoretically, this authoritarian regime tried to imitate Fascist Italy and reoriented the foreign policy according to the European context of polarization of powers on the eve of the outbreak of World War II. Furthermore, the fall of France, Romania's traditional ally, in June 1940 left Romania between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.<sup>87</sup> The subsequent abdication of Carol II led to the establishment of the National Legionary State on 13 September 1940, with Ion Antonescu as *Conducator* and Horia Sima, the leader of the Iron Guard, as vice-prime minister.<sup>88</sup> The main goal of the newly formed state was a continuation of the interwar process of Romanianization. Between 6 September 1940 and 22 January 1941, fifteen Jews were murdered in Romania.<sup>89</sup> These activities of the Iron Guard exacerbated the political fracture between Antonescu and the Iron Guard. Although a fascist in his convictions and behavior, Antonescu was revolted by the administrative and economic disorder brought on by the Legionnaire's corruption and

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<sup>86</sup> Irina Livezeanu, "The Romanian Holocaust: Family Quarrels," *East European Politics and Society* 16 (Fall 2002): 934-947.

<sup>87</sup> Maria Bucur, "Carol II of Romania." Taken from *Balkan Strongmen. Dictators and Authoritarian Rulers of South Eastern Europe*, ed. Brend J. Fisher (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007), 87-117

<sup>88</sup> Deletant, 48-50.

<sup>89</sup> Radu Ioanid, "The Pogrom of Bucharest 21-23 January 1941," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1991), 375.

incompetence, which created confusion and difficulties everywhere in the country's system.<sup>90</sup> In the end, the alliance did not last due to these differences in political vision and Antonescu decided to oust the Legionnaires. Antonescu forbade the activities of the Iron Guard *commissars* responsible for the ongoing process of Romanianization.<sup>91</sup>

The main concern for Antonescu was the economic disaster the Legionnaires left Romania in. For many of them, the process of Romanianization was merely a means to acquire wealth. In this context, the General's interests were affected. He aimed for full control of economy and Jews in a perfectly legal context. The Romanian interests coincided with the ones of Germany, which also needed a strong Romanian economy. In the summer of 1938 Romanian oil became one of the greatest interests for Germany diplomacy.<sup>92</sup>

The conflict between Antonescu and the Legionnaires peaked during the Bucharest pogrom (21-23 January 1941). It can be considered a suicidal act of the Legionnaires. The aftermath of the pogrom of Bucharest was unexpected. The Iron Guard started a series of terrorist actions played a crucial part in the development of the subsequent events.<sup>93</sup> Antonescu's political self-interest led to the underlying necessity to restore order in the country. For an extremely centralized state like Romania, the Legionnaires were a great danger for the society; hence, their destruction was imperative. Antonescu crushed the fascist movement, "denounced their terrorist methods and even obliquely portrayed them as Nazi underlings."<sup>94</sup> In a study on the fascist regimes in Europe, Mihai Fatu and Gheorghe Zaharia describe Antonescu as a progressive figure due to the fact that he silenced the Iron Guard.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The Legionnaires were also assassinating non-Jewish Romanian politicians and public figures.

<sup>91</sup> Ioanid, "The Pogrom," 375-376

<sup>92</sup> Philippe Marguerat, *Le III-e Reich et le parole roumain, 1938-1940* (A.W. Sythoff: Leiden, Geneva), 75

<sup>93</sup> Ioanid, "The Pogrom," 373

<sup>94</sup> Jean Ancel, "Antonescu and the Jews," *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 23 (1993), 217

<sup>95</sup> Gheorghe Zaharia and Mihai Fatu, *Regimurile fasciste si totalitare in Europa*, Vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Militara, 1980)

The National-Legionary state was abolished on 14 February 1941 and was replaced with an authoritarian regime in which senior officers and ministers took orders directly from Antonescu, a further step in the process of power centralization in Romania.

The events in Bucharest put into question Antonescu's image as both a radical anti-Semitist and a puppet who worked for Hitler's interests. In this case, it seems that the need to protect the state, the nation and the personal political interests of the Marshal played a greater role in his decision-making process. Also, the initial lack of minority policies and the focus on the Legionnaires in the early days of his state-power also raise underlying questions about the policy impetuses at this point. In fact, although it adopted some elements of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the regime was a military dictatorship. The monarchy did not have any further prerogatives and was transformed into a symbol of statehood.<sup>96</sup>

It can further be argued that the relationship between Hitler and Antonescu was also problematic. Prior to September 1940, Antonescu 'had no close ties to the Reich. He came to power in a vacuum, inheriting a situation created by Carol's aims of aligning with German foreign policy: "I went with Germany because I found the country committed to this policy, and no one then, whoever he might have been, could have given it a different direction without the risk of bringing ruin to the entire country"<sup>97</sup> Also, his anti-communist feelings played a crucial role in choosing his allies. In 1941, following Pearl Harbor, Antonescu noted: "I am an ally of the Reich against Russia. I am neutral in the conflict between Great Britain and Germany. I am for America against the Japanese."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sincera a poporului roman* (Bucuresti: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1997), 394

<sup>97</sup> Deletant, 51

<sup>98</sup> Deletant, 92



Another theory besides the German pressure on Antonescu's anti-Semitic policies was based on his inherent loathing of Judaism. On 6 September 1941, in a letter to Mihai Antonescu, his Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister during World War II wrote:

Everybody should understand that this is not a struggle with the Slavs but one with the Jews. It is a fight to the death. Either we will win and the world will purify itself, or they will win and we will become their slaves...The war, in general, and the fight for Odessa, especially have proven that Satan is the Jew.<sup>99</sup>

One of the most revealing documents in this sense is the letter he sent on 29 October 1942 to Liberal Party leader C.I.C. Bratianu, after canceling his decision to deport the Jews from southern Transylvania, Moldova and Wallachia to Poland:

The Romanian people are no longer subject to the servitude imposed by the Congress of Berlin in 1878, by the amendment of Article 7 of the Constitution [granting Jews citizenship], nor the [humiliation] imposed after the last war as concerns the minorities.<sup>100</sup>

Without a doubt Antonescu *was* anti-Semitic. He was a product of his time and Romania was an anti-Semitic country by and large. The extent to which his policy making decisions were ultimately influenced by this hatred is debatable. While the personality analysis approach could offer an interesting and plausible explanation, the contradictions within Antonescu's policies demonstrate a more complex issue.

A close look at Antonescu's anti-Semitic comments in the Council of Ministers' meetings reveals a more comprehensive picture of the actual reasons behind his policies towards ethnic minorities. On several occasions, Antonescu presented his plans for the restructuring of the country's social and economic life, in which the need to maintain public

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<sup>99</sup> "The Role of Ion Antonescu in the Planning and Implementation of Antisemitic and Anti-Roma Policies of the Romanian State," *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania* (2004), 187.

<sup>100</sup> "23 August 1944," *Documente*, Vol.1(Bucharest: Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1984), 429.

order and to *romanize* the economy were part of a more ambitious project of purifying Romania of Jews and Roma and creating an ethnocentric state.<sup>101</sup> According to Antonescu's personal secretary Gheorghe Barbul, Hitler asked the general to restore order during the pogrom in Bucharest. The reply was simply: "Please do so; I have no use for fanatics. I need a healthy Romanian army."<sup>102</sup> This ultimately proves that his aims to protect the country went beyond his inner beliefs. In fact, it can be argued that domestic interests flanked by hypernationalistic personal ideologies, along with a deep understanding of the international context played a crucial role in what Antonescu saw as a necessity for the survival of the state: a crusade against ethnic minorities, particularly Jews, and against communism.

Antonescu's policy against Jews was clearly explained in a letter to Wilhelm Filderman, the leader of the Jewish community:

All the Jews who came to Romania after 1914 will have to leave, as will all the Jews in the liberated territories without exception. Jews in the Old Kingdom who came here before 1914 will be allowed to stay provided they abide by the laws of our national state. But the Communists, as well as those who engage in subversive propaganda or join forces with the country's enemy, and all those who in one way or another try to sabotage the interests of the state and the Romanian people—all those will have to leave.

We decided to defend our Romanian rights because our all-too-tolerant past was taken advantage of by the Jews and facilitated the abuse of our rights by foreigners, particularly the Jews... We are determined to put an end to this situation. We cannot afford to put in jeopardy the existence of our nation because of several hundred thousand Jews, or in order to salvage some principle of humane democracy that has not been understood properly."<sup>103</sup>

A few days before the outbreak of war Antonescu sent an informal resolution to the Ministry of Propaganda demanding that "all the Jewish-communist coffee houses in Moldavia are to be shut down, the names of all Jewish and communist agents or sympathizers are to be listed (by county). The Ministry of Interior is to restrict their freedom

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<sup>101</sup> Lya Benjamin, *Anti-Semitism as Reflected in the Records of the Council of Ministers, 1940-1944: An Analytical Overview in The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews during the Antonescu Era*, ed. Rudolf Braham (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1997), 10.

<sup>102</sup> Ansel, 231.

<sup>103</sup> Ansel, 247.

of movement, so as to ensure that the Ministry will be able to execute further orders to be given by me concerning them, when the suitable time comes.”<sup>104</sup> Three days before the outbreak of the war, Ion Antonescu ordered the deportation within forty-eight hours of Jews from villages and townships in Romania itself, and the incarceration of men, and sometimes also women and children in camps in the south of the country.<sup>105</sup> On 21 June, acting on Antonescu’s special orders, the Romanian Secret Service, the SSI, set up a special unit modeled after the Einsatzgruppen. Antonescu issued Ordonance No. 4147, directing that all Jews between the ages of eighteen and sixty years who resided in the villages between the Siret and Prut rivers be evacuated to the Targu Jiu camp in the South of Romania; the first trains were to leave on exactly June 21. Members of the families of those deported were evacuated to several towns. A time-limit of forty eight hours was set for the execution for this operation: “It is a military principle that the population in the area of the front must be moved.”<sup>106</sup> On the afternoon of June 26, the leaders of the Jewish community of Iasi were ordered to present themselves at the Chestura, the central headquarters of the Iasi police, where they were told that the Jews of Iasi were guilty of collaborating with “downed Jewish Soviet pilots.”<sup>107</sup> This determined the context for the Iasi pogrom. The nature of Antonescu’s nationalistic policies is explicitly presented when he emphasizes the main reason for expropriation of the Jews and the cooperation with German: “the permanent interests of our living space (*spatial nostru vital*).”<sup>108</sup> Between 10,000 and 12,000 Jews lost their lives in Iasi, most within one day-June 29-and the remainder during their transport in freight cars. These

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<sup>104</sup> Matatias Carp, *Holocaust in Rumania: facts and documents on the annihilation of Rumania’s Jews, 1940-44* (Budapest: Primor Publishing, c1994), 170

<sup>105</sup> Ansel, 234

<sup>106</sup> *Procesul Marii Tradari Nationale* , 53

<sup>107</sup> Radu Ioanid, “The Holocaust in Romania: The Iasi Pogrom of June 1941,” *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 2 (1993): 126

<sup>108</sup> Ansel, 235

became death chambers and were in fact called *death trains*. Romanian civilian and military authorities supplied the pretext for the pogrom. They accused the Jews of having signaled to Soviet planes that carried out bombing raids against the city and then having opened fire from their homes on Romanian and German soldiers stationed there, inflicting losses.

In general, Antonescu maintained he did not know what was going on in Iasi: “At the time the massacre was taking place in Iasi, I was at the front in south Moldova and afterward I went to Iasi.”<sup>109</sup> Later on, he added that he knew only about 2,000 Jews who had been packed into freight cars at the railroad station in town and subsequently died of suffocation inside. Nevertheless, it is without doubt that Antonescu’s previous policies induced this conflict. In the case of the Iasi pogrom, there was a combination of traditions long-time anti-Semitic, terror spread by the military operations, official anti-Semitic propaganda and the manipulations organized by SSI (Serviciul Special de Information, the Special Information Service), which made the Jewish population of Iasi an easy target for the pogromists.”<sup>110</sup>

However, Antonescu realized that in order to purify the nation, he needed to start a process of ethnic cleansing. It is difficult to predict whether he could have been acquitted had Hitler or the Nazis not been anti-Semitic. Nevertheless, as seen in the previous years, the context mattered for the governments. Their policies were largely reactionary to the events in Europe. But in fact, the implications of these events were crucial for the domestic politics. The first crucial stage of the specific cleansing process was not finalized until August 1941. At least 150,000 Jews were murdered on Antonescu’s orders. According to Mihai Antonescu, the objective was to carry out ethnic and political cleansing in Bessarabia and Bukovina. At

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<sup>109</sup> Ansel, 262

<sup>110</sup> Ioanid, “The Holocaust in Romania,” 127

the conference in Bucharest of the administration heads of the areas in question, Mihai Antonescu outlined the next stages of the operation and said that steps must be “taken toward forced emigration of the Jewish element, in particular and foreign elements in general.”<sup>111</sup> On July 11, he issued a secret directive to the governor of Bessarabia, General Voiculescu, in which he demanded “the Jews be put under a regime which would suit their acts and attitudes during the ceding of Bessarabia...to the Soviets.”<sup>112</sup> On July 18, he issued an order to “put to work at hard labor all the Jews in labor and detention camps. In case of escape one out of ten must be shot. If they don’t work properly they must be denied food and now allowed to receive food or to buy it.”<sup>113</sup> Early in August 1941, Antonescu demanded that the SSI take a census of the Jews incarcerated in the camps and forward the figure to Mihai Antonescu. The deportation commenced on 6 September 1941, and proceeded more or less to Antonescu’s satisfaction with the exception of criminal acts by the soldiers and attacks by Romanian peasants on Jews in the convoys. In fact, socially, these policies had an extremely negative impact, paving the way to a great number of crimes. In Bessarabia, for example local residents used to buy Jews from the gendarmes for 2,000 lei in order to get their clothes after the soldier shot them. On October 6, at a government meeting, Antonescu summed up the operation to cleanse Bessarabia of Jews:

As for the Jews, I decided to remove all of them once for all from these areas. The operation is going on. There are still some 10,000 Jews left in Bessarbia, and they too will be moved across the Dniester within several days. If circumstances allow me, they will be moved across the Ural Mountains.”<sup>114</sup>

Politically, the deportations involved a series of changes within the government.

“Since some of the deportees were transported aboard trains, the Ministry of Transportation also had to be involved in the deportations, and the Railroad Authority was therefore placed

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<sup>111</sup> Ancel, 237

<sup>112</sup> Ancel, 239

<sup>113</sup> Ancel, 240

<sup>114</sup> Ancel, 244

under the jurisdiction of the General Staff in order to facilitate the conduct of the war.”<sup>115</sup>

The practical aspects of the deportations were discussed not at government meetings but in Order Council and with other ministers whose areas of jurisdiction had a bearing on the matter. At the postwar trial of Romanian war criminals, one of the former ministers said that the Council “did not discuss the deportations in the sense of decisions, proposals, or debates.”<sup>116</sup> Antonescu alone was responsible for these matters.

In essence, Antonescu’s attitude towards the Jews alternated. He even compared the policies with a war against the Jews:

The fight is bitter. It is a fight to life or death. It is a fight between us and the Germans, on the one hand, and the Jews, on the other...I shall undertake a work of complete cleansing, of Jews and of all others who have snuck up on us...Had we not started this war, to cleanse our race of these people who sap our economic, national, and physical life, we would be cursed with complete disappearance...Consequently, our policy in this regard is to achieve a homogenous whole in Bessarabia, Bukovina, Moldavia, and...in Transylvania.<sup>117</sup>

But in September 1941, Antonescu told Filderman that he would rescind the order forcing Jews in Romania to wear the Star of David, allow Jews to emigrate to Spain or Portugal, and not deport the Jews of Moldavia and Wallachia.<sup>118</sup> In 1942 however, he signed the April 1942 order to deport the remaining 425 Jews of Bessarabia to Transnistria. It was his decision to carry out the second deportation of Jews from Bukovina, formally enacted on 28 May 1942.<sup>119</sup>

There is no doubt that Antonescu cared about the image of Romania abroad, especially after the events of Stalingrad. Reports from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted that Romanian Jews under Nazi occupation were treated worse than Hungarian

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<sup>115</sup> Ancel, 245.

<sup>116</sup> Ancel, 245.

<sup>117</sup> *Final Report*, 97.

<sup>118</sup> Jean Ancel, *Documents Concerning the Fate of Romanian Jewry During the Holocaust*, Vol. 3 (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1986), 130-132.

<sup>119</sup> Lya Benjamin, *Evreii din Romania intre anii: 1940-1944, Vol.3* (Bucharest:Editura Hasefer), 228.

Jews; this simply annoyed Antonescu. During his trial, he claimed that the deportation was actually intended to save the allegedly pro-communist Jews from the population's wrath and that he could state with certainty that had he not dispatched them to Transnistria, none of them would have survived. He repeatedly emphasized that deportations were based upon military security reasons and for their own safety. It is without a doubt that Antonescu's name has been rehabilitated in the scholar and political circles in Romania since 1989 because of his anti-Sovietism. However, if that were the real explanation of the deportations of the Jews and not an extreme hatred against minorities, nationalism would still be the main impetus. Hitler and Nazism simply cannot be considered fundamental and decisive. The main proof is in Antonescu's variation in terms of policy-making decisions.

### **3.2. The Increasing Focus on the Roma**

The political interest in the Romani population had been relatively weak in the pre-1918 era. The lack of previous integrative measures after abolition of any forms of slavery<sup>120</sup> in Romania negatively impacted this particular ethnic group. Most of the Roma population did not manage to find a "good" and stable way of living and a good number went back to their owners, offering themselves for sale. It is believed that this situation heavily affected their demographic dynamics, leading to a nomadic life and on inability to have a secure form of income.<sup>121</sup> The First World War and the peace treaties led to the growth of the number of minorities to over 18% (28% of the total population), out of which 133,000 were ethnic Roma (0.8% out of total population). As Irina Livezeanu and Maria Bucur emphasize, the enlarged Romanian state suffered through a series of anxieties manifested in growing

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<sup>120</sup> Owning Romani slaves had been practiced before.

<sup>121</sup> Ian Hancock, "The Struggle for the Control of Identity," *The Patrín Web Journal* (1997): 37

ethnonationalism at an institutional and policy level during the interwar period.<sup>122</sup> In essence, the Romani population was vital to Romanian ethnonational identity. According to the 1930 census, 262,051 people declared themselves to be of Gypsy descent and many had the status of Romanian peasants. In a state that was mainly focused on creating a unitary state and on socio-economic development along the lines of nationalism, the Roma population found itself diminished. The authorities believed that Roma did not have the same rights as the other minorities, because they did not have a written culture and history.<sup>123</sup> Even more so, they were treated as a social category, which led to inapplicability of minority legislation. For example, The General Commissariat for Minorities (Comisariatul General al Minoritatilor), established in 1938, never considered the Roma within the scope of its jurisdiction.

After coming to power, the Legionary movement was the first to consider adopting a racial policy toward the Roma. The Legion journal *Cuvantul* published an article on 18 January 1941 that stressed the “priority of the Gypsy issue” on the government agenda and suggested that appropriate legislation be passed to make marriages between Romanians and Roma illegal and to gradually isolate the Roma into ghettos.<sup>124</sup> Finally, it can be argued that the violent pro-Romanian fascism led by Codreanu and the Iron Guard peaked under Antonescu, when the Romani population became a national “problem” for the first time.

Antonescu’s idea to deport Roma to Transnistria was only conceived after Romania obtained Transnistria, as a step toward national purification. The biological racialization of the Holocaust emphasized the concerns vis-à-vis the Romani population. The 1942 census

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<sup>122</sup> Largely discussed in Livezeanu and Bucur.

<sup>123</sup> D.A. Crowe, “The Gypsy Historical Experience in Romania,” in D.A. Crowe and John Kolsti, *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe* (London: M.E.: Sharpe, 1991), 68-69

<sup>124</sup> Lucian Stan, “Rasism fata de tigani”, *Cuvantul*, Vol. 18, No. 53 (18 January 1941): 1-9



validated the newly found “problem” status of the Roma population. Antonescu saw the nomadic Roma and those sedentary Roma with criminal records, recidivists, and those with no means of subsistence particularly problematic. A total of 40,909 individuals were registered on these lists: 9,471 nomadic Roma and 31,438 sedentary Roma. The order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of 17 May 1942 stated that the Roma on the list were to be kept under close surveillance by local authorities and prevented from leaving the country until further instruction. The decree that specifically ordered the census emphasized that the population targeted was the “sedentary nomads (especially those who, being non-nomadic, are convicts, recidivists, or have no means of existence or precise occupation from which to live honestly through work, and thus constitute a burden and a danger to public order).”<sup>125</sup> The previous confusion in relation to their political status led to the inability of the Gendarmerie to pinpoint this specific group. Therefore, a census of “all sedentary Gypsies who have had prior convictions, are recidivists, or live without a means of existence”<sup>126</sup> was created. Finally, on August 15, the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie ordered the return of the censuses of “convicted, dangerous, etc. gypsies” by the following day.<sup>127</sup>

The subsequent deportation consisted of the Roma registered in this census. The total number of Roma deported to Transnistria from June 1942 to December 1943 reached slightly over 25,000. In early October 1942, after both major deportations, there were 24,686 Roma in Transnistria: 11,441 were nomadic, 13,176 were sedentary, and another sixty-nine had been deported after having been released from prison.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Taken from Shannon Woodcock, “Romanian Romani Resistance to Genocide in the Matrix of the *Tigan* other,” *Anthropology of East Europe*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2008): 11.

<sup>126</sup> Woodcock, 11.

<sup>127</sup> Woodcock, 11.

<sup>128</sup> Viorel Achim, *Documente privind deportarea tiganilor in Transnistria*, Vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedica, 2004), 268-271. [Documents concerning the deportation of the gypsies in Transnistria].

The growing importance of the Roma proves that policies *against* minorities reached a major point. Discourses of social integration or assimilation had been relatively non-existent when it came to the Jewish population. The evolution of political discrimination and subsequent segregation of the Romani population generally demonstrate that Romania had become a racial state and its engine was Antonescu's hypernationalist policies towards homogenization.

### **3.3. Hungarians and the Failure of the Policy Exchange**

With the racialization of ethnicity becoming more central, the minorities with specific kin-states seemed relatively safe. That is not to say that Antonescu did not attempt to remove the rest of the ethnicities out of Romania. Perhaps the boldest program was drafted by demographer and "scientist" Sabin Manuila. His project entailed a comprehensive population exchange, a systematic and aggressive demographic policy. On 15 October 1941 Manuila presented the project to Ion Antonescu. He believed that this project was worth undertaking because it was largely an alternative to potential wars with neighbors. He believed that "Hungarians are as fanatical as [Romanians are]," and thus, it would be likely to be a war of extermination. He further emphasized that the return of Transylvania would have to be accompanied by a population exchange between the two countries if a stable settlement was to be pursued.<sup>129</sup> The exchanges were to be based on the borders of Greater Romania (1918-1940) and not those of 1941. According to him, revision would restore most of the territory

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<sup>129</sup> "Manuila Plan." 609. In Vladimir Solonari, "An Important New Document on the Romanian Policy of Ethnic Cleansing During World War II," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2007).

Romania had lost in 1940.<sup>130</sup> All in all, Manuila's plan aimed for the removal of 3,581,618 non-ethnic Romanians from the country and bringing in of 1,979,059 "Romanians by blood" from surrounding countries.<sup>131</sup>

The plan materialized only to a minor degree, entailing the repatriation of part of the Hungarian-speaking population from Moldova. However, the influence of this program in Antonescu's policies seems to have been minimal. Firstly, the plan was simply not realistic. Secondly, as Solonari argues, Manuila failed to take into consideration the ambitions of the *Conducator*, who besides homogenization of the population, also aimed at the territorial annexation of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and Northern Transylvania. He even had plans to annex Transnistria to Romania.<sup>132</sup> Antonescu's acute xenophobia, racialization of ethnicity and the pervasive existence of a national ideal of homogeneity led, in the end, to a prioritization of removal of the Jews and Roma and less of a concern vis-à-vis Hungarian population.

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Ion Antonescu post-1989 portrayals as a great patriot are not surprising. It can be argued that, indeed, Antonescu had a vision for Romania. In fact, it seems that his personal political interests had a secondary role when it came to controlling the minority population. Nevertheless, his patriotism was extreme and even culpable. The policies of segregation or pure elimination in the case of the Jewish and Romani populations were largely stemmed in previous attempts of homogenization. The European context definitely helped Antonescu in

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<sup>130</sup> "Manuila Plan," 611-617; Hitchins, Rumania, 450

<sup>131</sup> "Manuila Plan," 617, 610

<sup>132</sup> Vladimir Solonari, "An Important New Document on the Romanian Policy of Ethnic Cleansing During World War II," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21, No. 2 (Fall 2007): 268-297; 278

partially achieving his plans. But the lack of continuity of his campaign, as seen in the halting of the deportation of the Jews in 1942, demonstrates that he also focused on his image abroad. Germany was losing the war, so the ties with Hitler had to be loosened, in order to maintain a level of international legitimization, but also to save Romania from collapse.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Communist Period and Erratic Fluctuation of Minority Policies: 1945-1989**

At the end of World War II, Romania found itself in a rather precarious position. Geographically the situation had changed, albeit not to the same extent as after World War I. Politically, however, the change had extreme consequences, as the Soviets had taken over the country in a relatively short period of time. Politically, Romania switched from an orientation of extreme right to extreme left. However, nationalism remained a constant in terms of shaping minority policies. During the communist period, I argue that minority policies were determined by the necessity of the newly formed communist government to gain legitimacy, create alliances and critically centralize political power. This approach towards minorities allowed for a peculiar manifestation of a national ideology under communism. Considering these elements, the dilemma is in the degree of influence and the pressure of the external powers, particularly Moscow, before and after the withdrawal of the Red Army in 1958. I argue that, once again, the international pressure was relatively minimal in the relationship between the Romanian state and its minorities. The erratic fluctuation between policies of integration and segregation lead to the theory that, in fact, domestic political interest played the main role in policy drafting. The following section will discuss these particular approaches to minority policies in the communist period and how they determined the development of a particular Romanian identity under a socialist regime.

#### **4.1. From neo-stalinism to nationalist communism**

In the immediate post-1945 period, we can see a switch in approach concerning national minorities. The political discourse changed from the emphasis on full elimination of some ethnic minorities to a focus on integration. The new government led by Petru Groza was to be a leftist government that initiated a positive approach. The communists needed the minorities to be their allies, in order to strengthen their newly achieved power in Romania. Nevertheless, from an ideological standpoint, the arrival of communism also meant a more prominent focus on “stateness” and less on “nationness.”<sup>133</sup> Also, nationalism and communism are ideologically in conflict. The underlying question is how much of the relationship with minorities was imposed from Moscow in the early stages and how much was a domestic or self-interested political impetus. The erratic process of decision-making in the first half of communist rule, the development of nationalist communism and the emergence of the cult of personality during Ceausescu’s rule points to the fact that in Romania internal factors once again had the strongest role behind minority policies. While communist ideology played a substantial role in the policy framework in the first part of its rule, the Communist Party ultimately needed alliances from minorities that had been persecuted by previous rightist nationalists.

It is without doubt that on the theoretical level, in the early days of communist rule, particularly in the period between 1947 and 1956, Romania was influenced by ideas of “Socialist patriotism.” This was extensively based on Stalin’s theses on national identities.

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<sup>133</sup> I define “stateness” as institutional dynamic and nationness as national identity dynamic of the population.

The strength of Soviet patriotism -- said Comrade Stalin -- lies in the fact that it is based not on racial or nationalist prejudices, but on the people's profound loyalty and devotion to their Soviet Motherland, on the fraternal partnership of the working people of all the nationalities in our country. Soviet patriotism harmoniously combines the national traditions of the peoples and the common vital interests of all the working people of the Soviet Union.<sup>134</sup>

I describe this approach as being neo-stalinist. Thus, the new Romanian socialist state focused heavily on acquiring legitimacy through cultural and socio-economic communist values. Minority policies became part of this process particularly in the first half of the communist era.

Scholars generally agree that national ideology played a crucial role during the second half of Ceausescu's dictatorship. It has been argued that he extensively used it for the development of his cult of personality. Social anthropologist Katherine Verdery, in fact, emphasizes that national rhetoric and focus on language and culture contributed heavily to the symbolic force of the particular ideology put into practice by Nicolae Ceausescu.<sup>135</sup> Verdery, however, argues that nationalism was not one of Ceausescu's strategies to legitimate his rule and to keep "the intellectuals coopted or subservient."<sup>136</sup> In fact, she notes that the Party was "forced onto the terrain of national values (not unwillingly) under pressure from others, especially intellectuals, who it could fully engage in no other manner(...)" Romanian intellectuals were utilizing something-the Nation-that we might call a master symbolic, one having the capacity to dominate the field of symbols and discourses in which it was employed, pressing the meanings of other terms and symbols in its own direction."<sup>137</sup> She also adds: "National discourse in Romania is more than something used instrumentally by the Communist party but as rather, inscribed in and emanating from many quarters of

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<sup>134</sup> J.V. Stalin, *On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*. In *Works*, Vol. 15 (London: Red Star Press, 1984), 422-423.

<sup>135</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 99

<sup>136</sup> Verdery, 12

<sup>137</sup> Verdery, 122

Romanian society.”<sup>138</sup> There is no doubt that the Romanian intelligentsia was, indeed, a strong force in coercing Party national discourse. Nevertheless, the intelligentsia could have not used its rhetoric without a favorable context. The minority policies created this framework. They simply did not allow any forms of mobilization that could have affected Romanian national identity. By eliminating the foreign factor, either by assimilation or segregation, Romanian governments allowed the successful spread of national ideology in rhetoric. It is fair to assume that national symbols could not have had the same impact in a state plagued by ethnic conflicts. Thus, both liberalization and coercion of minorities played a significant role in the evolution of national ideology in Romania.

#### **4.2. Erratic Policies towards Hungarians**

In the post-war period, Hungarians became, once again, the center of attention for the newly formed government. The Hungarian population was, in fact, the most prominent, leading to serious political concern. I am tracing a number of crucial policies that affected the Hungarian population directly.<sup>139</sup>

Hungarians were immediately targeted in the initial stages of a somewhat populist approach of the Government that came to power in 1944, the immediate post-Antonescu era. There was a necessity for alliances with minorities for the Communist Party, because it was a relatively small party in the immediate post-war period. This led to an official collaboration between the Popular Magyar Union (Uniunea Populara Maghiara/UPM) and the Romanian Communist Party (PCR). The principles included in the collaboration between the UPM and

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<sup>138</sup> Verdery, 132

<sup>139</sup> A number of these policies were applicable to other minorities as well: e.g. Germans



PCR were: representation in the government, self-government in areas in which the Magyar population was above fifty percent, the recognition of Hungary as an official language, public education in Hungarian from primary school to universities, equality in rights of the Churches (Hungarian and Romanian Orthodox), the maintaining of Hungarian cultural institutions and freedom to use national symbols without restrictions.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, the state would support schools, kindergartens and community centers. In essence the Hungarian community was not integrated as a result of acceptance of ethnic individualism-either administrative or cultural, but based on its status as a functioning community within the Romanian space. In the end, it was a matter of integration that would have served the political purposes of the Party and not a matter of concern for the Hungarians and their socio-political status at that time. From the perspective of the Magyar population, there was a necessity for normalization of the minority status in the post-war period. Hence, a series of Magyar leaders started collaboration with the Communist Party. The preferred collective solution led to the elaboration of a document on the Status of National Minorities.<sup>141</sup>

Once the Communist ensured their relative legitimacy, the heads of the UPM and their minority collaborators were heavily investigated under the accusation of fraud or treason against the state. In May 1947, the year when the PCR fully seized power, a new campaign of Romanianization reminiscent of the interwar period began. Autonomous economic institutions were eliminated, and starting with 1947-1948 traveling in Hungary became almost impossible. In 1952, the Autonomous Hungarian Region was created and the UPM ended its activity in 1953. Furthermore, nationalization was the central policy between

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<sup>140</sup> Antal László, *Situația minorității etnice Maghiare în România* (Odorheiu Secuiesc, A.C.H.R. 1993) [The Status of the Ethnic Magyars in Romania]

<sup>141</sup> This document remains to be the basis of the legislative framework as of 2005; Guvernul României, "Aviz referitor la proiectul de Lege privind statutul minorităților naționale din România" (20 May 2005). [Notice concerning the law vis-à-vis the status of national minorities in Romania.]

1948 and 1956. It had massive consequences on the policies concerning minorities as well, as it led to a progressive destruction of the Hungarian community. For example, according to the Governmental Decree 176 from 1948, 1593 schools were subjected to nationalization. 81.6% were confessional Magyar schools. Furthermore, the decision no. 150/1950 of the Ministry of Culture and 2698/1952 of Ministry of Internal Affairs elaborated the confiscation of the archives or the nationalization of culture groups (e.g. Cultural Complex Batthyaneum in Alba Iulia).<sup>142</sup> At this stage, Magyars were deprived of the possibilities to maintain their national identity.

The 1956 Hungarian Revolution was a key moment in the relationship between the state and the Hungarian minority. If in the first periods of the communist regime we can discuss about concern for legitimacy and power strengthening, the centralized control over the Hungarian community developed heavily in 1956. The sympathies between Romania's Hungarian community and the ideals of the Hungarian Revolution were interpreted by the Romanian regime as nationalist manifestations against the state. When political dissent emerged and the Hungarian intelligentsia in Transylvania started organizing anti-communist activities, thousands of protesters were arrested and incarcerated.<sup>143</sup> The unrest was blamed on a series of bad policies concerning the minorities. The fact that most protesters were young people led to the conclusion that the existence of institutions where teaching in the mother tongue was allowed was a great policy mistake. Ultimately, the teaching of Hungarian language in high schools was restricted.<sup>144</sup> Even more so, minimum quotas for number of students in a class were imposed; but even when these were met, classes were

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<sup>142</sup> "Liga Pro Europa."

<sup>143</sup> "Minorities in Southeast Europe." *Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe - Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE)*, Accessed on 10 December 2010.

<sup>144</sup> Dennis Deletant, *Ceausescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (Hurst and Company: London, 1995), 112

cancelled.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore the Hungarian-speaking University, Bolyai University, and the Romanian Babes University were forced to merge in 1959. Consequently, the number of subjects that could be studied in Hungarian decreased considerably at the level of higher education.<sup>146</sup> In essence, the only career opportunities for Magyars were in teaching and medicine.<sup>147</sup>

When Nicolae Ceausescu was elected as the First Secretary of the Central Committee of PCR in 1965, a new stage of the communist period began. This was an episode of relaxation and, ironically, of liberalization concerning the policy towards minorities. However, it can be argued that there was a clear dichotomy when it came to political discourse and actions in relation to the Magyars. On the surface, it was assumed and even promoted that, in fact, the nationality issues had been solved. The cultural concessions were astounding: Hungarian magazines started publishing, Hungarian language newspapers appeared in counties with a predominant Hungarian population. The Hungarian elites were also consistently attracted in Ceausescu's circles of interest. Ultimately, minority rights would gradually diminish, as Ceausescu's focus was to turn Romania into a personal dictatorship. However, in the 1965 Constitution, the term *nationalitate conlocuitoare* or "co-existing nationality" was added. Article 22 showed that the government allowed the use of the mother tongue in books, newspapers, magazines, theater or within the education system. The media also began playing an important role, as the government allowed the opening of publishing houses and broadcasting of television shows in Hungarian. Language rights were

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<sup>145</sup> "SOS Transylvania," *International Helsinki Federation* (Vienna: International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 1988), 35.

<sup>146</sup> Antal, 19.

<sup>147</sup> Juliana Geran Pilon, *The Bloody Flag: Post-communist nationalism in Eastern Europe* (London: Transaction, 1992), 63

to be kept as part of a policy of integration.<sup>148</sup> However, at the beginning of the 1970s, the situation of the minorities gradually worsened. There is a consensus that Romania became a nationalist communist state between 1971<sup>149</sup> and 1989.

After Ceausescu's July Theses in 1971, a speech on "Proposed measures or the improvement of political ideological activity, of the Marxist-Leninist education of Party members, of all working people," "an unprecedented period of radical *re-stalinization* and the construction of a personality cult without precedent followed. In 1968 Romania had distanced itself from Moscow by refusing to support the military suppression of the Revolution in Prague. Ties were maintained based only on the common communist ideology. This allowed Ceausescu to create an iron curtain between Romania and the rest of the USSR. Interestingly enough, the ties with the West reversed, as he became a favorite of the Western leaders. Nevertheless, the practice of dictatorship was extremely prominent in this period. For the Hungarian population, severe travel restrictions were imposed.<sup>150</sup> Hungarians attempted to cross the guarded border into Hungary, but they were often arrested and charged with disloyalty or attempted subversion against the state.<sup>151</sup> The process of assimilation determined the creation of forced policies: Hungarian schools and departments were reduced in number, Hungarian publications were put under ideological censorship, broadcast of local radio stations in Hungarian was stopped, geographical and Christian names in the native

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<sup>148</sup> "Articolul 22." *Constitutia Republicii Socialiste Romania din 1965*. [The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Romania since 1965] In Romanian, this reads: "In Republica Socialista Romania, nationalitatilor conlocuitoare li se asigura folosirea libera a limbii materne, precum si carti, ziare, reviste, teatre, invatamintul de toate gradele, in limba proprie. In unitatile administrativ-teritoriale locuite si de populatie de alta nationalitate decit cea romana, toate organele si institutiile folosesc oral si scris si limba nationalitatii respective si fac numiri de functionari din rindul acesteia sau al altor cetateni care cunosc limba si felul de trai al populatiei locale."

<sup>149</sup> After a visit to North Korea in 1971, Ceausescu was favorably impressed by the effectiveness of the personality cult in controlling and keeping an iron grip on the population

<sup>150</sup> Ferenc Glatz, *A Kisebbségi kérdés Közép-Európában tegnap és ma: Tanulmány* (Budapest: Europa Institute, 1992), 51.

<sup>151</sup> Istvan Szonyi, *Hungary as a security risk: no major concerns* (Berlin: Forschungsinstitut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, 1993), 13.

language were prohibited, and villages began to be demolished, an initiative that Hungarians perceived as being aimed at them.<sup>152</sup> Perhaps the strongest policies of assimilation refer to education, such as Decree No. 278/1973 issued by the Romanian State Council on 13 May 1973: “in townships where primary schools offer instruction in the languages of cohabiting nationalities, (...) sections or classes taught in Romanian shall be organized, irrespective of the number of students.(...) the minimum number of children in a class shall be at least 25 in primary school classes [for minorities] and 36 in secondary school classes for minorities.”<sup>153</sup> Restrictions culminated with the closing of the Hungarian Consulate in Cluj in 1988 after a diplomatic scandal. By the end of the 1980s the “co-existing nationalities” were replaced by “Romanians of Hungarian language.”<sup>154</sup>

### **4.3. Migration of Germans**

In the post-1945 period, Romania did not expel Germans, unlike Poland or Hungary. However, 70,000 ethnic male Germans had been deported to labor camps in Ukraine and approximately 100,000 fled with the German army. The German community, however, remained relatively intact. Furthermore, in the immediate post-war period, the liberal minority policies used for Hungarians were extensively used for the German population also: access to mother-tongue education, their own weekly press and book publication, cultural programmes, and airtime for German-language radio and television broadcasts.<sup>155</sup> At the

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<sup>152</sup> Deletant, *Ceausescu*, 267-268..

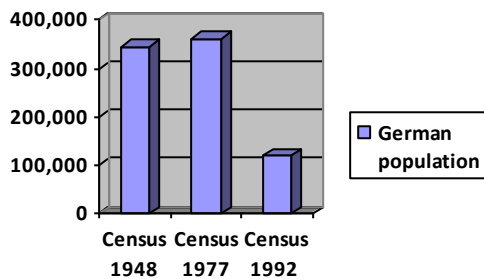
<sup>153</sup> Rudolf Joo, *The Hungarian Minority's Situation in Ceausescu's Romania* (Boulder, 1994), 48

<sup>154</sup> Antal, 225-260

<sup>155</sup> Stefan Wolff and Karl Cordell: Ethnic Germans as a Language Minority in Central and Eastern Europe: Legislative and Policy Frameworks in Poland, Hungary and Romania, 14. Taken from [Stefan Wolff Official Website](#)

same time, nationalization affected the German population to a similar extent as the Hungarian population. Nationalization led the mostly rural German population to poverty.<sup>156</sup>

When Ceausescu signaled the departure from multiculturalism in the early 1970s, the Germans were also affected, however, not nearly as severely as the Hungarian population. Germans continued to enjoy a relative freedom of expression of their ethnocultural identity. Historian Stefan Wolff argues that, this was connected to the fact that, the Romanian communist regime had discovered that its German minority was a source of hard-currency income. The regime also wanted to benefit from Willy Brandt's *neue Ostpolitik*, as over 150,000 ethnic Germans were given exit visas to the federal Republic between 1977 and 1988, against a per-capita fee of between 8,000 and 12,000 Deutschmarks.<sup>157</sup> All post-war censuses show a decline in the number of ethnic Germans in Romania largely because of the profit incentives that triggered the government to let Germans leave.<sup>158</sup>



In essence, there were a series of factors that led to the migration-oriented policies: the small German population could not have a big role within the state. There were not dangerous

<sup>156</sup> "Neamul Svabilor din Banat Sta Sa Piara," *Jurnalul National*, 26 April 2004.

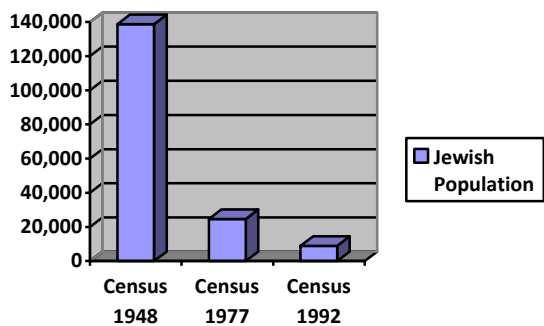
<sup>157</sup> Wolff 14

<sup>158</sup> The Census in 1992 is included in order to emphasize the decline of the German population. Taken from Varga E. Arpad. "Hungarians in Transylvania between 1870 and 1995: Supplementary Tables." *Teleki Laszlo Foundation* (1999). Accessed on 12 December 2010.

either, as seen in the case of the Hungarians. Like in many of the countries in Eastern Europe, the economic situation was difficult. When Germany offered the possibility of this exchange, the government embraced it.

#### 4.4. Early Policies of Inclusion and the Migration of the Jews

After the Holocaust, there were approximately 400,000 Jews in Romania. By 1977, as a result of mass emigration, approximately 20,000 remained.



The status of the post-war Jewish population rested heavily on restitution policies. It was a way for the population to go back to normality after the Antonescu era. However, nationalization delayed return of houses and other Jewish-owned property. As was the case with the other minorities, this state policy affected a large number of Jewish entrepreneurs. Consequently, Romania found itself dealing with a mass exodus to Israel. Emigration would, in fact, lessen the risk of ethnic conflict. However, the authorities prevented the departure of educated persons or those who could have contributed to the new socialist economy. Opinions were divided on the emigration issue leading to the regime's shifting policy vis-à-

vis the exodus of the Jewish population.<sup>159</sup> The interests of the Party managed however to offer an unprecedented set of privileges: ability to enter the Communist Party and have important positions at a local or administrative level. There was not a policy of aggressive segregation.<sup>160</sup>

However, due to the halting of the emigration policy between 1952 and 1956, Romania had to deal with a form of social anti-Semitism. In essence, the Jews were, once again, accused of spreading communism and communist values. In this context, the Party re-strategized its ethnic composition at the beginning of the 1950s, as the Jews were removed from political life. The community entered a period of marginalization.<sup>161</sup>

Improvement in the relations between Romania and Israel led to a change of status of the Jewish community. It is not a matter of Israeli pressure however, as it generally refrained from interfering in Romanian domestic policies, but a matter of economic concerns that had appeared even before Ceausescu took power. The economic benefits of an association with Israel and the United States were appealing to the governments of the time.<sup>162</sup> The opening of borders followed and a great number of the Jewish population fled to Israel. As Romanian-born Jewish mathematician Egon Balas described it, the Jews, “who had been traditionally discriminated against, now had an enormous privilege and advantage over non-Jews in that they could apply to emigrate.”<sup>163</sup>

Ceausescu’s liberal policy on Jewish emigration was appreciated extensively at an international level. Historian Leon Volovici argues that these open policies would have

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<sup>159</sup> Leon Volovici, “Romanian Jewry under Rabbi Moses Rosen during the Ceausescu Regime” in *Jews and the state: dangerous alliances and the perils of privilege*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (Oxford University Press, 2003), 183

<sup>160</sup> Volovici, 184.

<sup>161</sup> Volovici, 184.

<sup>162</sup> Volovici, 185.

<sup>163</sup> Volovici, 186.



influenced the greater spread of national ideology, since the population was to be far more homogeneous as a result of these exoduses.<sup>164</sup> The Jewish population was massively crippled after the war and despite a series of policies that might have emphasized its definite role on a political level the community was far too weak to pose any real threats to the regime, unlike the Hungarian population. On the contrary, it offered unexpected benefits, which Ceausescu ultimately took advantage of. Paradoxically, the Jews and the Germans had the same status within Romania which led to similar policies.

#### **4.5. The status of the Roma**

During the war, the Roma became an important focus for the Romanian racist state. However, their deportation was not seriously considered in the discourses of the communist leaders. The previous anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish policies were of greater importance to the communists. In fact, the Roma were not categorized as either a social or ethnic priority for the authorities. They were not discussed in relation to postwar minority policies. Furthermore, they were not mentioned in the policy towards “co-inhabiting nationalities.”<sup>165</sup> Roma were first considered a minority during the war, but were highly neglected as such before and after. Nevertheless, there was a preoccupation with the Roma, especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a program that focused on social integration was launched. We can only assume that its quick abandonment was related to the inability or lack of interest in acknowledging them as ethnic minorities.

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<sup>164</sup> Volovici, 186.

<sup>165</sup> Viorel Achim, “Romanian Memory of the Persecution of Roma” (paper presented at the Symposium *Roma and Sinti Understudied: Victims of Nazism*, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC, 2002): 59-77

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Minority policies during the communist period were triggered by a combination of previous causes. The internal engines were a mix of attempts for nation-building, centralization of power and economic interests. While the first half of the communist period had an ideological basis framed by the Soviet Union and generally controlled from Moscow, the need for domestic support of the relatively weak communist party in the early years cannot be ignored. However, the year 1968 played a definite role in the relationship between Romania and the rest of the USSR. Subsequently, Ceausescu “blocked” the country creating the perfect framework for a manifestation of an extreme national ideology. These elements reflected largely on the evolution of the minority policies, which heavily fluctuated between liberalization and constraints.

## Chapter 5

### Postcommunist Period and The Struggle for Legitimacy: 1989-2007

Scholars have extensively debated the involvement of the EU in the development of new democracies in Eastern Europe. Political scientist Laurence Whitehead emphasized the powerful impact of EU accession by stating that the organization:

...generates powerful, broad-based and long-term support for the establishment of democratic institutions because it is irreversible, and sets in train a cumulative process of economic and political integration that offers incentives and reassurances to a very wide array of social forces...it sets in motion a very complete and profound set of mutual adjustment processes, both within the incipient democracy and its interactions with the rest of the Community, nearly all of which tend to favor democratic consolidation...<sup>166</sup>

While the main idea of this argument is valid, one should not assume that the process of democratization would have external impetuses only. In the case of Romania and its minorities, one cannot ignore the resources for democratization that came from within. This aspect argues against Martin Brusis' positive rating of the impact exerted by the EU on shared power between ethnicities.<sup>167</sup> A look at the patterns of impetuses for minority policies in Romanian history also demonstrates a prevalence of internal factors and reactionary attitudes to external contexts. While the role of the EU in the drafting of the minority policies cannot be ignored, it should not be assumed that it was singular or decisive. In fact, the internal coordinates of these policies were maintained throughout the post-communist period.

The main concern of Romanian citizens in the aftermath of the Ceausescu regime was how to create a strong, lasting democracy based on political pluralism and social acceptance.

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<sup>166</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 19.

<sup>167</sup> He also defines Romania as an "exemplary" accession country. Martin Brusis, "The European Union and Interethnic Power-sharing Arrangements in Accession Countries," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol. 1 (2003): 1.

In this context, a great point of interest was how to transform an ethnic state, with a tradition of xenophobic fascism and nationalist communism, into a *civic state*. During the revolution of December 1989,<sup>168</sup> a number of reformed communists formed the National Salvation Front (NSF) and assumed the majority of political responsibilities. It has been argued however that their communist heritage slowed the process of democratization in the beginning, nationalism and centralization of power playing an important role between 1990 and 1996. The political change came in 1996 when the rightist Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) won the electoral majority, what some have called part of the second wave of democratization in the past communist region.<sup>169</sup> The main characteristic of this new government was the use of an *openness* policy. If the government of the early years of the transition period showed a centralized focus on internal affairs, often dismissing the intervention of the European Community, the CDR opened towards the West, emphasizing integration in the EU and NATO. The economic, political and social incentives proposed by the European Community determined a series of changes at the domestic level. Hence, I argue that the EU did not *impose* direct pressure when it comes to policies vis-à-vis minorities.<sup>170</sup> The socio-economic and political goals became the main catalyst for post-1996 governments to insure minority rights. This chapter focuses on the early post-communist nationalism, ideals of democratization and European institutional integration as the main impetuses for minority policies in post-communist Romania.

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<sup>168</sup> The only violent 1989 Revolution in Eastern Europe.

<sup>169</sup> Valerie Bunce, "Political Transition," In Wolchik and Curry, 33-54.

<sup>170</sup> This is different than European Union pressure in areas such as ruling justly or economic performance. For example, the European Union directly pressured Romania in creating the National Agency of Integrity, an institution created as part of a national anti-corruption strategy. Geographically, in post-conflict regions (e.g. Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina), the pressure has been more prominent.

## 5.1. Early Internal Changes and the Status of the Hungarians

The remains of Ceausescu's nationalist communism survived to a great extent in the early transition period. Former members of the communist party mostly formed the National Salvation Front, the party that took over power in Romania in 1990. They have often been called "reformed communists." In this context, the implications for minorities were vague. The Romanian government further focused on centralization, albeit moderate, drawing criticism from both the international community and from internal opposition. Nevertheless Ion Iliescu, the new president realized that the state needed legitimacy both internally and externally. In fact, it can be argued that the relationship between the government and the Hungarian population emphasized both the nationalist character of the state and the need for internal and external legitimacy. The first step in separating from communist policies towards minorities was the acknowledgment of the role of the Hungarian minority in the 1989 Revolution. Thus, the government started offering more rights, a stimulus to internal legitimacy.<sup>171</sup> An element that was to be considered in the drafting of the new policy frame was the fact that the Hungarian minority sparked the Timisoara events, the initial riot of the revolution. The Hungarian bishop Laszlo Tokes, an outspoken critic of the Ceausescu regime, was the central figure of this riot. The Securitate attempted to move him to a less prominent parish, but he refused to leave and on 17 December 1989 the police undertook an action to evict him from his house. This incident sparked riots in Timisoara leading to a general uprising in other areas of the country. In fact, in four days, genuine anti-communist

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<sup>171</sup> I define internal legitimacy as people's trust and confidence in the newly formed government.

demonstrations spread to Bucharest, throwing the country in a bloody revolution that led to the fall of the regime change.<sup>172</sup>

When the Ceausescu regime fell, the newly formed NSF created a ten-point program on 22 December, a first hint of openness towards minority rights. The document was a plan for democratization.<sup>173</sup> The first point of the program emphasized the establishment of political pluralism.<sup>174</sup> Another major point was point nine of the program, in which European integration and positive collaboration with neighboring countries become a clear interest of foreign policy.<sup>175</sup>

With the relationship between Romania and its neighboring countries becoming a major point in the process of early institutional democratization, Hungary played an interesting and unexpected role. Hungary was, in fact, the first state to recognize the new government on 23 December 1989. The goal was, primarily, to diminish the perception that Hungary still harbored territorial claims against Romania.<sup>176</sup> In essence, the shaping of policy towards the Hungarian minority in the early days of the transition period was heavily influenced by the relationship with Hungary, as it promoted democratic legitimacy and openness in foreign policy. On 11 January 1990 the countries signed a trade agreement, which stipulated the removal of restrictions on the sale of Hungarian books and newspapers

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<sup>172</sup> D.E.M. Mihas, "Romania Between Balkan Nationalism and Democratic Transition," *Politics*, Vol. 17 (1997): 178.

<sup>173</sup> "Comunicat catre tara al CSFN," *Monitorul Oficial, Partea I, Nr. 1* ( 22 decembrie 1989) [Communique to the country of the National Salvation Front].

<sup>174</sup> Point Number 1: The abandoning of the role of the one-party leader and the creation of a democratic system based on political pluralism; in Romanian: "Abandonarea rolului conducator al unui singur partid si statornicirea unui sistem democratic pluralist de guvernament;"

<sup>175</sup> Point Number 9: The foreign policy of a country to serve good neighboring, friendship and peace in the world, integrating itself in the process of building a united Europe, a common "home" for all the peoples of the continent. In Romanian: "Intreaga politica externa a tarii sa serveasca promovarii buneii vecinatati, prieteniei si pacii in lume, integrindu-se in procesul de construire a unei Europe unite, casa comuna a tuturor popoarelor continentului."

<sup>176</sup> Tom Gallagher, *Romania after Ceausescu: the politics of intolerance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 75

in Romania.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, Budapest had agreed to provide for the educational needs of the minority in Romania. These events contextualized the signing of declaration on the status of the national minorities in Romania. The NSF released this declaration on 5 January 1990, emphasizing the importance of the Hungarian involvement in the revolution and the open approach concerning the neighborly relations:

The revolution in Romania, an historic act of the entire people, of the Romanian nation and of the national minorities, attests to the unity and solidarity of all the homeland's sons who have wished freedom and authentic democracy. The bloodshed in common has shown that the policy of hate-mongering based on a chauvinistic policy of forced assimilation as well as the successive attempts to defame neighboring Hungary and the Hungarians in Romania, could not succeed in breaking the confidence, friendship and unity between the Romanian people and the national minorities. The National Salvation Front solemnly declares that it shall achieve and guarantee the individual and collective rights and liberties of all the national minorities.<sup>178</sup>

The declaration also emphasized that a Ministry of National Minorities would be created in order to “provide the appropriate institutional framework for the exercise of the minorities’ major rights, the use of their mother tongues, and the promotion of the national culture and the safeguarding of ethnic identity.”<sup>179</sup> This was, in fact, a strong addendum to the process of integration that had also been laid down through a law on local government. This decree emphasized that in areas of Romania inhabited by ethnic minorities, the mother language would be used in framing the decisions of the local state. Broadcasting in Hungarian (and German) was resumed, and radio stations from Bucharest and in the bigger cities of Transylvania had approximately twelve hours a week of transmissions in Hungarian. A process of restoring teaching in Hungarian in Targu Mures and Cluj, cities with a large Hungarian population, also emerged. However, despite a positive approach towards minority rights, the social implications were relatively negative in the early period of the 1990s.

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<sup>177</sup> Gallagher, 76

<sup>178</sup> *Rompres*, 6 January 1990. Taken from Gallagher, 76

<sup>179</sup> Gallagher, 76

On 15 March 1990 the Hungarian population in Targu Mures replaced Romanian flags and place names with the Hungarian version and chanted aggressive anti-Romanian slogans. On 19 March 1990, the headquarters of established Romanian parties, such as the National Liberal Party, were under siege. The Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR) was also attacked, a symbol of the disdain of the Hungarian minority towards compromise with the party in power. Finally, on 20 March 1990, street violence emerged. The aftermath of the events counted five casualties, 278 people injured; an Orthodox Church burned down and vandalized party headquarters. Petre Roman, the Romanian prime minister at the time, claimed “Hungarian nationalism had been revived in Transylvania by the actions of parties competing in the Hungarian general election which took place shortly after the Targu Mures events.”<sup>180</sup> However, despite the initial concerns expressed, there were no further radical positions, as both Romania and Hungary were attempting to implement political pluralism. The Romanian newspaper *Adevarul* published an analysis in March 2010 of the main causes for this conflict. One of the alternative assumptions was that these events were a result of the nationalist communism promoted by Ceausescu and the subsequent social and ethnic segregation.<sup>181</sup> After these events, the Romanian government promoted a nationalist rhetoric about threats from minorities and unfriendly neighboring states, making Andrei Cornea describe them as manipulations of nationalism that led to “an enormous diversion destined...to indefinitely delay the democratization of Romanian society and the alternation of power.”<sup>182</sup> In fact, nationalist symbolism from the pre-1945 era was heavily rehabilitated. The Iliescu regime began using historical commemorations that implied the

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<sup>180</sup> Gallagher, 93-94

<sup>181</sup> Mihaela Stoica, “Targu Mures 1990: Conflict intre maghiari si romani sau reactivarea fostei Securitati?” *Adevarul*, March 17, 2010.

<sup>182</sup> Andrei Cornea, “Targu Mures dupa 7 ani,” 22, June 3-9, 1997



country's past greatness in the pre-communist period. During the 1990s, six to eight statues of the interwar dictator Marshal Antonescu were put up around Romania, and twenty-five streets and squares were named after him.<sup>183</sup> These proofs of nationalism, along with a series of anti-opposition movements<sup>184</sup> attracted a lot of concern from the international community. In the end, however, the international interest of the Romanian government had more influence on the subsequent minority policies. A revival of Ceausescu's anti-minority policies or an emulation of Slobodan Milosevic's ethnocentrism would have been lethal in an international context. In essence, the weak economy, the need for foreign support from a socio-political standpoint and domestic need for legitimization played a more important role in the relationship with minorities. In the end, Romania accepted that the governing principle would have to be "respect for the democratic principles and human rights established by the Helsinki Final Act and the [1991] Charter of Paris for a New Europe."<sup>185</sup> One of the most poignant political implications of these approaches was the allowance of the Hungarian minority to have a full role in state affairs. In post-communist Romanian elections held in May 1990, the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR) received over 7% of the national vote and became the largest opposition party in Romania.<sup>186</sup> It is also without a doubt that Hungarians developed more freedom of expression than in the communist period. Analyst Tom Gallagher argues that, in fact, the "minority concerns figure more prominently on the NSF policy agenda earlier rather than later because Hungarians had organized themselves into a political body which soon showed that it was able to speak on the behalf of

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<sup>183</sup> Michael Schafir, "Varieties of Antisemitism in Post-Communist East Central Europe: Motivations and Political Discourse," *Jewish Studies at the Central European University* 3 (2002-2003): 175-210.

<sup>184</sup> Violent interventions of miners in Bucharest in 13-15 June 1990. These actions have been labeled as forms of state-led violence/terrorism against opposition groups.

<sup>185</sup> Article 6 of the EC-Romania Europe Agreement. Taken from Geoffrey Pridham and Tom Gallagher, *Experimenting with Democracy: Regime Change in the Balkans* (Routledge: New York, 2000), 160

<sup>186</sup> Mary E. McIntosh, Martha Abele Mac Iver, Daniel G. Abele, David B. Nolle, "Minority Rights and Majority Rule: Ethnic Tolerance in Romania and Bulgaria," *Social Forces*, Vol. 73 (March 1995): 944

a large section of the Hungarian population.”<sup>187</sup> In essence, there was a need to hold control domestically without interfering with foreign interests. Nevertheless, Iliescu’s attempts were weak: domestically, Romania was still fragile and the EU did not have enough power in a context in which ethnic nationalism, even though relatively subdued, clashed with attempts of foreign policy opening towards the West. In 1996, however, a new rightist government came to power offering Romania a new ray of hope. For Hungarians, this change was the most radical.

Iliescu’s successor, Emil Constantinescu, emphasized the domestic concerns that would eventually hinder the post-communist transition period in Romania. This was yet another focus on fixing the internal problems caused by fifty years of communist rule and a government made of political “remnants” of that period. After the events in Targu Mures, the interethnic relations between Romanians and Hungarians were tenser than before and the government believed that there was a need for reconciliation.<sup>188</sup> Consequently, UDMR joined the four-party coalition. Furthermore, a trade relationship flourished between Hungary and Romania. In his visit in March 1997, Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea emphasized the importance of economic cooperation, a switch from the Iliescu era when investment from Hungary was generally perceived as negative.<sup>189</sup> The international interests of the Romanian government were starting to take shape, as the image of Romania abroad strongly improved.

In the 2000 election, Ion Iliescu came back to power, but the leftist parties, particularly the Social Democrats, also known as the reformed NSF, went through an intense period of modernization. In fact, Iliescu kept the policies focused on institutional European

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<sup>187</sup> Gallagher, 77

<sup>188</sup> In the article published in *Adevarul* fear and the relationships strains are considered to be main consequences of the conflict.

<sup>189</sup> Tom Gallagher, “Nationalism and Romanian Political Culture in the 1990s.” In *Post-Communist Romania: coming to terms with transition*, ed. Duncan Light and David Phinnemore (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 109

integration in place. This conforms to post-communist theory that communist successor parties significantly change only once they use power in order to remain viable. Even if there could be a discussion about a success of the reforming of the Social Democrats after losing the elections in 1996, Iliescu became president after a second round against Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the leader of the Great Romania Party (PRM), a hypernationalist and highly xenophobic rightist party. The concerns among the population led to a clear victory for Iliescu in the second round. The relative success for the Great Romania Party was considered to be evidence of the still prevalent nationalism in Romania. However, I argue that in this case, popular nationalism played a small role. There were no serious negative social implications of the inclusion policies in the case of the Magyar population in this period of time. It could also be argued that it was simply a “protest” vote given to both Tudor and the rest of political class. Journalists Cas Mudde and Anna Siskova emphasized this disillusionment in their article *The Romanian Scenario*. They pointed out that CDR “had promised too much to too many people” but, despite its political discourse on Western-style democracy and openness towards the West, the coalition “soon turned governance into bickering over personal and financial details.”<sup>190</sup> The population was disappointed in the performances of both central-left and central-right governments. But fundamentally, European integration became the ultimate goal for the population as well. A backward nationalist ideology would have not fitted the long-term socio-political plan of foreign policy, which was finally attained in 2007, when Romania officially entered the EU.

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<sup>190</sup> Cas Mudde and Anna Siskova, “The Romanian Scenario,” *Transitions Online*, 15 December 2000.

## 5.2 The European Union and Its Incentives

On the surface, the European Union seems very powerful. A number of scholars argue that, in essence, the power of norms is crucial in shaping state behavior.<sup>191</sup> It is the first time when the external factor has used the term ‘conditionality’ or ‘membership conditionality,’ directly linking minority protection with EU membership. However, the greatest criticism comes from the fact that the criteria are extremely vague. Grabbe argues that the “uncertain linkage between fulfilling particular tasks and receiving particular benefits” may diffuse the EU’s influence, leaving it unable to directly pressure.<sup>192</sup> Moravcsik and Vachudova would go even further stating that the EU had created a set of standards on protection of ethnic minority rights that they had never set for themselves.<sup>193</sup> This suggests that, as political scientist Melanie Ram notes, “Western efforts to prevent ethnic violence and to help build democracies throughout the region have indeed seen mixed results.”<sup>194</sup>

The EU’s demands vis-à-vis minorities have not been precise or even strict in the case of Romania. This leads us to consider that the domestic government established its own minority policy management, focusing on the potential benefits that European integration could bring. I define the prospects offered by the EU as forms of soft forms of democracy promotion. Analyst Milada Anna Vachudova argues that “the greater the benefits of membership, the greater the potential political will to satisfy intrusive membership

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<sup>191</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International norm dynamics and political change,” *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1998): 887-917.

<sup>192</sup> Heather Grabbe, “How does Europeanization affect CEE governance? Conditionality, diffusion and diversity,” *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 8, No.6 (2001): 1025

<sup>193</sup> Andrew Moravcsik and Milada Anna Vachudova, “National Interest, State Power, and EU Enlargement,” *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 17, No. 1(Winter 2003): 46.

<sup>194</sup> Melanie Ram, “Democratization through European Integration: The Case of Minority Rights in Czech Republic and Romania,” *Studies In Comparative International Development*, Vol 38, No. 2 (Summer 2003): 31

requirements on the part of plausible future member states.”<sup>195</sup>

The failure to get Romania to pass a law on minorities in the early 1990s ultimately proves the early lack of power of the EU when it comes to involvement in internal use of minority policies. This is further supplemented by the fact that the EU depends on the willingness of the country to participate in the accession process.

In the early 1990s ethnic minorities in Romania demanded a national minority law. The involvement of the EU was relatively strong at first, as the Parliamentary Assembly wrote: “The Assembly proposes that the Romanian authorities and the Romanian Parliament:

1. Adopt and implement as soon as possible, in keeping with the commitments they have made and with Assembly Recommendation 1201, legislation on national minorities and education.”<sup>196</sup> Even if UDMR was quick to propose a draft law in December 1993, little happened on the issue after Romania joined the Council of Europe.<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, in January 1995, when the government created a coalition with three nationalist parties, Romanian National Unity Party, the PRM, and the Socialist Workers’ Party, the minority language law was not a priority and political scientist Judith Kelley argues that even the International Organizations “stemmed their efforts in realization of their futility.”<sup>198</sup> The external interest on the status of ethnic minorities in Romania was clearly persistent, however, in the case of the Roma population.

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<sup>195</sup> Milada Anna Vachudova, “The Leverage of the European Union on Reform in Postcommunist Europe” (paper presented at Workshop 4, *Enlargement and European Governance*, ECPR Joint Session Workshops, Turin, 22-27 March 2002): 4.

<sup>196</sup> “Opinion No.176 on the application by Romania for membership of the Council of Europe,” *Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly* (1993).

<sup>197</sup> A recurrent accession problem. Evidence shows that there is less focus on the internal performance of a country once it has joined a European organization. (e.g. European Union)

<sup>198</sup> Judith Kelley, “International Actors on the Domestic Scene: Membership Conditionality and Socialization by International Institutions,” *International Organization* 58 (Summer 2004): 443.

The Roma and their status in Romania has been a central point of concern for the European Union and other International Organizations. This can be considered a reactionary attitude to the growing number of the Roma population within Romania, particularly during the communist period: from 0.6% in 1956 to 2.4% in 2002.<sup>199</sup> At the beginning of the 1990s the EU's attention to the Roma issue was relatively limited, mostly due to the fact that they were not perceived as a dangerous minority to security and stability within the European space. In essence, the relationship between the state and the Hungarian minority posed a greater threat due to the minority's territorial nature and ethnonationalist claims. Analyst Peter Vermeersch also notes the "growing coverage of the Roma's predicament by the international media and by international advocacy organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Project on Ethnic Relations, and the European Roma Rights Center."<sup>200</sup> The growing Roma population in Western Europe, as a consequence of Roma migration, also helped determine its status as a "minority problem." Nevertheless, the marginalization of the Roma as approached by the international community should not be related to the policies settled by Romanian governments. The Roma have been politically and culturally less marginalized, but the social and economic exclusion has increased. In September 1993 the Transylvanian village of Hadareni was the scene of a serious attack upon the Roma: 750 ethnic Romanians and Hungarians killed four Roma, destroyed sixteen Roma dwellings and forced 130 to flee. The main criticism was that the reaction of the government was subdued, as it urged the Roma to simply move on.<sup>201</sup> But the concern is socially based

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<sup>199</sup> The clear numbers are still yet to be determined due to lack of official registration. Taken from "Minoritatile din Europa de Sud-Est: Romii din Romania," *Centrul de Documentare si Informare Despre Minoritatile din Europa de Sud-Est (CEDIMR-SE)*

<sup>200</sup> Peter Vermeersch, "Minority Policy in Central Europe: Exploring the Impact of the EU's Enlargement Strategy," *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 3, No.2 (January 2004): 8.

<sup>201</sup> Zoltan Barany, "Living on the Edge: The East European Roma in Postcommunist Politics and Societies," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer 1994): 332.

on interethnic clashes, national prejudice and discrimination.<sup>202</sup> In 1991 Human Rights Watch published a report that discussed a series of concerns about the status of gypsy discrimination. There is a doubt however about how much discrimination is closely related to direct policies against Roma. The report discusses a campaign against black market dealers in order to keep prices under control and to prevent inflation. While the groups targeted were prominently part of the Romani population, the economic policies were generally framed in order to create an internal balance that Romania needed at the beginning of the transition period.<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, the concept of democratic pluralism led to the decision not to obstruct the formation of Roma parties.<sup>204</sup> Thus, the economic and political interests determined the policies vis-à-vis Roma as well. In this context, the concern of the international organizations has been mainly on the basic type of discrimination of the Romani population and the governmental reaction.

At the beginning of the 1990s Helsinki Watch emphasized that the government in Romania simply did not have any political will in dealing with racial violence that targeted the Roma population or in giving any type of protection.<sup>205</sup> Amnesty International has published reports as well, in which discrimination of Romani has been the main topic of analysis when it comes to Romanian government policies towards minorities. They targeted local conflicts<sup>206</sup> and even elements of concern within the media.<sup>207</sup> As the debate around the

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<sup>202</sup> "Minoritatile din Europa de Sud-Est: Romii din Romania"

<sup>203</sup> Helsinki Watch, "Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Persecution of the Gypsies in Romania," August 1991, 61.

<sup>204</sup> Dan Ionescu, "The Gypsies Organize," *Radio Free Europe Report on Eastern Europe*, 29 June 1990, 42.

<sup>205</sup> Helsinki Watch, "Lynch Law: Violence Against Roma in Romania," Vol. 6, No. 17 (1994): 5

<sup>206</sup> "The mayor of the southern city of Craiova has been fined twice (€700 altogether) by the National Council for Fighting Against Discrimination (CNCD, the statutory body in charge of monitoring the application and observance of legal provisions on preventing, sanctioning and eliminating all forms of discrimination by public and private institutions, persons and companies) for racist remarks expressed on two occasions (20 April and 4 May 2005). The reaction of the authorities to the incidents was initially slow, and action was taken only after a petition to the authorities by the Media Monitoring Group and European Roma Information

Roma population remains a central concern, its coordinates seem to be focused heavily on how social pressure works and how governments *react*. In the Romanian case, the policies have proved to be open since the beginning, due to a series of domestic and international interests. Despite the numerous alerts concerning discrimination and prejudice, these factors were not particularly defined at a policy level. In a Monitoring report from 2006, the EU noted:

There are still cases of institutional violence against and assaulting of Roma, such as police raids and evictions in Roma communities, without providing them with alternative accommodation. Generally, the level of awareness of the Roma situation and of the government strategy for Roma, especially in the local communities, which are responsible for the evictions, is low. Local authorities should be supported to develop community development projects and bring solutions to the problems of legality of Roma settlements or others. The institutional framework for the implementation of the national strategy for Roma is not yet sufficiently effective and it tends to diminish the capacity decisionmaking capacity of the National Agency for Roma and representatives of the Roma population to participate effectively in decision-making in relevant areas. Romania's preparations in this area should be stepped up immediately and continued after accession.<sup>208</sup>

The immediacy to the 2007 accession would suggest that the EU pressure was at a very high level at the moment of the report. However, the Romanian Center for Ethnocultural Diversity mentioned in a later analysis that, in fact, the implementation of the EU requirements was relatively low when it comes to minorities.<sup>209</sup> The weakness of the suggests, once again, that minority policies in Romania had a reactionary value to incentives and less on intense pressuring.

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Office.” Taken from “Bulgaria and Romania: Amnesty International’s Human Rights Concerns in the EU Accession Countries,” *Amnesty International* (2005), 11.

<sup>207</sup> “The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) reported an increase in racist remarks made against the Roma in the media in the first half of 2005. The neutral terms of “rom” or “rrom” are reportedly only used in the articles addressed to the wider audience in the pan-European context, whilst pejorative terms such as “tigan” and “piranda” are increasingly used in the context of crime, police involvement and scandals.” Taken from Amnesty International, 11

<sup>208</sup> “Communication from the Commission: Monitoring report on the state of preparedness for EU membership of Bulgaria and Romania,” *Commission of the European Communities*, Brussels, 6 September 2006. 40

<sup>209</sup> “Drepturile Minoritatilor in Practica.” *Centrul de resurse pentru diversitate culturala* (2006-2007). [“Minority Rights in Practice.” *The Center for Resources for Cultural Diversity*].



The relationship between Romania and the European Community at the beginning of the transition period was fairly weak. The persistence of nationalism, the frail economy, and spread of corruption were a few critical issues for Romania. Furthermore, the issue of minority rights was not clearly defined within the European Community. In the mid 1990s the EU started addressing minority issues. Starting in 1996, when preparing the 1997 Agenda, the EU began a framing of the expectations that the process of accession was to emphasize. The EU stated that certain ethnic minority legislation was a requirement for opening negotiations, but it did not dictate policy formulation. Accession was the incentive and the government modeled its policies based on level of interest, which in the Romanian case was very high.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Stephen Deets, "Reimagining the Boundaries of the Nation: Politics and the Development of Ideas on Minority Rights," *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 20, No.3 (2006): 429

## Conclusions

The relationship between Romanian state and its minorities has been largely analyzed throughout the years. With post-conflict nation building or European integration preoccupying current international politics of the region, there is a need to focus on the general picture of state construction and how governments managed or controlled their minorities. As the EU kept growing, finally accepting Romania and Bulgaria as members in 2007, there has been a growing focus on how countries in the region have managed “by their own” and the “real” role of the international factors in the internal politics of these states. The emphasis on the economy and political dynamics has, however, hindered an important social aspect: the case of the ethnic minorities. Romania did not go through a civil war rooted in multi-ethnicity and most interests of the external actors, either states or organization, currently seem to be more and more focused on social discrimination vis-à-vis Romani population. However, Romania has had a long history when it comes to ethnic minorities. In this study, I focus on the approach of the state and the main impetuses that came into play in the drafting of the minority policies in the twentieth century.

In 1918 Romania went through a series of geographic changes, as Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina were added to the Great Kingdom. This is the key moment in the relationship between the state and its minorities, mostly because these regions had a number of ethnicities (Hungarians, Ukrainians, Germans, Russian-Bessarabians) that led to a commitment of nation strengthening. This was the main impetus behind these policies of the time, the focus largely being on education and citizenship. Also, the government needed more control and internal legitimacy. But if these factors led to policies of attempted

assimilation of a large sector of the minority population, grassroots Romanian anti-Semitism of the nineteenth century also developed extensively in the interwar period. Dreams of homogeneity led to a segregation of the Jewish population. The process of nation building largely shadowed the role of the international community of the time. Despite the existence of a relatively enthusiastic League of Nations, its role was minimal and largely purely theoretic in its Minority Treaties.

It is without doubt that during the interwar period the focus on population homogeneity led to political and social xenophobia. There was a remarkable rise of the extreme right. This was not a singular case, but part of an extensive trend in Europe, seen in the rise of Hitler or Mussolini. King Carol II was influenced to a large extent by the personalities of the fascist leaders, but less by the foreign policy of these countries in relation to Romania. Nevertheless, Romania tended to associate its foreign policy more and more with Germany. However, Carol's personal political interests seemed to have trumped arguments that highlight direct external involvement in domestic policy. In fact, the need of power for the King led to a series of erratic decisions vis-à-vis minorities. On one hand there was a massive trend of acceptance and integration, as seen in the case of Hungarians, Germans or Ukrainians, but the Jews were victims of the growing interwar anti-Semitism. Carol, however, did not lead a definite "crusade" against Jews. His successor Ion Antonescu, however, was the leader of the great anti-Semitic movement in Romania.

General Ion Antonescu, a controversial figure in Romanian history helped orchestrate the Romanian Holocaust, particularly between 1938 and 1944. His alliances with Nazi Germany and friendship with Hitler led to a focus on the pro-Germany foreign policy of Romania. However, the Romanian government's and Antonescu's xenophobic policies

against the Jews and the Roma were largely influenced by hypernationalism and ideals of a homogeneous Romania, and only as reactions to the international context of the time.

Antonescu's racial state was not born suddenly. In essence, the Marshal's hypernationalism stemmed from a previously discriminatory state. The internal focus of his policies can be clearly seen in his decision to save a great number of Jews from being deported to Poland.

The dichotomy between his decisions concerning the Jewish and Romani populations led to a series of controversies around his politics, heavily exploited by subsequent regimes.

The communist period in Romania developed in a peculiar manner. Once again, the state reacted to external factors, particularly the influence of the leaders in Moscow. But when it comes to minorities the domestic interests outplayed the potential pressure from Moscow. The initial need for political legitimacy made the communist political leaders draft policies in order to gain supporters of the regime. The Hungarian population, for example, was represented politically and received an autonomous regime. Things changed in 1956 due to the Hungarian Revolution, a matter of concern for the Romanian communists. A series of restrictions followed for the Hungarian population, suggesting that the domestic political interests mattered immensely for the Romanian leaders. The switch from liberal to restrictive policies points to an internal need to centralize power and have a wide control over the population. Nicolae Ceausescu supported a new set of liberal policies concerning minorities. But this halted in 1971, when he started building a nationalist communist state. His minority policies mirrored the interwar period, when the government supported aggressive assimilation. Ceausescu wanted to *overcentralize* power and homogeneity of the state was an important element of interest. This is also a period of migration of German and Jewish populations, supported by Ceausescu. The economic interests of the state had a great

influence, especially if one considers that for every person that left for Germany, the state would receive hard currency. In essence, Ceausescu's policies of assimilation and non-aggressive homogenization based on allowance of migration created a favorable context for the manifestation of the national ideology under communism.

When communism fell in 1989, the government was left with a shattered country from a socio-political and economic point of view. The immediate enthusiasm led to a sudden revival of liberal policies towards minorities. However, the initial government was mostly made of reformed communists, an aspect that hindered, according to some political scientists, interests of accession in the EU. Hence, the influence of the EU at the beginning of the decade was relatively minimal. Romania was still a nationalist state to a great extent. Nevertheless, the potential accession to the EU offered strong incentives, largely emphasized by the elected government of 1996. In essence, the potential support of economic and political development led to an important change of approach by the post-communist governments. This can be clearly seen in the socio-political rights offered to minorities. Despite an international focus on recurrent discrimination vis-à-vis the Roma population in Romania, the reports of the international community did not play a crucial role. The governments did not draft any anti-Roma policies specifically. The discrimination seems to have social motivation only. Even more, these extensive reports on discrimination do not seem to have had any heavy implications in the accession to the EU. The lack of clear focus on the meritocratic accession on the issue of minorities, leads to a strong debate between scholars about the true role of the EU in the relationship between states and minorities. In the Romanian case, the EU's role was not decisive or singular, the impetus coming, once again, from within.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from this study is the fact that throughout the twentieth century, the internal needs and interests of the governments, such as domestic legitimization, socio-economic and political domestic interests, have heavily determined minority politics. Whether or not the Romanian governments succeeded in their aims to assimilated, segregate or integrate minorities, it is without doubt that they had great control in dealing with Romanian multi-ethnic society. It is also noticeable that the importance of minorities in Romania has decreased systematically. At this stage, it seems that Romania has stagnated when it comes to managing its minorities. International NGOs and human rights groups have maintained their focus on the discrimination of the Romani population. However, the EU does not seem to have any considerable influence on the matter. When it comes to the Hungarian group, they have been part of the political spectrum in the last twenty years and have played a big role in the last eight years.<sup>211</sup> The main cause for their inclusion was a series of political interests, which involved the need for a majority vote in the Parliament. Hence, an alliance with the Hungarian party has proved to be successful. Ultimately, it seems that the pattern of the focus on the internal impetuses has been kept since the accession in the EU. It is difficult to predict whether the EU would pressure Romania in a case of extreme measures against minorities, such as the expulsion of a specific ethnic group.<sup>212</sup> But in the end, looking at the post-1918 history of the relationship between state and minorities, Romanian governments seem to play by their own rules. At this stage, an extreme action against any minority group would simply not be useful or relevant.

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<sup>211</sup> In the 2004 elections the UDMR became part of the governing coalition. UDMR President Marko Bela was elected Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Education, Cultural and European Integration.

<sup>212</sup> In the light of the 2010 expulsions of the Roma population in France, the EU has had a very aggressive reaction. EU chief Viviane Reding called the deportations a “disgrace” and called for immediate action against the French government. Ian Traynor, “Roma deportations by France a disgrace says EU.” *The Guardian*, 14 September 2010.

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