New Europe College Yearbook 2023-2024

Volume 2

ANCA DIANA AXINIA
MALTE FUHRMANN
PETRO KUZYK
ADRIAN-GEORGE MATUS
MANUEL MIREANU
DAN-ALEXANDRU SĂVOAIA
ROMAN SHLIAKHTIN
LUCIAN VASILE
NATALIIA VUSATIUK
EDWARD WAYSBAND

Editor: Andreea Eșanu

ISSN 1584-0298

New Europe College
Str. Plantelor 21
023971 Bucharest
Romania
www.nec.ro; e-mail: nec@nec.ro
Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10

ANCA DIANA AXINIA

Ștefan Odobleja Fellow

Independent Scholar
anca.axinia@gmail.com

Biographical note

Anca Diana Axinia received her Ph.D. in history from the European University Institute in Florence in 2022. Her dissertation *Women and Politics in the Romanian Legionary Movement* is the first systematic study of women's participation and gender relations in the Romanian Legionary Movement. The publication of her research findings has begun in 2023 with an article in the *European Review of History* and chapters in two forthcoming edited volumes published by Brill and Bloomsbury Academics.

GENDER AND THE REPRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE BUCHAREST POGROM (JANUARY 21-23, 1941)

Anca Diana Axinia

Abstract

This article examines the participation of women in the Bucharest pogrom and the representation of their violent actions, in particular in relation to transitional justice. The Bucharest pogrom was one of the first very violent episodes of the Holocaust in Romania. It occurred during the so-called legionary rebellion, a confrontation between General (later Marshall) Ion Antonescu and the Legionary Movement. In the immediate aftermath of the events, rumors started to circulate on the involvement of legionary women and their savage cruelty. Despite the recurrence of this element in several accounts, the participation of women in the Bucharest pogrom has never been thoroughly investigated so far. After the introduction, the first section will analyze the interrelations between women, gender, and violence in the Legionary Movement before the pogrom. In the second section, I will present the case study of a couple who took part in an episode of the pogrom, through the prism of the legal proceedings undertaken against them. Their long legal history, and the analysis of the interactions among defendants, victims, and the courts, will allow us to follow the changing definitions and meanings of the categories of violence, perpetrator, and responsibility throughout the years.

Keywords: Holocaust; Romania; women; gender; Legionary Movement; transitional justice

1. Introduction

On January 24, 1941, Emil Dorian, a Romanian Jewish doctor living in Bucharest, registered in his diary the first news of the events that occurred between January 21st and January 23rd. “We had a civil war.”, Dorian wrote. “Gradually we learn about the fight […] and – something I could never have imagined – [about] the pogrom that for two nights and two days swept through the Jewish quarter”.

[1] The "civil war" mentioned by Dorian was the so-called legionary rebellion, which put a violent end to the brief experience of the National Legionary State. Installed in September 1940, this political regime was built on the fragile alliance between General (later Marshall) Ion Antonescu and the Legionary Movement. The legionary rebellion offered Antonescu the opportunity to outlaw the Legionary Movement and install his own military dictatorship, with the backing of Nazi Germany.[2]

The Bucharest pogrom was one of the first very violent episodes of the Holocaust in Romania. Torture and assassinations, which resulted in hundreds of victims, were accompanied by the destruction of more than a thousand Jewish stores, houses, and workshops. The Coral Temple (Templul Coral), the main synagogue of the city and the symbolic heart of the Jewish community of Bucharest, was devastated, together with most of the other smaller synagogues. The dimensions and violence of the pogrom led Jean Ancel to write, in his extensive work devoted to the Holocaust in Romania, that "had this pogrom been committed in some period other than the Holocaust, it would probably have gone down in history as the largest pogrom against Jews since Kishinev (1903)".[3]

Details and photographs of the atrocities committed against the Jewish population started to circulate in the days following the pogrom. Episodes such as the massacre perpetrated at the Bucharest slaughterhouse, where bodies were found hanged on the hooks, became paradigmatic of the extreme cruelty and inhumane ferocity displayed by the legionaries.[4] Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of the legionary rebellion, rumors started to circulate on the involvement of legionary women and their savage cruelty. Emil Dorian noted in his diary that "here too, as elsewhere among criminal monsters, there have been women".[5] Jean Ancel, in his already mentioned work on the Holocaust in Romania, has underlined the fact that legionary women "tortured, murdered, and looted their Jewish victims".[6]

This article is the result of my preliminary research on legionary women's participation in the Bucharest pogrom and the representation of their violent actions, in particular, as we shall see, in the context of transitional justice.[7] As historian Adrian Cioflâncă has underlined as recently as 2021, the Bucharest pogrom is still a largely under-researched subject.[8] And even more so are its gendered dimensions. The development and research trajectories of Holocaust studies on and in Romania partially explain these gaps. The study of the Holocaust in Romania is still a "new" field of inquiry which, since 1989, has gone through different stages and

has followed different research interests. Understandably, during the first two decades of research in newly-opened archives, priority was given to the assessment of dimensions, responsibilities, and underlying motivations, ideologies, and rationales. As a result, crucial works have been devoted to the role of Ion Antonescu and his state apparatus, to the economic and ideological aspects of the Holocaust in Romania, as well as to the logics of violence and the peculiarities of the Romanian case.[9]

The assessment of the dimensions of, and the responsibilities for the Holocaust in Romania represented in the 2000s both a historiographical and a political necessity. Throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, a common trend, widespread at popular and institutional levels alike, tended to minimize or altogether deny Romania's participation in the Holocaust, deflecting all responsibility towards Nazi Germany. This position became, however, increasingly undefendable in light of the new emerging archival evidence and the historiographical efforts of many scholars; concomitantly, the negotiations for Romania's entry into NATO and later the EU prompted the government to intervene on this matter. The International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania was established in 2003 and its final report was approved the following year.[10] The state officially recognized the country's participation in the Holocaust and the National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was founded in 2005.

Writing in 2012, Roland Clark has observed how these institutional interventions and the creation of a permanent research center have contributed to an expansion of the field. At the same time, however, research on the Holocaust in Romania still lacked the perspectives of cultural and gender histories.[11] The past decade has registered if not an explosion of research, surely a much wider opening towards previously unexplored issues, with broader social, geographical and cultural scopes. While a comprehensive survey of these works is beyond the scope of this article, among them are studies devoted to the persecution and extermination of the Roma population, to Jewish forced labor, the Romanian army, the pogrom of Iași, the Kishinev ghetto, and transitional justice, together with works on memory studies and on Holocaust representation in media.[12]

In this wave of new and wider research scopes, the inclusion of women as subjects and of gender as a category of analysis has remained marginal at best. But this is far from being an aspect specific to the historiography of the Holocaust in Romania. Marion Kaplan has observed how gender analyses, while able to offer a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding

of the Holocaust as a human experience, were met with reluctance by traditional historians and rarely included in mainstream narratives.[13] While perceptions have gradually changed as far as the victims are concerned, research on women "perpetrators" has fought even longer and harder against cultural stereotypes and uneasiness in order to be taken seriously. After an initial focus on women in the concentration camp network, pathbreaking research has started to explore the less clearly definable roles and responsibilities of "ordinary" women, mainly in relation to the Holocaust, but increasingly also in other genocidal contexts.[14]

Following this line of inquiry, I will explore the figure of the legionary woman as perpetrator, along and beyond the rumors surrounding the cruelty and the violence displayed during the Bucharest pogrom. Firstly, a brief section will provide an overview of the relationships between women, gender and violence in legionary ideology and practice before the pogrom. The rest of the article will be devoted to the case study of a legionary woman who took part in an episode of the Bucharest pogrom with her husband (a "legionary couple"[15]). Inspired by works on women perpetrators from Italy and Hungary, and guided, at the same time, by the available sources, I will follow the legal proceedings undertaken against her at different times, within two very different political regimes engaged in their own understanding of transitional justice.[16] The legal history of this legionary woman sheds light on changing perceptions and representations of the concepts of violence, responsibility, and antisemitism among the prosecutors, the witnesses, the defendants, and the judges.

2. Sister, Fighter, Martyr: Gender and Violence in the Legionary Movement

In his remarkable reconstruction of the Iași pogrom (27-30 June, 1941), Jean Ancel characterized the participation of women in the pogrom as a "phenomenon". The space devoted to women's actions is scant but revelatory of the author's perception: "during the events that occurred in Iași reappeared the phenomenon of the *Romanian woman* – legionary or not – who takes part in the pogrom, shows an uncompromising hatred, beats and breaks, as already happened during the Bucharest pogrom six months earlier".[17] After these introductory remarks, a few more pages describe some of the violent actions perpetrated by women during those days. The choice of the word "phenomenon" and the use of italics

suffuse women's participation with a sense of awe, of disbelief, as if this phenomenon could be read as the ultimate sign of a society's loss of any moral compass.

Beyond cultural stereotypes around women's "nature", the sense of bewilderment provoked by the presence of women in the context of violent events stems also from a failure to fully acknowledge them as historical and political subjects. If women are absent from "general" reconstructions or appear in them only marginally, their participation in extraordinary events can easily be framed as a "phenomenon". But women *were* there, before and after the extraordinary events, and, as well as their male counterparts, they faced political choices. In interwar Romania, some women joined the Legionary Movement, founded by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in 1927 and later one of the major far-right, fascist and antisemitic parties of the interwar era.[18]

The Legionary Movement has become the subject of renewed historiographical interest in the past decade. More comprehensive and theoretically refined monographs have reconstructed the movement's political and social history, as well as the life and activity of Codreanu and his immediate entourage.[19] Increasing, though not systematic attention has been devoted as well to women's participation and gender relations within the Legion.[20] The presence of an active and organized women's section is considered as one of the movement's more "innovative" features, in a country where women were still a marginal presence in the political sphere.[21]

The Legion's rhetoric, tinged with militarism and violence, was certainly more appealing to men, and in fact its membership was overwhelmingly male. Nevertheless, the movement was open to female membership and recognized the importance of attracting women and including them in its activities. Throughout the movement's expansion, in particular in the mid-1930s, the number of women followers increased, bringing also a wider diversity in its social composition. The forms of political activism available to legionary women depended on multiple interactions between gender, class, age, and marital status. Ultimately, women's actions and degree of involvement rested upon the decisions and considerations of the male leadership of the movement. Dynamics of relative power within the women's section and in relation to legionary men often shaped and defined women's political agency.

These different dynamics of power impacted also legionary women's relationships with the movement's ideologies and practices of violence.

Even before its official foundation as the "Legion of the Archangel Michael" in June 1927, violence represented a distinctive feature of the Legionary Movement's first nucleus of members. A violent language, permeated by virulent antisemitism and by attacks directed toward various "enemies" was accompanied by physical violence, displayed in street riots, student protests and, ultimately, in political assassinations. Several assassinations marked the history of the movement, starting with the murder of the police prefect of Iași by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in 1924. At that time, the future leader of the Legion was taking his first political steps and the assassination and the subsequent trial, which ended with an acquittal motivated by "legitimate defense", boosted his popularity at a national level. This first, almost initiatory assassination, was followed by others, and some of them became part of a legionary "mythology" of violence.

The assassinations of the Jewish industrialist Tischler Mohr and of the Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Duca, in May and December 1933 respectively, became paradigmatic in this sense. The Legion defended the Romanian people from the Jewish "threat" and concomitantly defended itself and its activities from the incessant "attacks" of the state. This ideological and propagandistic issue became an increasingly important feature of the legionary self-portrait, in particular during the years 1936 and 1937. Writing in 1937, the prominent legionary member Alexandru Cantacuzino described violence "as a form of national education, as a force aimed to arouse the virtues of the Romanian people".[22] Another legionary ideologue, Dumitru C. Amzăr, presented legionary violence as a necessary defensive action, which occurred when the "soul" and the "honor" of a legionary member were repeatedly demeaned and offended. Thus, a violent act by a member of the Legion was never an act of aggression, but rather a retaliation, a revenge, or a response to a previous enemy strike.[23]

By designing its political activity as warfare, even if a "defensive" one, the Legion was an inherently violent movement and violence was inextricably linked to political action. It acquired an ordinary dimension through violent language and attitudes, with the effect of producing and maintaining a state of fear and uncertainty among their targeted "enemies", in particular the Jewish population. The inclusion of women in this narrative of violence, as well as their participation in violent actions, followed a more complex path. The Legionary Movement envisaged a women's section from its foundation in 1927. The following year, a language aimed at incorporating women into the militaristic world

of legionary ideology and discourse started to emerge. The Legion's ideological elaborations during this early stage can be traced throughout the pages of the movement's first magazine *Pământul Strămoșesc* (The Ancestral Land, 1927-30, 1933).

In spring 1928, the magazine announced the foundation of the first formal women's section, the "sisters of the Legion". The women of the section were presented as a group of "fighting women", introducing the concept of the woman fighter for the first time in legionary language.[24] Even more militarized accents accompanied the foundation of the first women's group – called *cetățuie* (small fortress) – in the city of Galați. The language of the article is permeated by military metaphors, and the "fortress" is defined as a "soldierly" organization.[25] Thus, ideologically speaking, the Legion was presented as an army, and every member, men and women, as a potential fighter. The choice of the word "small fortresses" to define women's groups is in line with the rhetoric of "defensive" violence mentioned above.[26]

As was the case with many other ideological stances, the concept of the legionary woman fighter was further elaborated in the mid-1930s, concomitantly with the Legion's expansion in following and political importance. In 1935, the prominent legionary commander Ion Banea, in a booklet called *Rânduri către generația noastră* (Lines for our generation), called for the participation of women alongside men in the great legionary battle:

> "We find ourselves today in a moment of great transformations, of fight. From this honorable battle, the women of our times can't be missing. We want the woman of our generation to be a fighter. *We want her to be a comrade.*"[27]

The role of legionary women as "fighters" and "comrades in arms" became an increasingly important theme in legionary gender discourse. The meanings and implications related to the potential role of women as fighters were analyzed at various times in the mid-1930s, signaling thus a need for this issue to be addressed more deeply by legionary ideologues.

As was often the case in legionary discourse, ideological stances and rhetorical choices were constantly reshaped and modified by actual circumstances and practices. The attention given to the issue of the woman fighter in the mid-1930s was very likely fostered by the growing number of women who joined the Legion, and by the discussions on various

role models these women found available or desirable for them within the movement. Legionary ideologues seemed particularly concerned with the education and training deemed appropriate for women. In this sense, in a document intended for internal use it was stated that women's education should be in accordance with the "feminine" spirit and should encourage and privilege "feminine" predispositions, at professional and social levels.[28] However, inflamed by the rhetoric of battle, the spectrum of appropriate options for women became wider.

Thus, what did it mean for the women who joined the Legionary Movement to have different, if not contradictory, models to conform to? Was the idea of fighting and contributing to the defense of the nation appealing to women? Could women militate alongside men? Could they be violent? Could they be heroes? The legionary poet and ideologue Radu Gyr tried to find answers to these and other questions in a booklet published in 1936 and developed from the text of a lecture he gave at the University of Iași in December 1935. In this relatively long booklet, replete with literary and cultural references, the author considered the ways and forms of women's participation in the "spiritual, moral and national heroism" that he ascribed to the "revolutionary" legionary youth. Starting from the premise that women had a crucial role to play in the heroic endeavors of the Legion, Gyr analyzed these roles and "missions".

The grounds of his theses comprise a wide range of presumptions and stereotypes about feminine "psychic" qualities and women's "natural" superior morality and intensity of feelings. As a result, for Gyr women were naturally inclined toward self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, and these virtues, central to the legionary ethos, could be stimulated by women, first and foremost in their roles as wives and mothers. But being wives and mothers were not the only roles available, given the inexhaustible qualities of women. They could be intellectuals, and at the same time, cultivate the arts and crafts inherited from their grandmothers, and they could even be called to defend their own homes and their country "weapons in hand". Enumerating a wide range of role models, from Joan of Arc and Antigone to the Virgin Mary, what the author envisaged in the booklet was the quasi-absurd ideological construct of a "heroine" or better, a "super-heroine" expected to fulfil a variety of duties and roles by virtue of her extraordinary qualities and spiritual greatness.[29]

The booklet of Radu Gyr represented the most systematic attempt to offer an ideological framework for the roles and models available to women in the Legionary Movement. However, throughout the highly

rhetorical and metaphorical discourse, the practical actions of a legionary woman fighter remained very vague. The direct connection between women and violence was not directly exposed. While legionary women were depicted as potential fighters, heroines, and "comrades in arms", the exercise of violence by women did not emerge in a straightforward way. Gyr briefly hinted at this possibility when he presented legionary women as able to defend their country "weapons in hand", if necessary. Being a fighter might have entailed to be ready to die for the Legion and for the nation, but significantly, there was no mention of women's readiness to kill.

Militarized language and women's participation in legionary "battles" notwithstanding, committing acts of violence remained a taboo. This taboo was primarily an ideological one, but also a practical one. The issue of self-sacrifice, was, on the contrary, more in line with legionary discourse and its passive character made it more suitable for women as well. As Jean Bethke Elshtain has observed, the construction of women as "naturally" non-violent, mostly in relation to their role as "life givers", has often excluded women from the very conceptualization of violence, especially collective violence.[30] In this sense, the incorporation of women into the legionary "army" was not taken to its extreme, and in legionary discourse there was little ideological room for women to commit violent acts.

This taboo, however, was mostly valid in the case of physical violence. Nonetheless, the legionary political project was inherently and overtly violent. Not only was its political activity envisaged as warfare, but the entire legionary ideology and the future "legionary world" the movement strove to build were grounded in violence. Antisemitism was the backbone of legionary ideology, and various forms of violence against the Jewish population constituted an integral part of the movement's political activity. To this violence legionary women members and sympathizers contributed in manifold ways, through their support to the Legion and the adoption of a violent language and attitude toward the Jewish population. Women's voices were seldom present in legionary publications and propaganda material. In the very rare cases when they were, women proved to have incorporated the violent antisemitic language promoted by the legionary discourse.

The first article published in *The Ancestral Land* written by a legionary woman, the student Maria Vieru, contained all the elements typical of legionary propaganda. Despite what would come to be called (by legionary men) women's "sensitivity", the violence of her language was not sweetened merely because it was written by a woman or directed

to women readers. The references to "Jewish dirt" were as crude and straightforward as the ones written by male authors.[31] A similar example is offered by the songs written by Viorica Lăzărescu, seemingly the only woman songwriter of the movement. Songs were a very important element in the legionary rituals, and they were sung at meetings, events, and commemorations. There were songs dedicated to various regional groups, to the "legionary youth", to the "heroes" who had died in battle, like Ion Moța and Vasile Marin. Songs marked important moments and figures of the Legion and collective singing reinforced the bonds of legionary fraternity.[32] In Lăzărescu's lyrics the main legionary themes are not "feminized" or translated into gendered terms. Many of her lyrics featured "calls to battle", indicating their composition in a period when the concept of politics as warfare was well-established, as was women's contribution to the legionary struggle. Moreover, in the song *Înainte* (Forward), Lăzărescu mentions the "vile pagans", who were bringing to the Romanian people only "injustice and tears".[33]

The brief period during which the Legionary Movement came to power alongside Ion Antonescu represented yet another, short-lived but significant, shift in discourses and practices in relation to women's participation. The National Legionary State lasted from September 1940 to the so-called legionary rebellion and the concomitant pogrom of January 21-23, 1941. The Legion seized power after two years of underground activity, characterized by extreme violence and dramatic changes. Codreanu, together with many other prominent members, had been assassinated and a great number of legionaries were imprisoned. With the proclamation of the National Legionary State in September 1940, the prisoners were released and legionary cadres both old and new tried to resurrect the Legion from its ashes. But violence was not abandoned, on the contrary: the few months of the regime were characterized by chaos, incompetence, arbitrary violence, revenge against former "enemies" and the instituting of a state of terror for the Jewish population.

In this context, the discourses on and the activities of legionary women took at least two very different paths. On the one hand, the creation of the "Organization of Legionary Ladies" in October 1940 grouped together old and new supporters from the upper classes.[34] These "ladies", and several other legionary women, engaged in philanthropic activities and offered a wide range of social provisions. An ample series of social initiatives were covered by the press and saw the participation of many high society women, legionary and otherwise. The union of different nationalist

political forces was deemed necessary given the moment of crisis and the potential entry of Romania into the war, which did not happen, however, until June 1941.

On the other hand, the Legion commemorated women "martyrs" who had lost their lives for the legionary ideal. The very restricted number of women to have "fallen in battle" transformed them in legionary discourse into exceptional examples of strength, sacrifice, and devotion. Among these women, the ultimate "heroine" in the legionary pantheon was Nicoleta Nicolescu, the Legion's first commander of the women's section and personal friend of Codreanu. In July 1939, Nicolescu was arrested and subsequently tortured and assassinated by the police. In the fall of 1940, among the incessant ceremonies, memorials, and commemoration of dead legionaries, Nicoleta Nicolescu received constant attention. An article from the time even used the expression "Nicoletele", a collective plural name to designate the legionary "heroines" as a group.[35] Her ashes, along with those of other legionary "martyrs", were reburied in Predeal (in the Carpathian Mountains) at the end of October 1940, during a solemn ceremony.[36]

Thus, in the months preceding the rebellion and the pogrom, legionary women emerged, especially in propaganda, as detached from the ordinary violence that characterized this period. On the one hand, groups of respectable legionary "ladies" became the organizers and the managers of various welfare services. These "constructive" activities overshadow and conceal any other form of women's participation during this period. On the other hand, the legionary women closer to the exercise of violence were treated as fallen "heroines", presented as innocent victims of a murderous persecution. But in-between the two ends of the spectrum, the "lady" and the "martyr", there was an entire range of legionary women who were motivated, among other reasons, by ideology, opportunism, family ties. Some of these legionary women participated, in various forms, in the rebellion and the pogrom of January 21-23, 1941.

3. A Legionary Couple in the Jilava Forest Massacre

3.1 Victims, Perpetrators, and the Limits of Justice

The vast majority of the victims assassinated during the Bucharest pogrom were found shot dead, robbed of their clothes, and scattered in the

snow of the Jilava forest, on the outskirts of the city. Throughout the night between January 21st and 22nd, at the height of the pogrom, legionary teams rounded Jews from their homes, using these break-ins also to steal money and jewelry, often "offered" to them by the victims themselves in the desperate attempt to save their lives. The Jews were then brought to various legionary headquarters and offices: some of these locations came to be known in the historiography of the pogrom as "torture centers".[37] Here the Jews were beaten, often with savagery and by numerous legionaries. The latter tried to extort additional money from the victims and in some cases forced them to "sell" their shops and businesses for symbolic sums.

After the beatings and the extortions, around 90 Jews were brought outside Bucharest, in a forest close to the village of Jilava, today a suburban small town of around ten thousand inhabitants. Here, very close to the main road which still connects Bucharest to the city of Giurgiu on the Danube, legionaries shot the Jews who were brought there with different transports in the hours preceding the dawn of January 22nd.[38] Rabbi Herș Guttman, one of the very few survivors, described the last stages of the massacre in a deposition given in December 1949:

> "[…] we were packed like sardines into a van, we were about 40 Jews. The van started driving and we drove for a long time without realizing […] where we were being taken. At one point, we heard shots and the truck stopped. We knew that the end had come and that we would be shot too. The Jews started to cry, to pray, to appeal to me as a rabbi, but there was nothing we could do. The truck door opened in the back. We saw that we were on a road, in the middle of the forest, without knowing where. There were five or six armed legionaries in the car and they started to take out the Jews, and shot them, two by two, with dizzying speed".[39]

Rabbi Guttman was brought to the Jilava forest together with his two eldest sons, Iancu and Iosif, who both died almost immediately after being shot. Their father survived and, in the morning, he started walking on the road close to the forest edge. He arrived at a building that turned out to be the town hall of Jilava. Many legionaries from the village and the nearby localities were gathered there, since during the days of the rebellion they occupied a great number of administrative buildings. Guttman was taken in by the legionaries and closed in a room with around eight other Jews who also survived the first massacre and arrived there probably in similar

ways. At night, this small group was brought back to the killing site in the forest and shot again.

Rabbi Guttman survived this time as well, and arrived again at the Jilava town hall, where he received the same treatment as the day before. However, it was January 23rd and the rebellion was about to be crushed by the authorities. During that day, regular soldiers cleared the town hall, first brought him to the police station of Jilava and then finally back to Bucharest. The incredible story of the Rabbi's survival of two shootings started to be known and registered already in the immediate aftermath of the pogrom. The renowned Romanian Jewish journalist Felix Brunea-Fox interviewed Guttman and wrote a heartfelt and detailed account of his story around February 1941.[40] As we shall see below, in the following years, and until the early 1950s, Herș Guttman would appear as a key witness in the different trials held against the legionaries of the Jilava town hall.

Among them, at the center of my analysis stands the "legionary couple" formed by Constantin Doncu, the mayor of Jilava during the legionary rebellion, and his wife Elena. During their subsequent trials, many different actors took part in the reconstruction and the narrative of the events. Beyond the prosecutors and their key witnesses, other legionary members from Jilava and the nearby localities (many also on trial), inhabitants of the village, passersby, neighbors, relatives were called to testify. While the history of transitional justice in Romania has started to receive increasing scholarly attention over the past decade, most of this attention is still devoted to the major protagonists and trials, in particular to Ion Antonescu, his entourage, and the higher echelons of the army in the territories occupied by Romania during the war.[41]

Less attention has been devoted so far to "minor" trials, to "ordinary" perpetrators or accomplices, to events at the micro-historical level. Even less explored are the gender dimensions of transitional justice. Elena Doncu, her husband, and other legionaries from Jilava went on trial for the assassination of the small group of Jews who survived the first mass shooting in the forest. While the executors of the greater massacre were not identified, the composition of this tight legionary group and the process that led to the decision to kill the survivors emerges from the indictments and the depositions. The transcripts of the legal proceedings also shed light on the social and political interactions between defendants and witnesses, on the widespread antisemitism and the thin line that separated "formal" legionary members from "non-legionary" accomplices and passive bystanders. At the same time, the motivations of the prosecutors,

the charges, the discourses used by the defense, and the languages of the different convictions open significant windows on the more general priorities and perspectives of different political regimes.

Elena Doncu, her husband and other eighteen men faced a group trial in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion and the pogrom. The sources available on the legal proceedings held by Military Tribunals during the Antonescu regime are very scant. A great part of this archival material got lost in a fire. Some files that I managed to consult at the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS), which took over this collection, show signs of burning and many pages are illegible. However, some of these documents have been preserved due to different circumstances. In this case, a copy of the sentence from 1941 was requested by the court when the case was reopened at the end of the 1940s. Thus, while the transcripts of the different stages of the trial are missing, the sentence contains nevertheless rich information on the role played by the various defendants in the assassination of the Jews and on the position taken by the prosecutors.

Constantin Doncu, even if he was the mayor of Jilava in those days, was not physically present during the imprisonment of the Jews in the locales of the city hall and their subsequent assassination. At the outbreak of the rebellion, he left for Bucharest and participated with many other legionaries in the occupation of the County Prefecture.[42] As a result, he was convicted only for the crime of rebellion and sentenced to five years in prison and two years of internment.[43] In charge of the Jilava town hall and one of those involved in the decision of assassinating the Jews was Eduard Tomescu. He appears as well in the reconstruction of the events given by the above-mentioned journalist, Brunea-Fox, based on the interview with Rabbi Herș Guttman. Tomescu, "young, beautiful" and cruel, promised the Rabbi he will not survive another time.[44] Tomescu was indeed only 19 years old at the time of events. He received one of the heaviest convictions: a total of 25 years of hard labor and ten years in prison.[45]

Three men were convicted for the material execution of the assassinations. One of them, Petre Ivănescu, committed suicide when he realized that the legionary rebellion had failed.[46] The other two, even if they had both totally or partially admitted their involvement in the first hearings, during the trial tried to deflect all responsibility on Ivănescu. In the attempt to exculpate themselves, they declared to have committed the crimes forced by Ivănescu, who allegedly threatened them with his weapon. The court, however, rejected these claims, since all of them

were armed, so that nobody was in the position to force others with a weapon.[47] As a result, they were convicted and sentenced to 25 and 15 years of hard labor.[48]

Elena Doncu was the only woman in the group of defendants and she was accused of complicity in murder. No explicit reference was made to her gender, at least not in the sentence. Nevertheless, her cooking for the legionaries present at the Jilava town hall is mentioned among the various forms of complicity of which she was found guilty:

> "[Elena Doncu] encouraged the executioners to commit the murders by telling them that orders were given to execute the Jews; she brought food to the defendants grouped in the town hall, coming several times during the day to inquire about the unfolding of the events in Jilava and in Bucharest, where her husband was. She saw that they did not have enough ammunition […] she prepared 36 cartridges, and [then another] 30 cartridges caliber 12, and seven caliber 16, and she gave them to the mayor's secretary […]"[49]

For the complicity in the assassination of the Jews, and in particular for having manufactured the cartridges, Elena Doncu was convicted and sentenced to five years of hard labor and two years of internment.[50]

Elena Doncu (spelled Dancu) appeared also in an article published in the newspaper *Universul* (The Universe) on February 3rd, 1941, that is, a few days before the final verdict of the Military Tribunal. With some imprecisions, the article reconstructs the assassination of the Jews by the group of legionaries from Jilava. In this reconstruction, Elena Doncu encouraged Eduard Tomescu, who was allegedly (and unlikely) "hesitant", to kill the Jews "by throwing 12 bullets on his table".[51] Thus, the newspaper article places her at the center of the decision-making process that led to the death of the Jews kept hostages in the Jilava town hall. Since the complete transcripts of the trial are missing, it is not possible to establish with certainty if she threw the bullets to encourage Tomescu to make a decision. It seems, however, a sensationalist detail: the connection between Elena Doncu and the cartridges was correct, but throwing them on the table adds a cinematographic effect suited for a newspaper article.

Before pronouncing the verdicts, the court declared that it considered as extenuating circumstances that the perpetrators were members of the Legionary Movement, and as such, they were influenced by "concrete propaganda". As an example, the transcript shows the complete lyrics

of a legionary song with a strong antisemitic content and very violent exhortations to "clean" the country of "leeches".[52] Because of this extenuating circumstance, the court did not condemn any of the material executioners to a life sentence, which was initially proposed by the prosecutors. The new regime emerged after the rebellion, a military dictatorship ruled by Ion Antonescu, had to punish the rebels while carefully avoiding to place the pogrom at the center of the rebellion. Within a few months from the events, the regime promulgated new and increasingly harsh antisemitic legislation and, in June 1941, entered the war as a key ally of Nazi Germany.

Elena Doncu was released from prison already on December 1st, 1942.[53] On the contrary, her husband was still in prison at the beginning of 1944. While he did not take part in the assassination of the Jews in Jilava, his position as mayor during the National Legionary State and his enduring legionary allegiances were among the reasons that prevented an early release. In March 1944 he submitted a request for release to the Ministry of the Interior, where he stated that:

> "[…] as mayor of the regime then in power, I did nothing but timorously executing orders […] I did nothing on my own initiative […] all my life I have been an honest man […] I am married with three children who have been left without any moral and material support […] I have always regretted the circumstances that have brought me to the accused's bench […] only the events, often stronger than human will, have brought me where I am"[54]

Doncu's exculpatory motivations did not, however, result in his release. The prison authorities, asked for an opinion on his case, declared him a "rebellious" and "dangerous" element, still strong in his legionary beliefs.[55] While I could not trace so far the motivations that led to the early release of Elena Doncu, it is possible to suppose the concurrence of different causes: as a woman, she did not hold any position of power in the regime; her sentence was relatively light; and as a mother of three children with both parents in prison, it was more "natural" to allow her to return to family life.

3.2 Gender, Politics, and Moral Responsibility

Two years later, in April 1944, Elena Doncu started to be followed by the police and to be considered a "suspect", most probably of ongoing legionary activity. This renewed attention towards her from the authorities coincided with the last months of the Antonescu regime. Brief entries on her movements and contacts were registered at regular intervals between April and early September 1944. Since her husband was in prison, she maintained the family by working as a seamstress, especially doing knitwork and embroidery for different clients in Bucharest. The suspicion of her being engaged in legionary propaganda among her clients in the city appeared to be unlikely by May, after a few weeks of investigation. According to the reports, she was struggling with great economic hardships and was often supported by her brothers-in-law.

However, the situation appears very different in the summer of 1944. In June, the police registered that she was spending most of her days in Bucharest and often returned home only late in the night. Moreover, an informant from the village of Jilava told the agents that Elena Doncu was still in contact with former legionaries, whom she met in the city. This information was corroborated, in the view of the police, by a change in her lifestyle. She and her children were well dressed, and on Sundays she went to the theater or to the movies. Since her earnings as a seamstress could not explain these "luxuries", it was assumed that she was materially supported by various legionary members from Bucharest. This addition to the reports registered in August 1944 is one of the last detailed entries on Elena Doncu's activity. The file continues throughout the year 1945, but it does not contain further new information.[56]

As in most belligerent countries, the years 1944 and 1945 represented a period of great turmoil for Romania: the fall of Antonescu and his military dictatorship in August 1944, the continuation of the war on the side of the Allied forces, and, following the end of the war, the gradual setting up and consolidation of the new communist regime. The main and most urgent priority was the judgment and punishment of those responsible for the war and for the terrible crimes committed. The process of transitional justice took different forms in the various national contexts, each with their own specificities and outcomes. In Romania, similarly to other countries of the former so-called Eastern bloc, special courts were assigned for this kind of legal proceedings, the "People's Tribunals", in Bucharest and in Cluj. As already mentioned above, the functioning of these tribunals and

the sentences pronounced by them have received increasing scholarly attention, in particular as far as major figures such as Antonescu and his entourage are concerned.[57]

From 1947 onwards, the task of prosecuting and convicting "minor" perpetrators returned to ordinary tribunals. A new law was also promulgated in the same year, in which the category of crimes against humanity was more clearly defined, and expanded in its reach.[58] Even before the promulgation of the new law, Elena Doncu came again under the eye of the police. In March 1946, the police section in charge of preparing a file on her as a "legionary suspect" asked the Military Tribunal for a copy of the sentence from 1941, when she received her first conviction.[59] Two years later, in November 1948, she was arrested, held in custody, and in July 1949 formally charged for crimes against humanity for "having participated during the legionary rebellion in the massacre of the Jews in the Jilava forest".[60]

Alongside Elena Doncu, the prosecutors charged for crimes against humanity Vasile Mihăescu, a priest in the nearby village of Mierlari. In the first trial of 1941, his involvement was deemed marginal: he was acquitted of the most severe crimes, such as rebellion and complicity in murder. He was convicted only for criminal possession of a weapon and sentenced to one year and a half in prison.[61] Together with these two defendants, who were present in the Jilava town hall during the days of the events, another woman from a nearby village was initially accused, but, as we shall see, her case was ultimately dropped by the court. The drafting of the indictments and the collection of testimonies by the prosecutors were long and meticulous. Witnesses were heard multiple times between 1949 and 1951. The actual trial began in the last months of 1951, and lasted until June 1952.

An important element in building the case against Elena Doncu was represented by her legionary allegiances. In most testimonies collected by the prosecutors over two years there is a mention of this aspect, either to confirm or to deny it. The witnesses were mostly neighbors and inhabitants of the village of Jilava, who thus supposedly knew her relatively well or saw her often, especially when her husband became mayor during the National Legionary State. Many witnesses stated that she was a legionary supporter: they saw her wearing the green shirt (the legionary uniform), others declared that she was also armed.[62] Rumors about her participation in the events clearly spread in the village and some of them were mentioned in the statements, which included gruesome

details. A witness "heard" that Elena Doncu led the massacre of the Jews in Jilava; another that she went to the forest to bring the ammunitions to Petre Ivănescu (the executioner who later committed suicide), and guided him towards the bodies that were still moving.[63]

Another group of witnesses declared not to know whether Elena Doncu was a legionary or not, and others, though not very numerous, declared that they had never seen her wearing the green shirt. A witness even described her as "a most hardworking woman".[64] Her mother-in-law declared that she never saw her in legionary uniform, and that during the days of the massacre Elena Doncu was at home.[65] This latter statement is contradicted by other witnesses, who saw her at the town hall, and especially by one of the key witnesses of the trial, doctor Eugen Solomon, who was also kept hostage in Jilava by the legionaries, but survived. Rabbi Guttman, in a long deposition given in December 1949, declared that he saw "a woman" at the town hall, but did not think he would have been able to recognize her.[66] Eugen Solomon, on the contrary, recognized Elena Doncu: he remembered her coming to the town hall and, "with an air of superiority", asking one of the legionaries present there to show her the hostages. He also "heard" that she was the one who armed the executioners.[67]

During one of the first rounds of interrogations, in 1949, Elena Doncu admitted that she went to the town hall during the days of the rebellion, but only to look for her husband, whom she had not seen for three days. At the town hall, she met the already mentioned Eduard Tomescu, who told her that her husband was in Bucharest. After receiving this information, she just returned home and she "took care of the household chores". As far as her legionary feelings were concerned, she firmly denied any involvement in the Legionary Movement, of which "she knew nothing".[68] Eduard Tomescu, who was serving his sentence in prison, was also interrogated in 1949. His deposition is pervaded by a self-exculpatory vein, and Tomescu presented himself as the most "compassionate" of the group. Apart from this very improbable self-portrait, in his statement he placed Elena Doncu among those who decided to assassinate the Jews imprisoned in the town hall. Moreover, according to Tomescu, she also brought two guns.[69]

During the trial, which lasted from fall 1951 until June 11th, 1952, the defense of Elena Doncu changed its line. By that time, the case built against her was strong, and it appeared perhaps unrealistic and legally useless to claim that Doncu was unconnected with the facts. Instead, the

defense opted for two different arguments: firstly, that she was not one of the material executioners of the assassinations, and thus not directly responsible for them; and secondly, that she had already been convicted for the same crime in 1941, and in line with the legal concept of *res judicata* (judged matter), she could not be prosecuted again for the same offense.[70] When the sentence was pronounced on June 11th, 1952, the court nullified both these arguments, and used a broad definition of the concept of responsibility in crimes against humanity to motivate its verdict.

The court considered Elena Doncu "a fervent legionary", a woman motivated by "racial hatred", who pursued the "criminal political goals of the legionary organization". She procured the necessary weapons and ammunitions, which showed the "degree of her perversity" in contributing to the "mass extermination of Jews". The court acknowledged as a fact that she did not participate directly in the assassinations and did not execute the Jews personally. However, she was an accomplice and as such, she was materially and *morally* responsible for the massacres in the Jilava forest.[71] As for the *res judicata* invoked by the defense, the court clarified that she was now charged with a crime (crimes against humanity) that did not exist at the time of the events, and that made it a different object of judgment. In conclusion, Elena Doncu was convicted and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor.[72]

As anticipated above, another woman, Elisabeta Scarlat, was initially prosecuted together with Elena Doncu and others involved in the Jilava massacre. She was accused of complicity in the assassination of Marcel Gherwirtz, who survived the first mass shooting, but was ultimately killed by the group of the Jilava town hall on the following night. The case against her was based on a statement already given by the victim's father in 1945, and included in the proceedings of the 1951 trial. Marcel Gherwirtz, who was only 17 years old, severely wounded but alive after the first massacre, waited until morning "hidden among the dead bodies" in the forest. He then walked away and arrived in the village Regele Ferdinand (today 1 Decembrie), not far from Jilava, where he asked for help and shelter Elisabeta Scarlat, who ran a tavern in the village. She "pretended to be moved" by the boy's despair and let him in. While he was asleep in her house, however, "this devilish woman" went to the village town hall, also occupied by legionaries, and denounced the boy. He was brought to the Jilava town hall, where he was imprisoned in the same room as Rabbi Guttman and the other few survivors of the previous night. Unlike the Rabbi, Marcel Gherwirtz did not survive the second massacre.[73]

In his statement, the victim's father described the trials held in 1941 as a "mere parody", and many perpetrators escaped judgment.[74] While a much higher number of those involved in the massacre were convicted or at least prosecuted under the 1947 law, at this trial the court dropped the case against Elisabeta Scarlat. The motivations invoked shed light on the underlying rationale of the proceedings and on the many possible interpretations of the concept of responsibility. For the court, "the most plausible" reason that prompted the defendant to denounce the boy was the wish to avoid trouble with the authorities. It could not be held that she "knowingly contributed" to the boy's death, because no evidence could indicate that she was aware of the massacre committed in the Jilava forest. Moreover, there was no evidence of "even a slight participation" of the defendant in the "actions undertaken by the legionaries for the extermination of the Jews".[75]

In conclusion, in the opinion of the court, Elisabeta Scarlat denounced Marcel Gherwirtz to avoid the possible "nuisance" that could derive from hiding a Jew "*at that time*".[76] However, the possibility of facing serious consequences, or even light "nuisance" for sheltering the boy was extremely unlikely even in that context. It is not possible to assess with absolute certainty if Scarlat had already heard of the great massacre in the forest before reporting Gherwirtz's presence to the legionaries of the village. But again, it is extremely unlikely that she was completely unaware of what was happening in the village. In the declaration she gave during the investigations, mentioned in the proceedings, she tried to exculpate herself by stating that she went to the town hall to help the wounded boy. Allegedly, Gherwirtz himself had asked her to call the company for which he worked in order to come and take him back to Bucharest. As a result, she went to the town hall, where was the only telephone available in the village.

This exculpatory statement must have appeared as unrealistic to the court, since it was mentioned but rejected as inadmissible proof in the decision to drop the case.[77] Thus, from the analysis of the court's motivations to clear Elisabeta Scarlat from all the charges seem to emerge two main elements. Firstly, though expressed in a convoluted language, it was determinant that Scarlat was not a legionary woman, or this did not emerge from the investigations. Whether she sympathized with the movement, or supported its ideology while not being involved in it actively, was beyond the competence of the court. Secondly, there was a limit to how wide the concept of responsibility could be, especially

with regard to what was called in the conviction of Elena Doncu, "moral" responsibility. For the court, Scarlat denounced Marcel Gherwirtz without knowing that he would have been assassinated. If she suspected it, or expected it, or if other motivations, beyond the fear of "troubles" from the authorities prevented her from hiding the boy and thus saving his life, were deemed aspects that did not pertain to the realm of law.

In the meantime, about 500 kilometers west of Bucharest, in the Severin County, Elena Doncu's husband Constantin was also on trial during the same months of 1952. His trial initially appeared as completely unrelated to the events in Jilava, since Constantin Doncu was arrested there under a different identity. A connection to his past existed nevertheless: he was now on trial for being part of a "subversive organization" composed of several former legionary members.[78] While his involvement in the organization ultimately emerged as marginal, the investigations conducted for the case led to the discovery of his real identity. Constantin Doncu was released from prison in 1947, and in 1948 he left his family, changed his identity, and moved very far away from Bucharest. During the trial of 1952 he declared that in 1948 he knew he would have been arrested again, and though he "did not feel guilty", he decided to flee and live under a different name.[79] As for his family, he stated that he had interrupted any contact with his wife in 1948.[80]

The disclosure of his real identity led to a new trial, during which he was charged for crimes against humanity in relation to the massacres in Jilava. The trial also involved a few other men from the group convicted for the first time in 1941. In 1953, however, it emerged that Constantin Doncu was not physically present in Jilava at the time of the massacre, but that he was in Bucharest together with other rebellious legionaries. For this reason, his case was to be judged separately from the others.[81] In May 1954 he was convicted for crimes against humanity and sentenced to ten years of hard prison. The court motivated the verdict by stating that "though he personally did not commit any murder, his attitude before and during the massacre proves that it was prepared and executed with his knowledge". Moreover, all witnesses "unanimously" declared that both him and his wife were "fervent legionaries", who held legionary meetings at their home, and possessed many weapons and munitions. Thus, even if he was not present personally during the events, his "racial hatred towards the Jewish people" linked him to the massacre, which was perpetrated "with his knowledge and approval".[82]

4. Conclusions

In spite of the severity of the sentence and the insistence of the court on the principle of wide responsibility, Elena Doncu was released from prison in November 1955.[83] The decree nr. 421/1955 granted amnesty to various categories of offenders convicted for crimes against peace and crimes against humanity.[84] Elena Doncu's case fell among one of these categories: those who were sentenced to more than ten years in prison and did not commit murder "on their own initiative". The decree thus reversed the notions of complicity and "moral" participation that guided the trials for crimes against humanity. Similar to these notions, the assessment of what one's "own initiative" entailed was open to interpretation and to political priorities. While Elena Doncu was immediately released, others from the group of the Jilava town hall, like the priest Vasile Mihăescu and Eduard Tomescu, served their sentences until 1964.[85] Constantin Doncu, Elena's husband, could not benefit from the amnesty because the decree excluded those who held official positions during the National Legionary State and the Antonescu regime, and he eventually died in prison in 1956.[86]

After both her convictions, Elena Doncu was the first to be released from prison among the small group of legionaries more closely involved in the assassination of the Jews imprisoned in the Jilava town hall. Her gender was never explicitly invoked as a determining factor during the trials and in the decisions that led to her release. Gendered structures, however, might have had an impact on her legal history, as it emerges more clearly from the 1951-52 trial and her subsequent release in 1955. In relation to other women, such as Elisabeta Scarlat, Elena Doncu's legionary activity, mentioned by many witnesses and gaining additional strength, perhaps indirectly, by the position of her husband, made a difference in the assessment of her participation. Her complicity was ideologically motivated and guided by clear intentions. When compared to legionary men, on the contrary, her political beliefs and role were probably considered marginal. Elena Doncu was a poor seamstress almost in her 50s when she was released, and her gender, class, and age very likely did not qualify her as a potential danger for the regime.

In all likelihood, most of the women, legionary or not, who participated in the Bucharest pogrom will remain anonymous, and their deeds impossible to reconstruct. Since gender is a contributing factor in the structuring of cultural and political beliefs, there is a tendency not to hold women responsible as a result of their supposed non-violent and apolitical

"nature". Documented cases that involve the direct participation of women in violent actions are overall far less numerous than those involving men, but, as Wendy Lower has remarked, these cases have to be taken seriously and not "dismissed as anomalies".[87] For a more comprehensive understanding of the Holocaust in Romania, the participation of women needs to be included in our historical knowledge, not as an appendix, or a "phenomenon", but as an integral part of this history. As this article shows, there are whole sets of still unexplored sources which can help us analyze how gender, in its interrelations with class, age, personal relationships, and political affiliations contributes to shape the exercise, the representation, and the memory of violence.

Endnotes

1 Emil Dorian, *Quality of Witness: A Romanian Diary, 1937-1944* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982), 138.

2 On Ion Antonescu and the military dictatorship, see Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally. Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-1944* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). For an account of the so-called "legionary rebellion" of January 1941, see 52-68. For the most recent work on the National Legionary State, see Florin Muller, *Statul national-legionar (septembrie 1940 - ianuarie 1941)*, Bucharest: Corint, 2025.

3 Jean Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania* (Lincoln-Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press-Yad Vashem, 2011), 149-164. Feelings of abnormality, of enormity, in relation to the events of the Bucharest pogrom were expressed by the contemporaries. The renowned Romanian Jewish writer Mihail Sebastian registered in his diary on February 4, 1941: "[…] the fact is that we have experienced one of the worst pogroms in history. […] The stunning thing about the Bucharest bloodbath is the bestial ferocity of it […] I haven't found anything more terrible in Dubnow" [he refers to Simon Dubnow's *History of the Jews*], see Mihail Sebastian, *Journal 1935-1944. The Fascist Years* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 316.

4 News on the crimes perpetrated at the slaughterhouse were also registered by Sebastian in his diary, see Mihail Sebastian, *Journal 1935-1944*, 316. For additional details on this and other episodes of the Bucharest pogrom, as well as for an assessment of victims and damages, see Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, Mihail E. Ionescu (eds.), *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, 112-115.

5 Emil Dorian, *Quality of Witness*, 140.

6 Jean Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*, 161.

7 With the expression "transitional justice" I intend in particular the postwar legal proceedings held against the perpetrators of the Holocaust in different countries. While the literature on this topic is extremely vast, for a general overview see Nico Wouters (ed.), *Transitional Justice and Memory in Europe (1945-2013)* (Cambridge Antwerp Portland: Intersentia, 2014).

8 Adrian Cioflâncă, '80 de ani de la masacrul antisemit din ianuarie 1941' [80 Years from the Antisemitic Massacre of January 1941], *Scena9*, 20 January 2021, retrieved at https://www.scena9.ro/article/masacru-antisemit-bucuresti-jilava-legionari-ianuarie-1941.

9 Among these works, see at least: Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: the destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000); Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*; Jean Ancel, *The economic destruction of Romanian Jewry* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007); Valentin Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

University Press,2009); Armin Heinen, *Rumänien, der Holocaust und die Logik der Gewalt* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007)

10 The Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania is also available online at https://www.inshr-ew.ro/ro/files/Raport%20Final/Final_Report.pdf.

11 Roland Clark, 'New models, new questions: historiographical approaches to the Romanian Holocaust', *European Review of History—Revue européenne d'histoire*, Vol. 19, No. 2, April 2012, 303–320.

12 Among these works, see at least: Petre Matei, 'Roma Deportations to Transnistria during World War Two. Between Centralised Decision-Making and Local Initiatives', S:I.M.O.N. – *Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation*, 9 (2022) 2, 26–50; Dallas Michelbacher, *Jewish Forced Labor in Romania, 1940–1944* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020); Grant T. Harward, *Romania's Holy War. Soldiers, Motivation, and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021); Paul A. Shapiro, *The Kishinev Ghetto, 1941-1942. A Documentary History of the Holocaust in Romania's Contested Borderlands* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015); Valentina Glajar, Jeanine Teodorescu (eds.), *Local History, Transnational Memory in the Romanian Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

13 Marion Kaplan, 'Gender. A Crucial Tool in Holocaust Research', in Larry V. Thompson (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies IV: Reflections on Religion, Justice, Sexuality, and Genocide* (Northwestern University Press, 2003), 163-170. Ruth Klüger, Holocaust survivor and professor of German Studies, wrote in her renowned memoir *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (2001): "[…] wars, and hence the memory of wars, are owned by the male of the species. And fascism is a decidedly male property, whether you were for or against it", quoted in Elissa Bemporad, 'Memory, Body, and Power: Women and the Study of Genocide', in Elissa Bemporad, Joyce W. Warren (eds.), *Women and Genocide. Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 5.

14 In this growing field of research, see at least: Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies. German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013) and Elissa Bemporad, Joyce W. Warren (eds.), *Women and Genocide.*

15 For one of the first descriptions of these sources, see Marius Cazan, 'The Bucharest Pogrom: New Archive Documents', in *Holocaust. Studii și cercetări*, 10/2017, 9-29.

16 For Italy, see Cecilia Nubola, *Fasciste di Salò. Una storia giudiziaria* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2016); For Hungary, see Andrea Pető, *The Women of the Arrow Cross Party* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), in particular 61-87.

17 Jean Ancel, *Preludiu la asasinat. Pogromul de la Iași, 29 iunie 1941* (Iași: Polirom, 2005), p. 85 emphasis in the original.

18 The use of the name "Legionary Movement" instead of "Iron Guard" has become increasingly prevalent in the most recent literature. However, the designation "Iron Guard", as well as "the Legion" (implicitly referring to the movement's first name, "the Legion of the Archangel Michael"), are still used interchangeably by scholars in the field. The different names were originally related to different periods of the movement's political life, but they tended to be conflated and used indistinctly from the second half of the 1930s.

19 Among the most recent works on the Legionary Movement, see Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth. Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2015); Traian Sandu, *Un fascisme roumain. Histoire de la Garde de fer* (Paris: Perrin, 2014); Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Ascensiunea și căderea "Căpitanului"* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017).

20 For one of the first accounts of women's participation and gender relations in the Legion, see Maria Bucur, 'Romania', in Kevin Passmore (ed.), *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 57-78.

21 Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" in Inter-war Romania* (Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, 2004), 86-89.

22 Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Cum suntem* (Sibiu: Editura Curierul, 1937), 3.

23 Dumitru C. Amzăr, *Naționalismul tineretului* (Bucharest: Rânduiala, 1936), 26.

24 'Informațiuni', *Pământul strămoșesc*, 15 March 1928, II, 6, p. 14-15.

25 'O cetățuie a surorii Legiunii la Galați', *Pământul strămoșesc*, April 1, 1928, 8.

26 This paragraph is derived in part from a section of a published article, see Anca Diana Axinia, 'In this country, women are also soldiers': interrelations between age and gender in the women's section of the Romanian Legionary Movement', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, Volume 31, Issue 3 (2024), 468-491.

27 Ion Banea, *Rânduri către generația noastră*, 1935, p. 15, [emphasis in the original], in ANIC, Fond DGP, dosar 279/1938, f. 21.

28 ANIC, Fond MI-D, dosar 17/1933, f. 99.

29 Radu Gyr, *Femeia în eroismul spiritual, moral și național* (Bucharest: Ed. Cetățuia Legionară, 1936).

30 Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 163-193.

31 Maria Vieru, 'În preajma sărbătorilor. Apel către surorile legionare', *Pământul strămoșesc*, 15 April 1928, II, 8, pp. 6-7.

32 On the role of songs and collective singing in the Legionary Movement, see Roland Clark, 'Collective Singing in Romanian Fascism', *Cultural and Social History*, 10:2, 2013, 251-271.
33 ANIC, Fond DGP, dosar 221/1940, ff. 6-7, 29-32.
34 ANIC, fond MI-D, dosar 12/1940, f. 79.
35 Mihai Stelian Rusu, 'Domesticating Viragos. The Politics of Womanhood in the Romanian Legionary Movement', *Fascism. Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 5 (2016), 149-176, 169.
36 ANIC, Fond DGP, dosar 257/1940, f. 9; dosar 262/1940, f. 97.
37 Jean Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*, 158-160.
38 For an account of the events and the names of the victims of the Jilava forest massacre, see the brochure issued on the occasion of the commemoration of the Bucharest pogrom in 2016, available online at https://www.csier.ro/documente/brosura/pogrom.pdf
39 CNSAS, Fond penal, P 076166, vol. I, f. 365.
40 Felix Brunea-Fox, *Orașul măcelului* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1997), 83-103.
41 For a review of the most recent literature on postwar justice in the Romanian context, see Emanuel-Marius Grec, 'Romania: Historiography on Holocaust and Postwar Justice Studies', *Eastern European Holocaust Studies*, 2023; 1(1): 259–270.
42 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. I, f. 670.
43 Ibid., f. 679.
44 Felix Brunea-Fox, *Orașul măcelului*, 99.
45 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. I, f. 679.
46 Ibid., f. 665. The sentence mentions the suicide notes left by Ivănescu.
47 Ibid., f. 661.
48 Ibid., f. 680.
49 Ibid., f. 662.
50 Ibid., f. 679.
51 ANIC, Fond MI-D, dosar 10/1939, f. 159.
52 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. I, ff. 675-676. The song in question is 'Imnul Legiunei Arhanghelului Mihail' [The Anthem of the Legion of the Archangel Michael].
53 Ibid., 733.
54 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 080530 vol. II, f. 120.
55 Ibid., f. 122.
56 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. III, f. 13.
57 Bogdan Chiriac, 'The Trial of the Antonescu Group (May 6 – 17, 1946) and the Communist Takeover in Romania. A Historical Interpretation.' PhD diss., Central European University, 2017; Alexandru Climescu, 'Law, Justice, and Holocaust Memory in Romania', in Alexandru Florian (ed.), *Holocaust Public*

Memory in Postcommunist Romania (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 72-95.

58 Law 291 published in *Monitorul Oficial* nr. 189, 18 August 1947, 7423-7425. The text of the law is available online at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monitorul_Oficial_al_Rom%C3%A2niei._Partea_1_1947-08-18,_nr._189.pdf

59 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. III, f. 14.

60 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. I, f. 11.

61 Ibid., f. 679-680.

62 Ibid., f. 191, 199, 450-451, 572, 580, 595,

63 Ibid., f. 450.

64 Ibid., f. 203.

65 Ibid., f. 209.

66 Ibid., f. 366.

67 Ibid., f. 452.

68 Ibid., ff. 453-454

69 Ibid., f. 590.

70 Ibid., f. 270, 211.

71 Emphasis mine.

72 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. I, ff. 272-274.

73 Ibid., f. 524

74 Ibid., f. 525.

75 Ibid., f. 443.

76 Ibid., f. 444. Emphasis mine.

77 Ibid., f. 443.

78 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 016088, vol. I, ff. 1-4.

79 Ibid., f. 78.

80 Ibid., f. 73.

81 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 0115931, vol. I, f. 242.

82 Ibid., f. 352-353.

83 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. II, f. 22; vol. III, f. 23.

84 Buletinul Oficial nr. 27 of 24 September 1955. The text of the decree is available online at: http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/decret-nr-421-din-24-septembrie-1955-pentru-gratierea-unor-pedepse-si-amnistierea-unor-infractiuni-emitent-marea-adunare-nationala-publicat-21461.html.

85 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 076166, vol. III, f. 119; P 0075431, vol. X, f. 4.

86 CNSAS, Fond Penal, P 0115931, vol. III, f. 12, 26.

87 Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 4.

References

Archives

National Historical Archives of Romania (ANIC)
- Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției (DGP)
- Fond Ministerul de Interne – Diverse (MI-D)

National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS)
- Fond Penal

Periodicals

Pământul Strămoșesc (1927-1933, 1940-1941)

Bibliography

Amzăr, Dumitru C. *Naționalismul tineretului*. Bucharest: Rânduiala, 1936.

Ancel, Jean. *The economic destruction of Romanian Jewry*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007.

Ancel, Jean. *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*. Lincoln-Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press-Yad Vashem, 2011.

Ancel, Jean. *Preludiu la asasinat. Pogromul de la Iași, 29 iunie 1941*. Iași: Polirom, 2005.

Axinia, Anca Diana. '"In this country, women are also soldiers": interrelations between age and gender in the women's section of the Romanian Legionary Movement', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, Volume 31, Issue 3 (2024), 468-491, https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2023.2231487

Bemporad, Elissa. 'Memory, Body, and Power: Women and the Study of Genocide', in Bemporad, Elissa, Warren, Joyce W. (eds.), *Women and Genocide. Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018.

Brunea-Fox, Felix. *Orașul măcelului*. Bucharest: Hasefer, 1997.

Bucur, Maria. 'Romania', in Passmore, Kevin (ed.). *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003.

Cantacuzino, Alexandru. *Cum suntem*. Sibiu: Editura Curierul, 1937.

Chiriac, Bogdan. 'The Trial of the Antonescu Group (May 6 – 17, 1946) and the Communist Takeover in Romania. A Historical Interpretation.' PhD diss., Central European University, 2017.

Clark, Roland. 'Collective Singing in Romanian Fascism', *Cultural and Social History*, 10:2, 2013, 251-271.

Clark, Roland. *Holy Legionary Youth. Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania*. Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2015.

Clark, Roland. 'New models, new questions: historiographical approaches to the Romanian Holocaust', *European Review of History—Revue européenne d'histoire*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 303–320.

Climescu, Alexandru. 'Law, Justice, and Holocaust Memory in Romania', in Florian, Alexandru (ed.). *Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018, 72-95.

Cioflâncă, Adrian. 80 de ani de la masacrul antisemit din ianuarie 1941. *Scena9*, 20 January 2021, retrieved at https://www.scena9.ro/article/masacru-antisemit-bucuresti-jilava-legionari-ianuarie-1941.

Deletant, Dennis. *Hitler's Forgotten Ally. Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-1944*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Dorian, Emil. *Quality of Witness: A Romanian Diary, 1937-1944*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Women and War*. Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Glajar, Valentina, Teodorescu, Jeanine (eds.). *Local History, Transnational Memory in the Romanian Holocaust*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Grec, Emanuel-Marius. 'Romania: Historiography on Holocaust and Postwar Justice Studies', *Eastern European Holocaust Studies*, 2023; 1(1): 259–270, https://doi.org/10.1515/eehs-2023-0038

Gyr, Radu. *Femeia în eroismul spiritual, moral și național*. Bucharest: Editura Cetățuia Legionară, 1936.

Harvey, Elizabeth. *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.

Harward, Grant T., *Romania's Holy War. Soldiers, Motivation, and the Holocaust*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021.

Heinen, Armin. *Rumänien, der Holocaust und die Logik der Gewalt*. Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007.

Ioanid, Radu. *The Holocaust in Romania: the destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu regime, 1940-1944*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000.

Iordachi, Constantin. *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" in Inter-war Romania*. Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, 2004.

Kaplan, Marion. 'Gender. A Crucial Tool in Holocaust Research', in Thompson, Larry V. (ed). *Lessons and Legacies IV: Reflections on Religion, Justice, Sexuality, and Genocide*. Northwestern University Press, 2003. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv47w86h.

Lower, Wendy. *Hitler's Furies. German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.

Matei, Petre. 'Roma Deportations to Transnistria during World War Two. Between Centralised Decision-Making and Local Initiatives', *S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah:*

Intervention. Methods. Documentation. 9 (2022) 2, 26–50. https://doi.org/10.23777/sn.0122/art_gste01

Michelbacher, Dallas. *Jewish Forced Labor in Romania, 1940–1944*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020.

Nubola, Cecilia. *Fasciste di Salò. Una storia giudiziaria*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2016.

Sebastian, Mihail. *Journal 1935-1944. The Fascist Years*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000.

Pető, Andrea. *The Women of the Arrow Cross Party*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Rusu, Mihai Stelian. 'Domesticating Viragos. The Politics of Womanhood in the Romanian Legionary Movement', *Fascism. Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 5 (2016), 149-176.

Sandu, Traian. *Un fascisme roumain. Histoire de la Garde de fer*. Paris: Perrin, 2014.

Schmitt, Oliver Jens. *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Ascensiunea și căderea "Căpitanului"*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017.

Shapiro, Paul A., *The Kishinev Ghetto, 1941-1942. A Documentary History of the Holocaust in Romania's Contested Borderlands*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015.

Solonari, Valentin. *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.