

Anti-Semitism in Romania 2003 Report

By Marco Maximillian KATZ
In affiliation with ADL (Anti-Defamation League since 1913)

“MCA Romania” in affiliation with 
The Centre for Monitoring and Combating the Anti-Semitism in Romania
Direct Fax: +1 630 2144804 RO Fax: +40 21 3230821
www.antisemitism.ro www.holocaust.ro
E-mail: office@antisemitism.ro

המרכז למעקב ולוחמה נגד האנטישמיות ברומניה

INDEX

Introduction	3
Political environment	3
General.....	3
Political Environment	4
“Great Romania “(PRM) Party	4
Political Environment	6
2003 Official taken commitments	6
Political Environment	7
Anti-anti-Semitic, anti-racist and anti-xenophobic legislation.....	7
Governmental Ordinance 31.....	7
Political Environment	8
Restitution of the Jewish Properties	8
Anti-Semitism.....	8
Incidents in 2003	8
Anti-Semitism.....	10
Events reported in 2002 MCA Report.....	10
What happened since?	10
Education	10
The Holocaust in Romania	10
Presentation in the Romanian school books.....	10
Education	12
Anti-Semitism and Jews in linguistics.....	12
Education	14
Seminars	14
Education	14
Jews and Israel in Mass-Media presentations.....	14
Conclusions	15
Anti-Semitism.....	16
Events reported in 2002 MCA Report.....	16
What happened since? - ANNEX1	16

Introduction

MCA Romania – The Center for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism in Romania was established in 2002 as a non-governmental and non-profit organization.

The 2003 MCA Romania Report is the second annual report presenting the trends in anti-Semitism and Jewish-related issues in Romania.

In 2003, anti-Semitism continued to be a problem in Romania. As in past years, there was a general refusal to deal with the Holocaust in Romania, as well as to seriously implement hate crimes bills. The extremist Romania Mare Party remained in the news - but this time with leader Vadim Tudor's attempts clean up his anti-Semitic and extremist image.

One bright spot was the Wiesel Commission, initiated by President Iliescu, which is documenting the final solution in Romania. It is hoped that in the year ahead there will be more effort made to combat anti-Semitism through Holocaust education, and effective legislation.

Political environment *General*

2003 was a year of relative political stability. No major changes took place within the Romanian political leadership and the Romanian Government. The Government is still largely controlled by one political party, the PSD – Social Democrat Party.

Two of the main opposition parties, PD (Democratic Party) and PNL (National-Liberal Party) joined forces in the second half of 2003 in an effort to present a viable alternative to the ruling party in the upcoming 2004 elections.

A Gallup poll taken in October 2003 revealed the desire of the vast majority of Romanians for an AUTHORITARIAN, iron-fisted leader. 84% of the Romanians participating in this poll believe that only this type of leader could immediately and effectively bring an end to the widespread poverty and corruption in Romania.

Gallup also found that about one third of the population would like to see a single political party and thought a military regime would best fit Romania.

Bucking a trend in the European Union, 86 percent said Romania should make religious classes compulsory in schools and that the government should sponsor the Orthodox Church.

According to the media, following the results of this poll, pertinent questions on the readiness of Romania to join EU in 2007 have been raised.

Political Environment “Great Romania “(PRM) Party

In the political vacuum that followed the 1989 anti-communist revolt, PRM was created as an ultranationalist and xenophobe party. Ex-communists, ex-security services members and other individuals with nationalistic orientations found, in PRM, a solid platform and a shelter from where they could express freely their political and personal controversial views, under the protection of “speech freedom” democratic concept. But no one of the PRM members abused this democratic concept better than the PRM founder and leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor who from the dedicated communist he was until 1989 became the dedicated ultranationalist he is today.

In 2003, PRM, the right wing, nationalistic party of Romania is alive and well. Its members and leaders comfortably hold seats in the Romanian Parliament and the party continues to enjoy the support of large numbers, declared and undeclared sympathizers of PRM. Unfortunately, the poverty, the high levels of corruption and the slow economical progress Romania registers, are the “fertilizers” for the development of ultranationalist, xenophobe and racist public opinions and activities.

In 2003 PRM continued to express its well-known points of view in its “Romania Mare” publication. However, in 2003, unlike in 2002, the PRM held back on publicly expressing or demonstrating its poisonous racist and anti-Semitic views and policies.

According to some political analysts, the PRM’s power source is the growing tolerance and passivity with which this party is treated by the other leading Romanian parties which are aware of the growing influence of this party within the Romanian society.

In December 2003, Mr. Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the leader of the PRM, in an attempt to draw foreign support and reduce the accusations of anti-Semitism against him, initiated negotiations to hire a well-known Israeli PR and Image consulting firm as election consultants. While speaking one language to the Israeli firm Mr. Corneliu Vadim Tudor remained loyal to the style and message he has always put forward to the Romanian public.

Mr. Tudor’s decision to put up a memorial to Yitzak Rabin, as evidence of his “change of heart”, brought him under heavy fire from those (MCA Romania amongst them) that reject his sudden pro-Semite attitude, considering it to be insincere and opportunistic. Jewish and Israeli institutions determined Mr. Tudor’s new face as false, cynical, temporary and only politically motivated.

In 2000, Time Europe presented Corneliu Vadim Tudor as follows:

QUOTE: During the reign of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, Corneliu Vadim Tudor was seen by many as Ceausescu's personal bard, a role he played with the same energy he now devotes to his political career. After the collapse of communism in Romania in December 1989 Tudor faded briefly from public life. He emerged in 1992 to found his own political party, Greater Romania, whose platform is a crude mixture of anti-Semitism, racism and nostalgia for the good old days of communism. Despite his primitive politics, Tudor has a dedicated following among certain segments of the population, mainly former members of the secret police and the elderly. His party currently holds eight seats in the 143-seat Senate and 19 seats in the 343-seat Chamber of Deputies. A member of the parliamentary Committee for Foreign Policy, Tudor's recent forays into foreign affairs include visiting Muammar Gaddafi in Libya and inviting France's far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen to attend a Greater Romania party congress. With friends like these, Tudor is sure to have plenty of enemies. END of QUOTE

We consider that no fundamental changes occurred since the above review was published. For the time being the latest pro-Semitic declarations issued by Corneliu Vadim Tudor remain a superficial attempt to influence public opinion for purely political purposes.

Political Environment **2003 Official taken commitments**

2004 is the year of Parliamentary elections. This is a crucial year for the PSD party, which has made unprecedented investments in its efforts to remain in power.

Following the international reactions generated by the unfortunate and disturbing government declarations last summer regarding the Holocaust in Romania, the Romanian President Mr. Ion Iliescu initiated the implementation of several measures, which would ensure the proper preservation of the Romanian Jewish memory and heritage when fully applied:

- 1) The formation of the Wiesel International Commission to determine and bring out into the open the undeniable and unquestionable reality of the Holocaust in Romania.
- 2) The immediate institution of a National Holocaust Day
- 3) Implementation of permanent educational programs to effectively educate Romanian educators on the Holocaust in Romania and the history of Romanian Jewry.
- 4) Measures to ensure the immediate return of the confiscated Jewish properties back to their owners or their representatives.

The so called Wiesel Commission, proposed and created at the initiative of President Iliescu, is comprised of Jews and non-Jews. Half of the members are Romanians and the other half are foreigners. The Romanian group is coordinated by General Mihai Ionescu (Head of the Military History and Research Institute) who is also the President's

representative in the Commission. The foreign group is led by Dr Radu Ioanid, Director with the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC.

The preliminary report of the Wiesel Commission is due to be released before November 2004, when the Presidential elections will take place in Romania.

In September 2004 the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the “Targum Shlishi Foundation” launched their “Operation: Last Chance” initiative in Romania following its implementation (from July 2002) in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The project offers rewards of \$10,000 US for information which will facilitate the prosecution and punishment of Nazi war criminals. In presenting the project at a press conference held in Bucharest at the Federation of Jewish Communities and attended by their leadership, the Wiesenthal Center's top Nazi-hunter Dr. Efraim Zuroff stressed the importance of the project in Romania which since becoming a democracy had not investigated, let alone prosecuted, a single Holocaust perpetrator. Besides establishing a special “hotline,” the project will include a special ad campaign to solicit information from the public and educate about the crimes committed by the Nazis and their Romanian collaborators during World War II.

Zuroff also met with Romanian Attorney-General Dr. Ilie Botos who said that if the project yields a considerable number of suspects he would consider the establishment of a special investigative unit to handle these cases.

Also, the Minister of Education announced that in 2004 a new Holocaust educational program would be adopted.

Political Environment
Anti-anti-Semitic, anti-racist and anti-xenophobic legislation
Governmental Ordinance 31

Unfortunately we have no news to report in this field. The only anti-racism legislative document, issued in 2001 (Governmental Ordinance 31), has yet to be approved as a permanent law. It remains an ineffective document and is used only for governments statements affirming the existence of effective anti-racism legislation in Romanian.

Political Environment ***Restitution of the Jewish Properties***

In 2003, out of thousands of Jewish properties to be restituted, only 2 restitutions acts were completed. This clearly indicates that at the time when there is “political readiness” to implement the existing restitution legislation the restitution procedure is not being effectively implemented.

Anti-Semitism ***Incidents in 2003***

On June 12 2003, the Romanian Government stated after its weekly meeting, in its weekly press communiqué, that there was no Holocaust in Romania.

On June 19 2003, during the Vienna OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism, the Head of the Romanian delegation, ignoring and without apologizing for the June 12 official statements, announced to the participants at the conference that Romania does accept the fact that the Antonescu Government was responsible for the death of Jews during the WWII.

The delegation stressed Romania’s anti-racist legislation, as well as the the mandated teaching of the Holocaust in schools. These were waved as a flag of the goodwill by the Romanian Government demonstrates on this issue. (A discussion on Holocaust education is in a later chapter of this report

The Romanian Delegation met the US and the Israeli delegations at the conference, making efforts to convince their listeners that the whole matter was the unfortunate fault of the Minister of Public Information, Mr. Vasile Dancu. The Israeli and the US delegation were informed that measures for correcting the mistake were taken and Mr. Dancu was fired. However the Israeli and the US delegations were not informed that Mr. Dancu was named, after a governmental restructure, as the President of the Agency for Governmental Strategies, serving in within the Government.

Surprisingly, Mr. Razvan Theodorescu, the Minister of Culture and Cults, a close and a sincere friend of the Jewish Community and Israel was among those who issued the June 12 Governmental statement. However, it must be noted that since that date Mr. Theodorescu changed his views regarding this sensitive issue and became the first to openly call for the Romanian Government to fully recognize Romania's part in the Holocaust brought upon the Romanian Jews by the WWII Romanian authorities.

In August 2003 the Israeli newspaper “HAARETZ” published an interview with President Ion Iliescu, outlining his controversial statements regarding the Holocaust and Jewish property in Romania.

In the same month, HAARETZ was accused of publishing faked statements. HAARETZ immediately released the voice recordings of the interview, proving the correctitude of the Israeli newspaper.

In December 2003, during a sporting competition in Germany, Alexandru Mironov (from Romania), former presidential spokesman and the Honoric President of a Romanian sportive agency said to Uriel Bar Iosef (from Israel), the President of the Judges Association participating at that competition the following:

“You are guilty for all what is happening today in the world and I would not be surprised if one day Bucharest will also be blown away. The Jews are involved with their money in the international politics. I would not be surprised if one day the Jews that emigrated to Israel

from Romania will sale their properties for returning to Romania.”
(Quote from “Romania Libera” daily – December 04)

We were not only revolted but also disappointed to see that no sincere apologies or expression of regrets followed any of the unfortunate above presented events. Instead, confusing explanations and accusations of misrepresentation of the most inflammatory statements were released, creating an even more controversial atmosphere around these unfortunate incidents which should not happen in fist place.

Anti-Semitism Events reported in 2002 MCA Report What happened since?

In the 2002 MCA Report, five major anti-Semitic incidents which took place in 2002 were reported. In July 2003 MCA Romania approached the Romanian Police with the request to be updated on the investigation and findings in the reported cases. In September 2003 MCA Romania received an answer to its request from the Romanian Police.

We attach to this report an official translation of the Police response (see ANNEX 1). We will leave it to our readers to make their own impressions on the significance of such a response and the reality behind it.

Education The Holocaust in Romania Presentation in the Romanian school books

On June 12, 2003, at the end of its weekly meeting, the Romanian Government published an official denial of the Holocaust in Romania in its weekly press release.

On June 19th, 2003, following firm international and domestic reactions of indignation, the Romanian delegation to the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism in Vienna issued a statement

recognizing the involvement of Antonescu's regime in the extermination of Romanian Jews. However no apologies were presented by the Romanian Government for the June 12 rejection of the responsibility on the Holocaust in Romania.

In its statement the Romanian delegation pointed out that the Holocaust is taught in schools in Romania. This statement drew the attention of MCA's representative to the OSCE conference.

MCA Romania decided to check the manner in which the Holocaust in general, and the Holocaust in Romania, is presented in the history books used in Romanian schools.

In July 2003 MCA Romania sent a request to the specialized office within the Ministry of Education, asking for its assistance in studying how the Holocaust in Romania, and Romanian Jewish history is presented in the school books in use. In August 2003 MCA Romania received the response to its appeal. This response included photocopies of the pages of these school books where the Holocaust is presented to young students in Romania.

The materials sent to MCA Romania were extracted from the history books used in the 2002-2003 school year. MCA Romania was informed that the same books will be used for 2003-2004 school year.

In order to reach accurate conclusions, MCA Romania systemized the data presented in the history books in a dedicated database. From the materials provided by the Romanian Ministry of Education we learned that while all books present the Holocaust as a tragedy initiated and conducted by the German Nazi regime, there are no presentations of the suffering, the atrocities and the extermination that Romanian Jewry endured between 1938 and 1944 under the control of the Romanian authorities.

Romanian students are not presented with any information about the contributions brought by the pre-WWII Jewish community to the development of the Romanian society.

Romanian students still do not learn that in 1938 in Romania there were 780,000 Jews. They do not learn that Romanian Jews were granted Romanian citizenship only in 1919. Young students are taught that, due to Romanian tolerance, Romania had the highest number of Jewish survivors in all of post-WWII Europe. The students are not told that 400,000 Jews were killed in territories where they were deported under the supervision of the Romanian army. No details on the deportations, the 1938 racial legislation, the confiscation of Jewish properties, the 1940-1941 pogroms, are found in any of the materials brought to our attention by the Romanian Ministry of Education.

The MCA findings are not the first of this kind. In 2002 Ms Felicia Waldman from Bucharest University, made public her conclusions on the same subject. Dr. Lya Benjamin, a well-known Romanian Jewish historian, also expressed her observations regarding the same issues. None of these observations have yet been taken seriously.

We hope that 2004 will bring a real change in the present situation and the promises released by the Ministry of Education regarding a new Holocaust educational program will include information on the Romanian Jewish community, its role in the development of modern Romanian society, its history, and its experiences during the Holocaust.

Education ***Anti-Semitism and Jews in linguistics***

We consider that words are the symbols of sentiments and thoughts. Words have a spiritual weight which can make the difference between good and bad, between love and hate, between a primitive and an evolved community, between life and death.

This is why we decided to check on how the words related to Jews are presented to the Romanian public.

Our reference for this presentation is The Dictionary of the Romanian Language (The DEX) which is edited and published by the Romanian

Academy of Linguistics. The DEX is considered the bible of the Romanian Language.

- **JIDAN (similar to the English meaning of KIKE)** is widely used by many people in Romania. This name is used to define Romanian Jews and has become a symbol of the deep rooted anti-Semitism in Romania. It is used at all levels of society, even by those who, if asked, reject the idea of being anti-Semites.

In DEX - JIDAN (folk, pejorative) = JEW

The attention of The Romanian Academy of Linguistics was drawn to this issue a few years ago. The request issued then to either correctly and fully defines this inflammatory word or to erase it from the DEX, was firmly rejected by the Academy's representatives.

- **HOLOCAUST** is one of the most discussed words in Romania. The endless and malicious polemics deliberately conducted around this word and its meaning have only served to increase the level of confusion with the Romanian population vis-à-vis the true historic definition and accepted meaning.

In DEX - HOLOCAUST = “Sacrifice brought to GODS when the sacrificed animal was entirely burned by fire– Sacrifice – Killing of large masses of people by burning in fire”

- **POGROM** is a word which is unknown to most of the young and middle-aged Romanians. It seems that there is a belief that by forgetting the word, the pogroms that took place in Romania will also be forgotten.

In DEX - POGROM = “mass murder of the members of a minority national group, organized by nationalistic elements”

- **ANTI-SEMITISM** is a word which causes many adverse reactions in Romania. The Romanian Society do not sufficiently accept the Anti-Semitism present within the modern Romanian society. In Romania, Anti-Semitism is considered to happen

anywhere in the world but not in Romania and any reaction against anti-Semitism is creating an general hostile atmosphere for those who dare to take position and speak out.

In DEX - ANTISEMITISM = “hostile attitude (political, social, etc) towards the Jews”.

We urge The Romanian Academy of Linguistics to correct the above definitions which, in our opinion, are not comprehensive and effective enough in defining the terms and educating the readers on the racism, anti-Semitism and deep-rooted murderous hatred, always directed against the Jews that these words embody.

Education *Seminars*

In 2003 a few seminars concerning Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in Romania took place. The usual numbers of participants to these seminars is of around 40-60 participants. Most of the participants are the same historians who, for decades, have been investigating Anti-Semitism, Jewish History and the Holocaust in Romania. A representative of the Romanian Government participates at almost every such seminar in order to give an official air to these events. The seminars usually take place in locations which are not accessible to large numbers of people. In the best cases these seminars become public only after they take place, and the media coverage is no more than symbolic. The echoes of such seminars do not reach the public and do not get the same exposure that events held by the Legionary movement receive.

Education *Jews and Israel in Mass-Media presentations*

With satisfaction we noticed that in the second half of 2003, an increased number of dramas presenting the horrors of the Holocaust were broadcast by TV stations such as HBO and National TV. In

contrast, worrying and confusing messages regarding the “Jewish conspiracy”, the Holocaust in Romania and the Jewish motivations behind the intention to make Romania officially accept its responsibility towards it’s the Jewish WWII victims, were observed in talk shows such as “Batalia for Romania” (The Battle for Romania). “Batalia for Romania” is a daily talk show, broadcast at peak hours by Realitatea TV.

Israeli policies and its defensive measures taken against Palestinian terrorism are often presented in the International news sections of Romania mass-media. These reports usually focus on the effects of Israeli military incursions, and not the reasons behind them. The terrorist groups, such a Hizbullah, Hamas, The Islamic Jihad, The Palestinian Liberation Front, etc, are perceived and presented by the mass-media as freedom fighters, militants and guerilla groups. None of the activities conducted by these groups are defined as terror acts and none of the members of these groups are defined as terrorists.

Conclusions

We expect 2004 to be the year when new, real, consistent and evident measures will be officially adopted by the Romanian Government, after so many promises made since 2001.

In Romania, where the Jewish Community is formed out of less than 9,000 elderly people, anti-Semitism has nothing to with the Jews but says everything about the anti-Semites.

The founding members of MCA Romania thank to Mrs. Susan Heller Pinto (ADL), Dr. Michael Shafir, Dr. Alexandru Florian, Dr. Radu Ioanid, Adv Sorin Iulian, Ing Ozy Lazar, Dr. Lia Benjamin and Mr. George Paunescu for their moral and professional support which made MCA’s 2003 activities possible.

-END-

Anti-Semitism
Events reported in 2002 MCA Report
What happened since? - ANNEX1

Registered Translation from Romanian

THE GENERAL INSPECTORATE OF THE ROMANIAN POLICE
THE JUDICIAL POLICE DIRECTORATE

No. 148.254 of September 2003

**THE CENTER FOR MONITORING AND FIGHTING ANTI-SEMITISM IN
ROMANIA**

Bucharest, str. Cristian Popisteanu nr. 2-4, sector 1
S.P.A. Enache si Enache for M.C.A. Romania -

At your request regarding the stage of investigations carried out by the police regarding several events qualified as anti-semitism committed at Falticeni, Vatra Dornei, Cluj and Bucharest or in other Romanian towns, we hereby inform you on the following:

- With reference to the Jewish Synagogue of Falticeni, Suceava county, the investigations showed that the constitutive elements which describe a criminal offence provided by Art. 3 of the Government Ordinance No. 31/2002, regarding the banning of fascist, racist and xenophobe organizations and symbols, could not be established. Investigation into the offence of destruction, a deed provided by and punished according to Art. 217, paragr. 1, Criminal Code is continuing.
- With regard to the breaking in of the door at the Jewish synagogue of Vatra Dornei, Suceava county, at June, 26, 2002, specific activities aimed at the identification of the perpetrators are still in progress.
- Alike, in the discovery of some inscriptions at October 12, 2002 on the outside wall of the Jewish State Theatre of Bucharest, our activities resulted in the identification of two suspects, whose writing samples were taken in order to carry out a graphological investigation. The investigations are ongoing in this case too in order to identify the authors.
- Referring to the existence of some anti-semitic inscriptions and drawings on the wall of a block of flats in Cluj-Napoca at October 15, 2002, the investigations

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and checkings have shown that these were written in 2001 by children living in the area, and these were not organized anti-semitic manifestations.

Besides these events, police is also working on two cases, i.e.: the theft of a metal fence which took place during March 10-14, 2003 and of a metal gate, on September 11, 2002, both by unknown authors, from the Jewish cemeteries of Calarasi and Resita.

In all cases, the police are still working on the cases to identify and capture the authors.

Head of the directorate
Police Chief
Dr. FLORESCU BUJOR,