

**THE REGIME OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND MATERIAL AND FINANCIAL
OBLIGATIONS OF THE JEWS DURING THE ANTONESCU REGIME (1940-1944)**

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Abstract

This paper deals with the regime of contributions and material and financial obligations of the Jews during the Antonescu regime (1940-1944). The various obligations applied to Jews by decree-laws under the threat of fines, deprivation of liberty and deportation in Transnistria, summed almost 2 billion lei for this period, without accounting for the value of expropriations of Jewish goods.

Keyword: *Jews, Antonescu regime, material and financial obligations, extortion*

JEL Classification: *B20, B29.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the Proclamation to the country, on the occasion of the takeover of power in the state, in September 1940, General Ion Antonescu presented his government program stating that: "I will present the program to you so that you all can judge it. It will spring entirely from the creed of integral nationalism" (Official Gazette, 1940). According to the vision of the head of state, integral nationalism meant: "intolerance to ethnic pluralism; the elimination of foreigners and especially Jews, firstly from the structures of the Romanian society, then from Romania in general; ethnic homogenization of the Romanian nation" (Antonescu, 1942). Integral nationalism was the basis of the romanianization program adopted by the Head of the State as an official policy and with immediate action, the anti-Jewish legislation being the instrument of the romanianization of the society. According to Antonescu (1942), the anti-Jewish legislation contributed to "shaking the Romanian property of the foreign mistletoe and removing the overwhelming role of the Jews in the economic life". The program of national-social reform, in fact the integral nationalism was continued even after the legionaries were removed from power, in February 1941, Antonescu's speech on the repression of the rebellion is proof of this, when he declared that: "this state will be founded on the Romanian primacy in all areas. I will carry out, without hesitation, all the reforms necessary to remove foreign influences in order to ensure our national destiny. The whole struggle and settlement of the great German national-socialist revolution and the fascist achievements will serve us as grounds for experience to graft in the Romanian soul and needs, the fruit of these people's organizations, the grounds of a new world" (Antonescu, 1941).

The authorities used the pretext that the Jews "had not been obliged to perform military service or serve in the army and had not risked their lives in war" and subjected them to numerous material and financial contributions that have exceeded their material possibilities.

The material condition of the Jews was a precarious one, as a result of the measures taken by the authorities, measures which aimed at mass dismissals, dispossession of material goods, evictions or taxation of all kinds which contributed to the poverty of the Jews.

In all this activity of spoliation, Jews' Central played an important role and Lecca (1994) put into practice the policy of the Antonian regime. In his memoirs, Lecca wrote about this need for money: "Mrs. Antonescu used to demand money for the Patronage, Mihai Antonescu always demanded money for Argeş County, where he built schools, churches, etc. - to gain popularity in the case of elections - there was also von Killinger, who had also many needs (...)"

All these obligations, which will be tackled in this paper, were worth 1,800,135,600 lei., for the period analysed, according to the work of Matatias Carp.

II. THE REGIME OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND MATERIAL AND FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE JEWS DURING THE ANTONESCU REGIME*The „ Patronage Council” of Mrs. Antonescu*

These social obligations were included in the Law of the The Patronage Council of social works, law presented to the government by the Minister of Justice himself, Tomescu, at the beginning of April 1941, by which all the Jews were affected, even if the law did not contain the term "Jewish". The law was intended to coordinate all "works of protection and social assistance" throughout Romania through "close cooperation between public authorities and the private initiative" (Timpul, 1941). The president of this Patronage Council was Antonescu's wife, Maria, who could organize a network of aid institutions, homes and donation collection centers and distribute them on behalf of the Council or her own. Practically, the institution whose symbol was a blue cross with a flower, was, an institution which was in direct competition with Romanian Red Cross. During this period, the patronage council was a source of tension between the Royal Palace under whose patronage was the Romanian Red Cross and Maria Antonescu, while for the Jews it was a means of "bribery" to improve their situation. Until July 1, 1943, the amount of 410 million lei was deposited, the amount which come from the taxes imposed for issuing compulsory work exemption cards (ACSIER, fund III).

The Loan of Reunion

It was launched immediately after the re-integration of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in 1941, and the leaders called on the Jewish population to "seek each to serve as an example to the others; to give so much that everyone feels obligated to say: if he gave that much, I have to give ten times more. It is our duty to give the country all we can, even more than we can, without bargain, for the country's sake, for our sake, for the sake of all" (Activitatea Centralei evreilor din România, 1998). Thus, on May 20, 1942, the date when the census of the Jewish population was carried out, the subscribed amount was 1,994,209,141 lei (Activitatea Centralei evreilor din România, 1998).

Collections of sanitary equipment and clothing

They represented other obligations imposed by decrees-laws, under criminal sanctions. Sanitary equipment for hospitals in the amount of 500,000,000 lei were requisitioned by force and unpaid. Regarding clothing, every major Jew was forced to submit a number of complete effects of clothing, footwear and linen (shirts, underwear, stockings, handkerchiefs, towels, boots, hats, blankets, mattresses, pillowcases, pillows and sheets), depending on the taxable income of each. Those who could not deposit these effects, could deposit their value in money. Their value for the analysed period amounted to 1,800,135,600 lei. This action began on September 1, 1941, and a law was issued in this respect, the Law for compelling Jews to contribute to the creation of clothing stocks in the social interest, from October 20, 1941. The punishment for those who escaped was "the correctional prison from 5 to 10 years and a fine from 100,000 to 500,000 lei ... For failing to fulfill the obligations stipulated ... will be punished, ... its leaders" (M.O. part I, 1941). Those who could not fulfill this obligation were sentenced to prison, but they had the chance to be pardoned in exchange of money, the amounts paid in this regard being about 100,000,000 lei. The law, was named by Gustav Richter, Eichmann's envoy to Romania, the "law of underwear" (das Unterhosenengesetz) (AnceI, 2008). Due to the great problems regarding these collections and especially the deadlines, in January 1942 a new law replaced the requisition of goods with a tax, and the cash equivalent of some goods was established (M.O., Part I, 1942). The quantities of effects handed over by the Jewish authorities were immense: 204,717 shirts, 203,790 linens, 205,775 pairs of stockings, 359,505 handkerchiefs, 203,373 towels, 104,841 sweaters, 80,103 suits, 67,894 pairs of shoes, 34, 444 , 34,095 sheets, 65,805 bed and pillow covers, 20,139 coats, thousands of other clothes, hospital equipment (Jean AnceI, 2008).

Exempt labor taxes for public benefit

It was another means of financial plunder to the Jews, as an equivalent of compulsory labor. Its establishment and collection was arbitrary, the amounts collected only between April 1, 1943 and August 23, 1944, amounting to 3,034,148,141 lei. Also here were the exemption from the snow work, a contribution imposed by those who belong to a certain category of Jews, especially intellectuals, exempted from the obligation to clean the sidewalks and streets of cities. These taxes applied in the winter of 1942-1943 and 1943-1944 amounted to 144,024,375 lei (AnceI, 2003).

Exceptional contribution of four billion lei

This tax was imposed in April 1943 by Marshal Antonescu himself, to the entire Romanian population. Under the threat of deportation to Transnistria, the Jews contributed 734,156,308 lei (Matatias Carp, 1996). The reason for this tax was made by Antonescu himself to Radu Lecca from May 11, 1943, as follows: "Please be

aware that the government considering that while the Romanian soldiers are sacrificing on the front, the Jewish population continues to enjoy the freedom to trade and stay safe from the dangers of war, has decided that this population will contribute to the financial needs of the country with the sum of four billion lei [...]. Please note that the government has decided that the Jews who oppose to pay the tax imposed [...] should be sanctioned by deportation to Transnistria, and that their assets be liquidated for the benefit of the state. We would like to draw your attention to the responsibility of the leadership of the Jewish [...] for the accurate execution of the above decision of the government" (ACSIER, fund III). The order issued by Lecca included a threat with the deportation in Transnistria of those who refused to pay, even if in the autumn of 1942 the Antonescu government had abandoned the deportation policy. According to this order, two billion represented the contribution for 1942, which had to be paid "until June 12, a.c., and the remaining two billion, for 1943, will be paid until August 12, a.c." (Jews in Romania between 1940-1944, vol. IV, 1998).

The palace of disabled persons/ invalids

A contribution imposed from the initiative of the leader of the Jewish Central of Romania, for the construction of a hospital (called Z.I. 303 Bucharest) in which the wounded of war are cared for and professionally integrated the war invalids. The total subscription of the Jewish Central in Romania was of 100,000,000 lei (*Activitatea Centralei evreilor din România*, 1998). A partial estimation of the contributions and material and financial obligations of the Jews during the Antonescu regime (1940-1944) is presented as follows (Ancel, 2, 2, 2003):

- the loan of the reunification 1.994.209.194 lei
- the value of the deposited effects - 1,800,135,650 lei
- contribution to the "palace of disabled persons" -89,575,898 lei
- the contribution of 4 billion-734,156,308 lei
- contributions to the order of the authorities - 1,067,876,827 lei
- the snow tax 139,323,875 lei
- tax for compulsory work exemption cards - 2,028,450,206 lei
- contributions from the Jewish Central - 504,186,987 lei
- direct contributions to the Council of Patronage - 510,000,000 lei
- money transfer the Council of Patronage - 1,264,813,800 lei

III. CONCLUSION

These are only part of the sums and material goods extorted by the Antonescu government from the Jews, without taking into account the value of expropriation of Jewish goods that exceeds the amount of 70 billion lei (Trei ani de guvernare, 6 septembrie 1940-6 septembrie 1943, 1944). All these "Romanianization" measures were justified by Antonescu in a memorandum handed over to the People's Court before its execution. In his report he stated that through these measures to help the war, he left a stable economy, with a stable currency with the increase of the BNR's gold reserve, a smooth economic life and investments in infrastructure.

But from the contribution of the population of 30 billion lei, almost a third was extorted from the Jews.

IV.ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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APPENDIX A

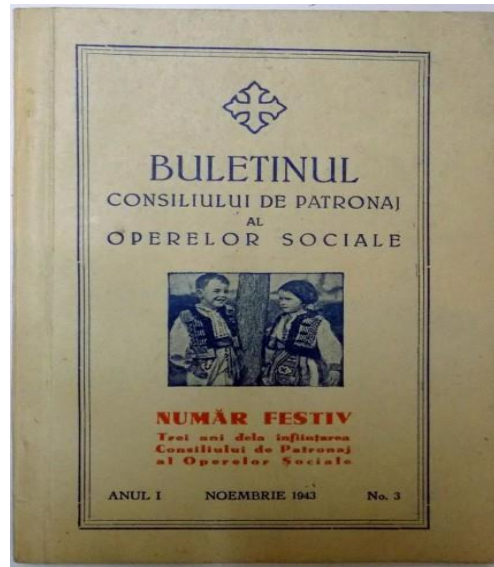


Figure A1 – The „Patronage Council” of Mrs. Antonescu

Source: https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consiliul_de_Patronaj_al_Operelor_Sociale#/media/



Figure A2 – The Loan of Reunion

Source: <https://www.galeriasigma.ro/produs/AFIS+ORIGINAL%2C+IMPRUMUL+REINTREGIRII+ROMANIEI+>