

The Romanian Holocaust Commission – the executive report.

There is no doubt in my mind that the report is something extremely important which will have a strong impact both at the level of public opinion but also of future policies of the Romanian Government.

The document was very much needed and advocates strongly, well deserved measures able to reverse the shocking percentages of Romanians denying or unaware of the role Romania played in the Holocaust.

Unfortunately the way the Roma Holocaust in Romania is presented in the executive report raises serious concerns as it gets a very marginal attention in the report. The report from the start downplays the Roma Holocaust as it writes after a 245 words of description of Jewish Holocaust which starts presenting the Transnistria as a “giant killing field for Jews” that “**a portion of the Roma** population of Romania was also subjected to deportation and death in Transnistria.”

It is hard to understand why the report needed to underline that just “**a portion of the Roma**” were “**subjected to deportation and death**” but has strong and well deserved words about “systematic deportation and extermination of nearly all the Jews” despite it describes also the faith of just a part of the Jewish population.

The report writes in its first page “Between 105,000 and 120,000 **deported** Romanian Jews **died as a result of the expulsions** to Transnistria.” About Roma it writes “**A high proportion of those Roma** who were deported also died. Of the 25,000 Roma (half of them children) sent to Transnistria, approximately 11,000 perished.”

The discrepancies between the Jews and Roma are again strong, as the report doesn't mention **a high or low proportion** of Jews who died as a result of the expulsion but just gives the estimate of those who died. The estimated number of Roma who died in Transnistria is also a lot less than 19.000 as reported by Radu Ioanid, of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the report fails to mention the fact that the archives of Ukraine and Bessarabia weren't accessed.

The next part of the report “Evolution of Destruction” from page 2 to page 6 has 2180 words describing the situation before, during and after the Holocaust. It mentions Roma once and paradoxically the only time it does it practically makes an argument against Roma Holocaust as it writes“. And indeed various liberal, or simply decent, Romanian politicians and public figures occasionally intervened on behalf of the Jews or **Roma**.” It is very hard to believe that the researcher weren’t aware of the strong anti-Gypsy feeling and speeches in the Romania society.

Accordingly the following chapter Contemporary Conclusions and Recommendations the most important in our opinion as it sets bases for concrete actions is largely ignoring Roma also. It mentions Roma once as it recommends inclusion in educational text books of facts “describing the historical experience of **Jews and Roma** in Romania prior to their persecution during the Holocaust.

The measures write at large about “a long history of anti-Semitism among Romanian political and intellectual elites” and ways to curb the anti-Semitism but doesn’t even mention the strong anti-Roma (anti-Gypsyism) history in Romania based on centuries of forced slavery of Roma. It fails to give any specific recommendation on Roma and combating anti-Gypsyism. The chapter has also a strong focus on Jewish communities and completely ignores the Roma communities.

The report does mention at its very end the anti-Roma feelings but that had no reflection or mentioning this in the vital recommendations.

The report includes also at its very end a definition of the Holocaust provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum proving that **Romania fits into the category of countries characterized by a *state-organized* participation in the genocide against Jews and Roma** during World War II. Despite this the analyses of Roma Holocaust is done in a chapter which fails as the entire report to mention explicitly the **Roma**

Holocaust called simply “The Deportation of the Roma and Their Treatment in Transnistria”

Moreover the chapter paradoxically seems to try to prove the non-existence of a Roma Holocaust as it writes “although the February 1938 Constitution distinguished between “Romanians by blood” and “Romanian citizens” to the detriment of the latter, this distinction was enforced against Jews and other ethnic groups, but not the Roma.”

This makes no sense whatsoever as the reports later writes about the popular eugenic theory saying that “Roma were socially peripheral paupers with high criminality rates who were a menace to the “racial purity” of Romanians” which asked for forced sterilization of the Roma.

The report continues to force a clear distinction between Roma and Jews presenting the first as less discriminated. It writes: “Since the deportation was limited to only part of the Roma, their situation may seem to be parallel to that of the Jewish population. Only Jews from Bessarabia, Bukovina and from Dorohoi County were deported; the other Romanian Jews—with only a few exceptions—were not. Nevertheless, during the war, the Romanian state led a policy which aimed at all Jews; the antisemitic legislation and Romanianization policies affected, albeit in different ways, all segments of the Jewish population. From 1940–1944, **the entire Jewish population was subject to heavy discrimination. It was not so with the Roma population.**”

Worrisome the report also contains hardly justifiable sentences as “The situation of the Roma in Transnistria was extremely difficult at first.” It could be interpreted as it was difficult at first and then become fine. This is in stark contrast with the facts as the “first” was 1942 and the report writes at a later stage that :”In fact, almost all deaths among the Romanian Roma deported to Transnistria occurred during the winter of 1943/1944”

The report goes also at length into presenting the opposition of Romanians against the deportation of Roma which is presented as much stronger than in the case of Jews as it writes: ”The deportation of the Roma did not enjoy the support of the Romanian

population, and protests came from all quarters. Some protests even came from the political and cultural elite, including C.I.C. Bratianu, the leader of the National Liberal Party, and leaders of the National Peasant Party as well as composer George Enescu. The management of several companies, such as the state-run Romanian Railway Company, also defended their Roma employees out of fear that deportations would extend to new categories of Roma. Most documents indicate popular opposition to the deportation of Roma from all social classes, whereas few documents show support for the measure. Protest was usually expressed in the form of letters or memoranda sent by individuals or entire communities to such public authorities as the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Ion Antonescu personally, the queen mother, the Ministry of Interior, and the Great Chief of Staff. These efforts aimed either to stop deportations from a certain village or town or to secure the return of deportees to their homes, and most were made in fall 1942, after the deportation of the “dangerous” sedentary Roma. “

After all this argument the report mentions paradoxically that:

“These objections to the deportation of the Roma, however, **never concerned the nomadic Roma**, whose deportation seems to have been considered justifiable by the Romanian majority. “

It is sad to see that Roma continues to be regarded as third class citizens even in death. It is worrisome that the executive report of the Holocaust in Romania goes to strong semantic efforts in order to avoid talking about a Roma Holocaust.