

Citation style

Waldman, Felicia: review of: Stefan Cristian Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance to "Romanianization", 1940-44*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, in: *Hungarian Historical Review*, 2016, 1, p. 211-214, DOI: 10.15463/rec.2074261605, downloaded from recensio.net

First published:

<http://www.hunghist.org/index.php/archive/82-book-reviews...>



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Jewish Resistance to “Romanianization”, 1940–44. By Stefan Cristian Ionescu. *Palgrave Studies in the History of Genocide*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 267 pp.

Although he is treading on well-worn paths in Holocaust and genocide studies, in his book Stefan Cristian Ionescu offers several new insights into a topic which might be regarded as having already been made the subject of exhaustive study. Not only does the work provide a coherent and comprehensive overview of the manner in which the Romanianization process unfolded during the years of World War II, which is in itself a new enterprise (so far, no other expert has attempted to provide such a thorough overview of the facts), it also offers the reader a clear picture of the historical (political, social, and economic) background from which these development emerged.

Divided into eight chapters and a conclusion, Ionescu’s book reveals the author’s thorough familiarity with both older and more recent specialized literature. His readings are impressive and cover a variety of perspectives and sources from several countries. For instance, the chapter focused on the fate of Bucharest’s Jews in 1940–44, which opens the volume (“Introduction: World War II Bucharest and its Jews”), gives the reader a balanced overview of the main historical events of the time and interpretations of these events by the most important scholars in the field (Jean Ancel, Dennis Deletant, Armin Heinen, Carol Iancu, Mihai Chioveanu, Radu Ioanid, etc.). It also provides an interesting comparison with previous nationalization policies of the Romanian state, which constitutes a new and welcome contribution to the subject. The introduction additionally bases its interrogation of the process of Romanianization on local theoretical grounds, showing that this process had deep and strong Romanian intellectual roots and was not an import or imitation of another model (which does not mean, however, that the Romanianization process was not well part of larger trends at the time, as Ionescu rightly mentions). Ionescu clearly underlines the goals and targets of this process, and he does not neglect mention of the Roma as one of the targets. Furthermore, the use of carefully selected and verified interviews, letters, diaries, memoirs, and court rulings as research sources alongside the usual statistics, archival documents, and materials from the press is an original and innovative approach in tackling the wartime condition of the Jews of Bucharest, especially since their situation was quite different from that of their coreligionists in the rest of the country, with its three component parts

(the former Principalities of Wallachia, Moldova, and Transylvania), as Ionescu indeed reveals by adopting a comparative perspective.

Ionescu's thorough effort to trace the roots and evolution of the Romanian anti-Jewish legislation and analyze this legislation in relation to similar laws passed in the neighboring and allied countries, in particular Germany (Chapter 2, "Romanianization Legislation: Concepts, (Mis)interpretations and Conflicts"), constitutes another contribution to the field, especially in regard to "the burden and ambiguity of ethnicity during the Antonescu regime: the problematic concepts of ethnic Romanian, Jew and German" and the "state institutions' complaints against the formalities of Romanianization legislation and the misinterpretations of these laws by courts and public agencies." Neither of these topics has been given much attention by other experts in the recent past. Similarly useful and welcome is Ionescu's original review of two particular cases of exemptions from Romanianization and their respective outcomes: that of the foreign Jews (with all the implications and subsequent, sometimes beneficial complications that the notion entailed) and that of the Jews who converted to (various types of) Christianity.

Ionescu analyzes another rather neglected aspect of the process in the third chapter, "The Romanianization Bureaucracy." This gives him an opportunity not only to describe the structure and roles of the bureaucracy, but also to document what is considered "common knowledge" but has not really been addressed in detail, i.e. the fact that the enterprise, the Romanianization of the bureaucracy, was doomed to fail from its inception due to the ways in which Romanians sabotaged it from the inside through nepotism, intentional and unintentional poor management, and bribery, to which the author adds as his own contribution a new and persuasive argument: the lack of consistent state policy.

In its turn, in addition to giving a thorough review of the various categories of people and organizations that benefited, directly or indirectly, from the process, whether in cash (bribery) or in kind (real estate), and as a result of more or less determined (at times even aggressive) competitive pursuit, the chapter on "The Beneficiaries of Romanianization" allows Ionescu to originally ponder a number of intellectuals' sometimes shocking lack of understanding of the psychological implications of their participation in theft, such as Camil Petrescu, who built his literary career on a (Jewish) Hillel scholarship (1914–19), or Alice Voinescu, who was otherwise very sympathetic to Jewish plight.

Another interesting contribution to the field is Ionescu's insight into "Romanianization versus Germanization" (chapter 5), which brings to the

forefront the subject—which has been largely overlooked—of local and foreign German competition for Romanian Jewish properties and the negative reactions it prompted both among the state officials and the general public. Ionescu thus analyzes the reactions of the Germans to the different treatments to which they were subjected by the Romanian authorities: the properties of the Germans who left Romania to join the Waffen SS were Romanianized, while Germans who remained in Romania were allowed to preserve their assets, to the dissatisfaction of the majority; however, no German, whether local or foreign, was permitted to obtain any benefit from the properties confiscated from the Jews, much to their dissatisfaction.

In regard to “Deportation and Robbery: The Roma Targets of Romanianization” (chapter 6), relying on published and unpublished documentation made available by Romanian and foreign experts, Ionescu draws some interesting conclusions of his own, not without merit. He sketches a series of new social and racial nuances in the interpretation of the reasons behind the deportation process, and he rightly underlines the differences between Jewish and Roma victimhood, both in the eyes of the authorities and in the eyes of the majority population.

By and large, “Jewish Legal Resistance to Romanianization” (chapter 7) is a valuable account of the struggle to fight the state with its own means. Drawing heavily on recently discovered archival documents and the existing secondary literature, Ionescu manages to come up with a clear picture of the chaos ruling the wartime Romanian legal system, which complicated the Romanianization process and allowed a number of Jews to outwit it, thus giving a new dimension to the analysis, which so far has dealt more with the Jewish initiatives and acts and less with their results.

Finally, based almost exclusively on recently discovered archival material and diaries, “Sabotaging the Process of Romanianization” (chapter 8) proposes an entirely new approach to the subject from a rare perspective. This chapter constitutes Ionescu’s main personal academic contribution to the historiography of World War II Romania. This is undoubtedly the book’s strongest point.

All in all, the variety of sources, innovative approaches, and original insights make the volume a significant contribution to the historiography of the Romanian Holocaust. Its only downside is that while it is called *Jewish Resistance to Romanianization, 1940–44*, only two of its eight chapters deal with Jewish resistance. The rest are devoted to the various aspects of the Romanianization process itself. This is not to say that the six chapters dealing with the process

were not necessary or should have been shorter. On the contrary, the book should perhaps have been longer and also should have included more discussion of other forms of resistance among Jews (educational, cultural, spiritual, etc.), which Ionescu mentions but does not dwell upon. However, this does not make the book any less important as a very useful tool for both researchers and students in the field of Holocaust studies.

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