

CONSTRUCTING INTERETHNIC CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

Why Some People Harmed Jews and Others Helped Them during the Holocaust in Romania

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Jewish civilian: "I encountered extraordinary people. . . . [Ukrainians] helped me to survive in the camp."¹

Jewish civilian: "[when] war broke out the Moldovans immediately burned down our house. They were the ones who helped the Germans, they burned houses and people."²

CIVILIAN populations across Europe reacted differently to the Holocaust and the opportunities it brought to victimize or aid their Jewish neighbors. As the above quotes attest, there were patterns of behavior that may have gone beyond individual, idiosyncratic differences. This article locates spatial differences in behavior within one region of Eastern Europe, explaining why one group of gentiles provided support and aid to its suffering Jewish neighbors, while another group exacerbated the situation, causing deliberate harm, often with gratuitous acts of violence.

In contrast to most research on interethnic relations, this article looks at the causes of both conflict *and* cooperation. We argue that

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¹ Sheyn 2005.

² Sherman, Yad Vashem Archives.

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the underlying “quality” of interethnic relationships between civilian populations of different ethnic groups affects the likelihood of producing conflict or cooperation when opportunities for such action arise. We work in the constructivist tradition, arguing that states can play a central role in building interethnic relationships that are then internalized by members of the ethnic groups. Critically, our empirical data demonstrate that states can construct cooperative relationships even in societies that have experienced decades of previously violent interethnic interactions, and we show that this can be accomplished over the course of relatively short periods of time. Our cases strongly suggest that state citizenship and nationality policies, if they are focused on integration and inclusion and backed by strong political commitment, are able to build cooperative interethnic relationships that are internalized and that endure beyond the life of the state itself.

This underlying quality of interethnic relationships also contributes to other debates in the field by linking macrotheories of ethnic war to microlevel explanations of ethnic violence. Some explanations of war, such as state weakness or opportunistic elites, run into problems because they cannot explain why some ethnic dyads turn violent while others do not, and why some nationalist elites succeed while others fail. To address this, more recent studies have made explicit their assumption of preconflict animosity, but they tend to treat this background animosity as fixed, the result of macrohistorical processes involving prior conflict. We take one step back in this causal chain and seek *to explain how these background interethnic relations are constructed and, more importantly, how animosity can be transformed into affinity through deliberate state policies regarding citizenship and nationality*. The specific focus of this article is on how background interethnic relationships of animosity or affinity cause or prevent low-level violence among nonstate actors.

We believe that these results have direct applicability to the twenty-first century’s increasingly multiethnic societies: as states struggle to alleviate tension between historic groups within their borders as well as with new immigrant communities, the state can play a direct, constructive role in fostering better relations. The role of state citizenship and nationality policies can play an ever-increasing role in how these migrants integrate and how extant citizens react to, treat, and behave toward them. Further, we see new nationality policies, even in the short term, as capable of altering long-term antagonistic behavior between established ethnic groups within a given society.

I. OUR CASES: A NATURAL EXPERIMENT

To test our theory about the impact of state nationality policies on citizens' individual-level motivations toward conflict or cooperation, we have taken a natural experiment in which two multiethnic populations of similar sizes and proportions are subject to the same racist, exclusivist nationality policies from the state at time t , but at time $t+1$ one of the multiethnic populations is subject to strongly inclusivist nationality policies from the state, while the other continues to receive the same racist, exclusivist policies. At time $t+2$ both populations are given the opportunity (and even encouraged) to abuse a minority population during conditions of war under a racist, exclusivist regime. The central difference between the groups is an intervening two-decade period during which one state sought to construct interethnic cooperation. The results are striking and compelling: the citizens who were subjected to the inclusivist "treatment" were less likely to abuse and far more likely to aid the minority, even when aiding the minority posed a risk to their own safety.

Our case studies come from an East European region on the territories of modern-day Moldova and Ukraine (see map of Figure 1). This territory contains two regions that came under Romanian control during World War II, when Romania was allied with the Nazis. We use the example of Romania during the Holocaust because it provides a unique natural experiment: the neighboring territories of Bessarabia and Transnistria³ contained Jewish populations of similar size in both percentage and aggregate numbers,⁴ and these two territories were part of the Russian Empire until 1918, after which Bessarabia joined Romania and Transnistria joined the newly established Soviet state. During the tsarist period, these territories had been subjected to extreme forms of official state anti-Semitism, including restrictions on employment, residence, mobility, and implicitly sanctioned or tolerated pogroms against the Jewish population. After 1918 the Bessarabian population continued to live under state-sponsored anti-Semitism; however, the Transnistrian population experienced a vastly different policy fostered by the Soviet Union, one that included a radically inclusive nationality

³ Transnistria during World War II included present-day Transnistria, a region within the Republic of Moldova, as well as territory to the east, located in present-day Ukraine, and comprising a large proportion of ethnic Ukrainians. In this article Transnistria refers to this larger WWII geographic region and not only to the present-day territory of Transnistria.

⁴ At the end of the nineteenth century Bessarabia had 228,620 Jews (11.8 percent), and in the province of Podolia, which formed a major part of Transnistria, the Jews numbered 370,612 (12.3 percent). More details on the population size at the start of World War II can be found at fn. 98.



FIGURE 1
APPROXIMATE GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES OF Bessarabia and
Transnistria inside Romania during World War II

policy specifically aimed at destroying negative stereotypes of the Jews, fostering positive images, and integrating the marginalized Jewish population into mainstream Soviet society.

In 1941, twenty-three years after having been divided, Bessarabia and Transnistria were once again rejoined, under the control of the Romanian government, with some help from the Germans. It was explicit Romanian policy to detain all Jews within Bessarabia and Transnistria and place them in camps and ghettos within Transnistria. As in other regions occupied by the Nazis, destruction of the Jewish population was devastating, and the Romanian security forces encouraged local peasants in both regions to engage in anti-Jewish victimization.

After a careful study of gentile behavior toward the Jewish population in these two regions, our research indicates that there was a remarkable difference between actions taken in Bessarabia and Transnistria. On the basis of more than two hundred Jewish survivor testimonies, a mail-in survey with Jewish Holocaust survivors, interviews with over one hundred non-Jewish Holocaust witnesses located on the territories

of Bessarabia and Transnistria, and archival material from the Romanian, German, and Soviet governments, we found the following: the Bessarabian population was more likely to commit abusive actions against Jews (for example, beatings, theft, murder, rape), whereas the Transnistrian population was both (1) less likely to commit abuse and (2) more likely to behave in a cooperative manner (for example, providing food and hiding Jews from persecution). We believe that the prewar state policies encouraging either animosity or affinity between ethnic groups greatly contribute to our understanding of this outcome. We present our results in both qualitative and quantitative forms.

The rest of the article proceeds as follows. Section II presents literature on interethnic conflict, focusing on five main approaches to violence onset. Section III provides a brief history of the region under study, highlighting our theory by focusing on the exclusivist and inclusivist nationality policies of the different governments. Section IV details the data we have on violence and cooperation perpetrated by the local non-Jewish population toward the Jewish population during World War II, demonstrating lower levels of violence and higher levels of cooperation from the inclusivist side. Finally, Section V briefly considers alternative explanations specific to our case study. We conclude with Section VI.

II. LITERATURE EXPLAINING INTERETHNIC VIOLENCE

Literature explaining ethnic violence can be divided into five dominant research areas: structuralist, instrumentalist, institutionalist, emotional-psychological, and constructivist. We argue that the first three rely on the fourth as a necessary condition. The fourth, in turn, is typically treated as a constant, a result of macrohistorical circumstances, such as modernization or prior conflict. Our theory builds on this fourth area and contributes to the burgeoning constructivist literature by demonstrating the malleability of underlying interethnic relationships and by looking specifically at the state's role in that process. We also contribute to the constructivist literature by examining not only how violence influences the construction of ethnic identity but also the reverse process: how the construction of identities influences the production of violence.

STRUCTURALIST EXPLANATIONS

Structural explanations of interethnic violence often focus on the state or regime, identifying information failures and state weakness as the prime drivers of domestic interethnic violence. Some have identified

the structural conditions associated with regime transitions as a particularly fertile ground for interethnic and nationalist violence. For these authors, such “critical junctures” and the possible “emerging anarchy” are a time of dangerous instability precisely because of the uncertainty of state policies and information failures that can occur within the “marketplace of ideas.”⁵ While this approach is helpful in identifying the timing of conflicts, most are not able to specify which ethnic dyads are likely to come into conflict with one another and why some countries in transition experience no violence at all.

Some structural explanations can elucidate which ethnic dyads may engage in violence. Erin Jenne, for example, explains radicalization of ethnic demands through powerful external actors who provide support for minority groups in their bargaining with the government.⁶ Meanwhile Stathis Kalyvas argues that levels of violence in wartime are dependent on the degree of territorial control by armed forces.⁷ While both theories make important contributions, neither can explain our case: why nonstate actors attacked Jews in one region of the country but aided them in another, despite a uniform domestic state (Romania) and external actor (Soviet Union).

INSTRUMENTALIST AND INSTITUTIONALIST EXPLANATIONS

Instrumental approaches to ethnic conflict, exemplified by the work of Valere Philip Gagnon, focus on elites within society that are able to galvanize the masses into nationalistic acts of solidarity, violence, and sometimes warfare against other groups.⁸ Violence entrepreneurs are often deployed by elites to unite one ethnic group, in an elite’s bid to obtain or solidify power.

Very often instrumentalist approaches are tied up with institutionalist explanations, with one approach complementing the other. Paul Brass, for example, attributes Hindu-Muslim riots in India to the presence of “institutionalized riot systems”—networks of people aiming to maintain tension and initiate violence between groups.⁹ Steven Wilkinson’s institutional explanation accepts that violence entrepreneurs are involved but argues that the makeup of electoral districts can create incentives for political parties to use violence as a means of achieving victory at the ballot box.¹⁰ Ashutosh Varshney also believes violence

⁵ See, for example, Bertrand 2004; Posen 1993; and Snyder 2000.

⁶ Jenne 2007.

⁷ Kalyvas 2006.

⁸ Gagnon 1994–95; Gagnon 2004.

⁹ Brass 2003.

¹⁰ Wilkinson 2004.

entrepreneurs can create violence but argues that, where the web of transethnic civil society organizations are dense, small-scale violence is likely to be contained.¹¹

Importantly, for our explanation, both institutionalist and instrumentalist approaches *rely on the presence of extant interethnic tension*. After all, elites that try to stir up ethnic rivalries for political gain are a dime a dozen, but they are only sometimes successful. These elites usually need extant ethnic tension with which to manipulate the general public. Wilkinson, for example, concedes that “*preexisting* antiminority sentiment” is an important “enabling condition” for his theory.¹² Kalyvas suggests, similarly, that interethnic violence is most likely to occur where preexisting ethnic polarization is highest.¹³ We believe that exploring where this preexisting polarization comes from and how it changes is a critical and underexplored factor in explaining interethnic violence.

EMOTIONAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

Primordialist explanations of interethnic violence have long fallen out of favor within the social sciences, yet in recent years more sophisticated emotional-psychological explanations have emerged to explain background animosity between ethnic groups.¹⁴ Stuart Kaufman’s *Modern Hatreds* is exemplary: “people respond to ethnic symbols and mobilize . . . only if a widely known and accepted ethnic myth-symbol complex justifies hostility to the other group.”¹⁵ These hostile myths, according to Kaufman, come from histories of conflict and group victimization upon which elites can draw in their bid to obtain or maintain power. Horowitz similarly looks at an emotional sense of gratification that rioters feel when victimizing the ethnic “enemy,” and that, he argues, contributes to the occurrence of ethnic riots: “Whatever leaders may plan, the plans would not come to fruition if the rioters did not find the festive infliction of suffering and degradation thoroughly satisfying. No hidden logic of costs and benefits can explain the violence *tout court*.”¹⁶

¹¹ Varshney 2002.

¹² Wilkinson 2004, 2.

¹³ Kalyvas 2006.

¹⁴ It is not clear that “primordialism” in its pure form was ever a significant explanation in the social sciences. Clifford Geertz is typically cited as the primordialist, but his work allows for multiple identities and shifts within those identities. The primordialists tend, rather, to be journalistic accounts. See Geertz 1963; and Geertz 1973. For an example of the journalistic accounts, see Kaplan 1993.

¹⁵ Kaufman 2001, 30. Brubaker also works on this issue when referring to “levels of groupness” that aid elites in their quest for power. See Brubaker 2004, 22.

¹⁶ Horowitz 2001, 123.

This emphasis on background relations helps identify antagonistic groups, the baseline of tensions necessary for violent conflict to occur between ethnic groups. But these explanations also tend to treat such background conditions as relatively fixed and unchanging. They do not explain how, for example, a sense of interethnic cooperation or affinity could emerge after histories of conflict.¹⁷

CONSTRUCTIVIST EXPLANATIONS

The most recent addition to the ethnic conflict literature is constructivism.¹⁸ Constructivists explain the processes by which identities are formed, but their explanation of how identities lead to violence has been limited. As Charles King commented in a review of the literature: “Constructivism is intuitively right that social identities can be shaped, but it rarely offers an account of why identities take the shape they do (and why this fact should even matter in explaining mobilization and violence).”¹⁹ Kalyvas, similarly, has criticized the civil war literature for not adopting constructivist insights into theories of ethnic violence.²⁰ In addition, constructivists have not addressed the issue of how emotions of intergroup affinity could be created after long histories of conflict. Our approach problematizes and explains how these interethnic relationships can lead to violence, how interethnic relationships change, and how cooperative relations can be constructed from an antagonistic starting point all through policies of the state. Equally important, the conclusions here suggest that states committed to adopting a strongly inclusive, multiethnic national identity can have a profound impact on their citizens, leading them to internalize the sense of intergroup affinity that can *outlive the life of the state itself*.

III. STATE CONSTRUCTION OF INTERETHNIC CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

We now lay out the state nationality policies for our cases, providing descriptions for time t (both territories under tsarist Russia) and time $t+1$ (territory 1 [Bessarabia] under interwar Romania, and territory 2 [Transnistria] under interwar Soviet Union). We then move to the violence at time $t+2$ (both territories again united under Romanian control).

¹⁷ James Fearon and David Laitin are among the few authors in political science who have focused on the emergence of cooperation, although they do not focus on affinity or enter the constructivist debate. See Fearon and Laitin, 1996.

¹⁸ See Chandra 2001; Wimmer 2008; Lemarchand 1997; and Posner 2003.

¹⁹ King 2004.

²⁰ For a recent exception and shift in this approach, see Kalyvas 2008.

TIME T: BESSARABIA AND TRANSNISTRIA WITHIN TSARIST RUSSIA

Bessarabia and Transnistria were both part of the Russian tsarist empire after 1812. These two regions were largely agricultural, with comparable Yiddish-speaking Jewish minorities, usually highly segregated in small towns and cities.²¹ In Bessarabia at the end of the nineteenth century, ethnic Romanians were the majority of the population and there were 228,620 Jews, constituting 11.8 percent of the population. Of these, 48 percent lived in towns (including 50,237 in Kishinev, the capital of Bessarabia), 26.5 percent in small towns, and 25.5 percent in villages.²² In the predominantly Ukrainian province of Podolia,²³ which formed a major part of Transnistria, the Jews numbered 370,612, or 12.3 percent of the total population in 1897; of these the majority lived in towns and about 14 percent lived in villages.²⁴ The biggest city of Transnistria, Odessa, had 138,935 Jews, who constituted 34 percent of the population.²⁵ The biggest part of the Jewish population in these regions was usually employed as small tradesmen and craftsmen.²⁶

The Russian Empire was infamous for its state-sponsored anti-Semitism. The tsars themselves held explicitly anti-Semitic opinions, which largely coincided with the official view of the government. During one of his trips through Russia, the future tsar, Nicolas I, recorded in his diary: "The ruin of the peasants of these provinces are Kikes²⁷. . . . [T]hey drain the strength of the hapless White Russian people. . . . They are regular leeches, and suck these unfortunate governments to the point of exhaustion."²⁸ The tsars also supported openly anti-Semitic groups. For example, at the start of the twentieth century Tsar Nicholas II officially received a delegation of the Black Hundreds, a nationalist ethnic Russian group known for its anti-Semitic position and responsible for dozens of pogroms in the Russian Empire.²⁹

Official policies of the Russian government toward the Jews were worse. With rare exceptions, Jews were legally barred from public service, could not teach in government schools or obtain army commissions,

²¹ Regarding the segregation of the Jews in tsarist Russia, see Nathans 2002, 119.

²² Jewish Virtual Library 2008a.

²³ Podolia was the region in southwestern Ukraine, separated in the south from Moldova by the Dniester and in the west from Western Galicia by the Southern Buh. It borders on Volhynia in the north.

²⁴ Jewish Virtual Library 2008b

²⁵ Herlihy 1991, 251.

²⁶ Alroey 2003, 216.

²⁷ The Russian word is *Zhyd*, a derogatory term for Jewish people.

²⁸ Dubnow 2001, 2:14.

²⁹ Dubnow 2001, 3:131.

faced extensive other restrictions on employment, and were forced to live within a regional settlement on the western edge of the empire—the Pale of Settlement—of which both Bessarabia and Transnistria were part. From 1881 to 1905 the Russian government passed more than one thousand pieces of anti-Jewish legislation, preceding the Nazi Nuremberg racial laws of 1935 by half a century.³⁰ One author referred to tsarist authorities “treating the Jew as a disloyal and dangerous element, an inner enemy.”³¹

The Russian press was equally anti-Semitic and encountered no efforts on the part of the government to curb its hostile messages. The quintessential Russian writer, Dostoevsky, wrote in one article: “He [the Jew] has been driven for so many centuries only by ruthlessness to us [Russians], only by the thirst for our sweat and blood.”³² In 1880 the daily *Novoe Vremea*, then Russia’s most widely read newspaper, published the infamous article “*Zhid Idet!*” (The Kike Is Coming!), which blamed the Jews for “corrupting society,” both from above, as capitalists, and from below, as socialist revolutionaries.³³ Russian publishing houses were also the first to print the infamous “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” a forged document purporting to show a secret conspiracy to establish a Jewish world government. This document appeared as early as 1903 in the newspaper *Znamia* and was republished at least a dozen more times between 1905 and 1907 in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other regions.³⁴ A daily newspaper in Bessarabia (*Bessarabetz*), according to statements at the time, involved “regular and systematic baiting of the Jewish population . . . [and included] articles which amounted to a simple call for the extirpation of the Jews en masse.”³⁵ According to Simon Dubnow’s analysis, anti-Semitic slander in central and provincial newspapers was partially to blame for ruthless waves of pogroms that soon swept the Pale.³⁶

Throughout these occurrences the state has been identified as promoting, sponsoring, or, at the very least, creating a permissive environment for such attacks to continue.³⁷ Typically, once pogroms began, they would continue for days without interference by the police. The state would typically act late and impose relatively light sentences on

³⁰ Laqueur 2001, 581.

³¹ Yarmolinsky 1928, 39.

³² Dostoevsky 1949.

³³ *Novoe Vremea* 1880.

³⁴ Laqueur 2001, 499–503.

³⁵ *New York Times* 1903.

³⁶ Dubnow 2001, 2:248.

³⁷ Judge 1992; Klier and Lambroza 1992.

the participants.³⁸ These deadly pogroms occurred primarily in Ukraine (including our area of interest, Transnistria) and Bessarabia. The number of Jewish victims of the deadliest pogrom in Transnistria, which took place in 1905 in Odessa,³⁹ is estimated at between 302 and 1,000.⁴⁰ The most widely known pogrom of Bessarabia occurred in 1903 in Kishinev, resulting in 47 Jewish deaths, almost 500 wounded, and over 2,000 left homeless. Greatly distressed by the deadly pogroms and strained by the political and economic restrictions, numerous Jews considered emigrating from tsarist Russia.⁴¹

To summarize, we quote from Zvi Gitelman, a scholar of Jewish life in Russia and the Soviet Union:

The revolution of March 1917 was hailed by the overwhelming majority of the Jewish people in the crumbling Russian Empire. They had little cause to regret the downfall of a regime which had confined them to the Pale, had closed the professions, agriculture, and heavy industry to them and, during the war, had climaxed its treatment of the Jews by expelling thousands of them from their homes, particularly in the border areas of Poland and Lithuania, on the grounds that they were a disloyal element.⁴²

TIME T+1

The end of World War I was the beginning of a period of great change for the Jews in Eastern Europe. During the chaos that followed the 1917 Russian Revolution, Bessarabia joined Romania. The territory of Transnistria, meanwhile, became part of the newly forming Soviet state.

TERRITORY 1, BESSARABIA WITHIN THE ROMANIAN STATE: STATE-SPONSORED ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE CONTINUED CONSTRUCTION OF INTERETHNIC CONFLICT

Romania emerged from WWI substantially enlarged both geographically and demographically. The Jewish population of this newly enlarged

³⁸ One participant, who was eventually charged, complained about her arrest, stating: "They told us we had permission to beat the Jews, and now it appears that it was all a lie." See Dubnow 2001, 3:34.

³⁹ Odessa was well known for its anti-Jewish violence; pogroms took place here in 1821, 1859, 1871, 1881, and 1905. For a discussion and explanation of these and other pogroms, see Klier 1992, 13–34. On the 1871 pogrom in particular, see Zipperstein 1985, 114–28.

⁴⁰ See Weinberg 1987, 2, n. 2. He mentions that the hospitals reported treating 608 persons during the pogrom, another estimate of 302 victims is cited in an article in *Zionist Organisation* 1910, 130. Meanwhile the figure of 1,000 Jewish victims is given in Vitte 1960, 615.

⁴¹ According to Dubnow's estimate, during the years of 1905–6, nearly 230,000 left Russia for the United States. During the following years the figure was somewhat lower, but still amounting to 50,000 to 75,000 annually. See Dubnow 2001, 3:148

⁴² Gitelman 1972, 69.

Romania was 4 percent, and in our territory of interest—Bessarabia—Jews constituted 7.2 percent.⁴³ As part of the terms of the treaties of Paris, Romania agreed to strict provision of rights for its minorities, including full citizenship with voting rights for its Jewish population, which it conferred in its 1923 constitution.⁴⁴

Despite its promising legal beginnings, however, the reality of discrimination against Jews throughout the state and society in Romania during the interwar years has been well documented.⁴⁵ The 1923 Romanian constitution, for example, while granting legal equality to the Jews, failed to resolve fully the problem of Jewish citizenship in the country's new territories. In 1928 eighty thousand Romanian Jews remained unnaturalized, a majority of them living in Bessarabia.⁴⁶ Iakov Kopanskii, a historian of the period, writes: "Despite this formal equality of rights, in practice all Romanian Jews—and *Bessarabian Jews in particular*—remained second class citizens: the civil service and upper military echelons was barred to them, and obstacles and restrictions were placed in the way of those seeking higher education."⁴⁷ Historian Robert Crampton writes of the period: "the non-Romanians, or 'foreigners' as they were frequently and contemptuously called, lived in a state of permanent isolation."⁴⁸

Anti-Semitic propaganda and violence were common within the country throughout the interwar period. In 1923, for example, there were demands for a Jewish quota in higher education. Already in 1926 a Romanian Jewish senator spoke in parliament of "violence against Jews in trains, streets, trams, and synagogues."⁴⁹ Another prominent Romanian Jew at the time stated that "[t]he Jewish population laments the criminal indifference of the authorities and the apathy of the legal instances . . . nothing has been done to guarantee our personal security and property."⁵⁰ Kopanskii refers to several anti-Semitic riots that took place throughout Bessarabia between 1929 and 1932.⁵¹

By the 1930s, anti-Semitism had moved to the forefront of political and social affairs: virulent publications, student rallies, and political

⁴³ Statistics from Romania come from Rotman 1996, 10; statistics from Bessarabia come from Rozen 1996, 78.

⁴⁴ Rotman 1996, 11; Herscovici 1996.

⁴⁵ See, for example, International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania 2005, chap. 1.

⁴⁶ Livezeanu 1995, 123.

⁴⁷ Kopanskii 1996, emphasis added.

⁴⁸ Crampton 1997. Jews in particular were labeled "foreigners" or a "foreign body"; see, for example, speeches of the far-right Romanian politician Alexandru C. Cuza.

⁴⁹ Reported in the newspaper *Bessarabia* 04/03/26, No. 1220; cited in Kopanskii 1996, 349.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Kopanskii 1996, 350.

⁵¹ Prepelita, Orhei County (1929), Lipcani (1930), Balti (1930), Radoaia (1932).

parties were propagating anti-Semitism not only as a program, but as a philosophic and aesthetic creed, unimpeded by governmental restrictions. Political parties associated with fascism, such as the Iron Guard and the Cuzists, gained steadily in popularity throughout the decade, and Crampton has called Romania's fascist movement "the strongest in Eastern Europe."⁵² The universities of Bucharest and Iași became hotbeds of anti-Semitism. A leading biochemist and physiologist, Nicolae Păulescu, for example, was obsessed with anti-Semitism and wrote explicitly about the destruction of the Jews: "Can we perhaps exterminate them the way bedbugs are killed? . . . That would be the simplest, easiest, and fastest way to get rid of them."⁵³ Nicolae Iorga, a onetime prime minister of Romania and arguably the most famous Romanian historian of all time, wrote in 1937 that "[the Jews] are at work to accumulate as much as they can for themselves, like an invading nation . . . they are quite simply throwing us out of our own country. . . . They are razing our churches, taking over our shops, occupying our jobs, and, what is even more devastating, they are falsifying our soul."⁵⁴

By 1937 Octavian Goga and Alexandru Cuza, from the fascist Cuzist Party, led the Romanian government and shut down two democratic newspapers on the pretext that they were controlled by Jewish interests.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the government began restricting the constitutional rights of Jews in the name of nationalism, exemplified by the Citizenship Revision Law. As Liviu Rotman explains: "Antisemitism was central to this emphasis on 'Romanian Values.'"⁵⁶ One Zionist activist described the sentiment among Jews in his memoirs: "People scurried around in fear. Members of the liberal professions and many businessmen simply lost their livelihoods. . . . Panic and depression set in as persecutions against Jewish schools, journalists, and cultural institutions began."⁵⁷

Our region of interest—Bessarabia—was particularly hostile to its Jewish population, which became evident at the 1937 general elections, when a number of counties voted heavily for the two dominant anti-Semitic parties, the Cuzists and the Iron Guard.⁵⁸ We conducted interviews in 2008 and 2009 in almost all villages of Bessarabia in which

⁵² Crampton 1997, 113.

⁵³ Păulescu 1924, 31.

⁵⁴ Iorga 1937, cited in International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania 2005, 28.

⁵⁵ *Adevărul* and *Dimineața*.

⁵⁶ Rotman 1996, 18.

⁵⁷ Kotlyar 1989, 4, cited in Kopanskii 1996, 352.

⁵⁸ In the December 1937 parliamentary elections, Cuzists received the largest share of the vote in Bessarabia: 21.3 percent, as opposed to 9.15 percent in Romania as a whole. Especially the central and northern parts of Bessarabia were Cuzist strongholds. See Enescu 1937, 522, 523.

Jews and gentiles had lived together during the interwar period.⁵⁹ While there is no Jewish population there now, the Moldovan population confirmed memories of an antagonistic environment between Jews and non-Jews, emphasizing material inequality and exploitation, exactly the themes highlighted by politicians and mass media in the late 1930s.⁶⁰

Right-wing parties skillfully manipulated and fueled the antagonism based on peasants' perception of Jewish affluence. These parties' populist pleas to expropriate Jewish property proved especially appealing. For example, one Romanian recalled a conversation he had in the 1930s with some friends, where they agreed that "[t]his party [the fascist Cuzists] will soon take power in its hands, [we] will break the Jews, and all their shops and property will be ours, and then life will be very good."⁶¹ The ideology of these right-wing parties helped foment and legitimize a popular resentment against the Jewish population, encouraging its expression in more open and aggressive forms. Romanian secret police reports stated that in Bessarabia "especially the teachers" promoted the Cuzist Party and its ideology.⁶² A germane illustration can be found in a letter written by a local teacher to his colleague, now stored in the National Archives of Moldova: "[The] stinky kikes . . . who polluted our air and poison us with the viper juice that is coming out from their skin. . . . [A]ll teachers . . . and anyone who is named a Christian hopes to provide [the Romanian people with] the life-giving medicine which is the L.A.N.C. [Cuzist Party]."⁶³ The secret police confirmed that anti-Semitic propaganda had "caught on with the rural Christian population very significantly" and that "the enmity is reciprocal between the Christians and Jews."⁶⁴

TERRITORY 2, TRANSNISTRIA UNDER THE SOVIET UNION:

INCLUSIVE NATIONALITY POLICIES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF INTERETHNIC COOPERATION

The situation for Jews in Transnistria was the diametric opposite of that in Bessarabia. During the interwar period the Communist Party placed great emphasis on national equality as the best vehicle for advancing its socialist goals. We see three categories of action undertaken by the Soviet state that specifically benefited the construction of interethnic cooperation between Jews and other ethnic groups in Transnistria. First,

⁵⁹ These interviews were conducted for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

⁶⁰ Vulpe 2008; Rusu 2008.

⁶¹ Tanasescu 1944.

⁶² Bessarabian Regional Police Inspectorate 1927, 32.

⁶³ Bessarabian Regional Police Inspectorate 1927, 33.

⁶⁴ Soroca District Police 1929, 370.

full legal equality was granted to Jewish citizens, as well as to all other minority groups; it was meaningful equality, supported by the organs of power. The second is public discourse, which both prohibited anti-Semitic statements and promoted a positive image of Jews within society. This was a wide-ranging program designed to reconstruct how gentiles perceived the position of Jews within society. Third, the Jewish population was physically integrated into mass society, which entailed placing Jewish children in integrated schools and kindergartens while placing Jewish adults in professions and workplaces, where they had not been present during the tsarist period. This created a sense of equality and commonality between Jews and gentiles that assisted the construction of interethnic cooperation.

Above all, we believe that there was a clear and overwhelming political commitment by the governing communists to achieve interethnic cooperation and societal integration during this interwar period, and government policies flowed from this commitment. These changes in policies, we argue, led to the construction of interethnic cooperation that came to be internalized by the gentile population and then led to continued cooperative behavior even after the Soviet Union was replaced by the anti-Semitic Romanian forces during World War II.

It may strike some readers as odd that the Soviet Union fought against anti-Semitism, in particular, if they are familiar with the Soviet Union's anti-Semitism in the post-World War II period. However, the Soviet Union went through many changes during its seventy-one-year history, and during the two decades prior to World War II the state was decidedly inclusivist, fostering the integration of previously marginalized groups, in particular, the Jews.⁶⁵

From the very beginning, the Communist Party fought against anti-Semitism. During the civil war, which pitted the pro-tsarist "Whites" against the pro-communist "Reds" (1917–21), for example, the communists gained a reputation for ending widespread violence targeting the Jews. Hundreds of pogroms and ethnic riots that erupted during the war specifically targeted Jewish populations and led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Jewish civilians. These were primarily instigated by members of the White Army, local peasants, and other "Ukrainian nationalists."⁶⁶ The pogroms led to approximately two hundred thousand Jews massacred, over three hundred thousand Jewish children orphaned, and over seven hundred thousand Jews left homeless.⁶⁷ Some

⁶⁵ See especially Martin 2001.

⁶⁶ Altshuler 1990, 284.

⁶⁷ Smith 1999, 110.

of these pogroms took place on the territory of Transnistria, demonstrating significant tension between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations at that time.⁶⁸ Of the many pogroms in Transnistria, the most infamous took place in Rybnitsa, Kodyma, Dubossary, Krivoye Ozero, and Birzula. The Red Army, however, far from engaging in these riots and pogroms, instead worked to end the violence: “As a rule, the appearance of the Soviet detachment meant comparative safety for the Jewish population.”⁶⁹

GOVERNMENT ACTION: FULL EQUALITY WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS
IN SOCIETY

The Jews under the newly established Soviet regime received all rights given to citizens who were members of other ethnic groups. Most significantly, this meant that (1) in contrast to the Pale of Settlement established by the tsarist empire, Jews were now able to reside in locations of their choice throughout the Soviet Union; (2) Jews were free to study at whichever schools and institutions of higher learning they desired; and (3) Jews were given the freedom to work in any profession, including the civil service, the police, and other professions that had previously been closed to them. Further, the communist government promoted a variety of minority languages, including Yiddish, which achieved the status of an official language and was used in government offices and courts of law in areas where Jews were populous.⁷⁰

To be sure, there was a difference between formal rights conferred on Soviet citizens by the constitution and substantive rights that could be exercised in society, but the important dimension we wish to emphasize here is that all citizens received the same substantive rights, regardless of ethnicity. This stands in contrast to Romania, where formal equality was initially granted but where the state worked to circumvent that equality.

GOVERNMENT ACTION: PUBLIC DISCOURSE

The second strategy adopted by the Soviet regime to promote inter-ethnic cooperation was to control public discourse about the Jews. The Soviet government aimed to destroy negative stereotypes of the Jews and promote new, positive images. This occurred by (1) prohibiting anti-Semitic remarks publicly, (2) deconstructing negative stereotypes, and (3) reconstructing a positive image of Jews within society.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Frumkin, Aronson, and Goldenweiser 2002, 42–43.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Gitelman 1972, 160. See similar statements about the Red Army protecting the Jewish population, in Yarmolinsky 1928, 57.

⁷⁰ See Gitelman 1972, 395; Yarmolinsky 1928, 130.

The prohibition of anti-Semitism was applied to all spheres of public life, from political speeches to popular mass media, and transgressions of these policies were punished by the courts. Terry Martin writes that “intentional state action included propaganda in favor of internationalism and punitive action against both chauvinist words and deeds.”⁷¹ Robert Weinberg, in his book about the Jewish autonomous region established for the Jews in the interwar period, mentions examples of anti-Semitic acts being prosecuted. One example came from a Russian mechanic who, in 1935, was sentenced to a five-year prison term for distress he caused Jewish co-workers through a series of anti-Semitic pranks. Another example was of two construction workers sentenced to prison in 1937 for anti-Semitic slurs made in their dormitory after heavy drinking.⁷² The Soviet Union, especially in the 1930s, was the archetypal totalitarian state with extremely high levels of repression, epitomized by the gulag. This political system had its advantages in suppressing undesirable ideas in society, including anti-Semitism. However, as we will see below, the Soviet state went much further than simply banning anti-Semitic behavior.

The examination and deconstruction of negative Jewish stereotypes was applied to a wide spectrum of public life, from newspaper articles, to education in schools, to theater, film, and other media. Gitelman, for example, referenced how the “Soviet press devoted much space to the problem of anti-Semitism” and how prominent state officials regularly attacked anti-Semitism in their public speeches.⁷³ The Soviet head of state, Mikhail Kalinin, published a brochure in 1927 called “The Jewish Question,” which deconstructed the most popular negative stereotypes of Jews from that period.⁷⁴ Even under the truly catastrophic conditions of the Civil War, the Bolsheviks continued to publish imaginative literature that targeted anti-Semitism. During the 1920s approximately forty silent movies based on Jewish themes were produced, with several of them, such as *Cross and Revolver* (1925), challenging the popular myth of Jews killing Christians.

The new Soviet regime, however, did not simply wait to prosecute acts of anti-Semitism or deconstruct negative stereotypes; rather, it actively sought to mobilize thought and engender sympathy and support for Jews for the purpose of reconstructing their image within the

⁷¹ Martin 2001, 392.

⁷² Weinberg 1998, 67.

⁷³ Gitelman 1972, 455.

⁷⁴ Shternshis 2006, 159.

mass consciousness. Writers, journalists, educators, artists, and others incorporated this message into their work, presenting anti-Semites as uneducated, ignorant, and aggressive individuals while simultaneously praising Jews and Jewish heritage. The multilayered propaganda mechanisms available to the Soviet government ensured the transmission and reinforcement of its message to society.⁷⁵ The state did not allow society's attitude toward Jews to remain a private matter and instead transformed it into a political issue, by offering two clear-cut models for its citizens: (1) the way to modernity and integration into socialist society, which was inherently free of any ethnic prejudice, or (2) the counterrevolutionary model, a "backward" approach, which meant reprimand, probable prosecution, and, ultimately, exclusion from society.

Examples of this reconstruction effort are almost endless. Some films, such as *Hirsh Lekert* (1927) and *Prison Labor* (1929), emphasized the participation and positive contribution of the Jews to the 1917 revolution, as well as the suffering they endured in the pogroms during the Civil War. Examples of state efforts to engender sympathy and support can be seen in a public poster for lottery tickets aimed at raising funds for Jewish resettlement; the tagline reads: "Let us give millions to settle poor Jews on the land and attract them to industry."⁷⁶ Similar themes were also present in films of the 1930s, such as *Five Brides* (1935) and *Dnepr on Fire* (1937).

Further, the government produced plays in the form of public theatrical trials dealing with anti-Semitism. These performances were staged throughout the Soviet Union. An American journalist who visited Kiev in 1932 described such a performance: the plot featured a clerk accused of influencing a peasant through anti-Semitic statements. By the end the play, it is revealed that the clerk has no facts to back up her anti-Semitism and she is both fired from her job and sentenced to a two-year prison term for the counterrevolutionary activity of inciting anti-Semitism. Even the clerk's boss, a Jewish man, is put on trial in this play: he is accused of hearing anti-Semitic statements from his workers and doing nothing to stop them.⁷⁷

GOVERNMENT ACTION: PHYSICAL INTEGRATION

The third major government strategy focused on physically integrating the Jewish population into broader Soviet society. Jewish children, for

⁷⁵ For a theoretical and empirical description of the Soviet Union as "propaganda state," see Kenez 1985.

⁷⁶ Weinberg 1998, 36.

⁷⁷ Shternshis 2006, 164–65.

example, began attending integrated, mixed-ethnicity schools. Adults, meanwhile, were integrated in the workplace, entering professions that had previously been off-limits. Many Jews were also encouraged to settle in agricultural zones heavily populated by other ethnic groups.

Furthermore, in the 1920s the communists embarked on a radically inclusive policy agenda for all ethnic groups that had previously been marginalized in tsarist Russia. Martin, who wrote about those initial policies, stated: “[t]he Soviet Union was the first country in world history to establish Affirmative Action programs for national minorities, and no country has yet approached the vast scale of Soviet Affirmative Action.”⁷⁸ In fact, the Soviet Republic of Ukraine (where Transnistria was located) was singled out by Martin as having developed “the most systematic policy promoting national minorities’ rights in the Soviet Union.”⁷⁹ Therefore, not only were Jews given access to the professions but they were also actually encouraged to join and were promoted within these areas, including law, agriculture, the civil service, and government.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

There are multiple indications of the success these programs had in integrating the previously marginalized Jewish population, both socially and professionally. In Ukraine, for example, the number of Jewish men married to non-Jewish women grew from 3.7 percent in 1924 to 18.1 percent in 1939, and the figure for Jewish women married to non-Jewish men in the same period went from 4.5 percent to 15.8 percent.⁸⁰ In Ukraine, where Jews were 5.4 percent of the population, they were 13.1 percent of the Ukrainian Communist Party.⁸¹ Gitelman describes the Jews during the interwar period as already being “heavily represented” in the secret police.⁸² Benjamin Nathans remarks that “[in] the 1920s and 1930s, Jews were a much-noted presence across virtually the entire white-collar sector of Soviet society, as journalists, physicians, scientists, academics, writers, engineers, economists, NEPmen, entertainers, and more.”⁸³

Anecdotal evidence from the local non-Jewish population supports the notion that Jews were perceived as equals in society by both the state and the gentile population. During interviews conducted in 2008

⁷⁸ Martin 2001, 17.

⁷⁹ Martin 2001, 37.

⁸⁰ Altshuler 1998, 74.

⁸¹ Gitelman 1972, 401.

⁸² Gitelman 1972, 117.

⁸³ Nathans 2002, 2.

with Transnistrian gentiles who had been children during the interwar period, expressions of equality were common: “We were all the same. There wasn’t any of this ‘he’s a Jew and we’re Moldovan’ . . . if work needed to be done in the field, they called us both out, there was no difference.”⁸⁴ Other representative quotes include: “I didn’t even understand . . . I didn’t have the thought in my head [during the inter-war period] that there was a difference between Jews, Moldovans, Ukrainians;”⁸⁵ “Everything was fine. Moldovans, Russians, Jews . . . we all worked!”⁸⁶ “[Jews] were very good people, very hard working.”⁸⁷ Those quotes are similar to quotes from the Harvard Interview Project, which conducted in-depth interviews in 1950–51 with hundreds of Soviet citizens who had moved to the United States. Martin says the majority of respondents agreed that the Soviet state treated its nationalities equally, and provided some quotes: “The equalization of the nationalities must be considered an achievement of the Soviet system.” And “[l]egally and administratively, all the nationalities were treated alike.”⁸⁸

There is also evidence that the Jewish population itself, while divided on many issues, was broadly supportive of these changes. Jews were described during that period as “inclined to accept the existing [that is, Soviet] regime. The Government is no longer the alien, hostile power that it used to be.”⁸⁹ That author goes on to state that “it goes without saying that the Jewish wage-earners, employees and professionals enjoy the full measure of civic and political rights, including suffrage.”⁹⁰ One neurologist, whose father was the former chief rabbi of Moscow, stated at the time: “[T]hough in the old Russia I could get no promotion for twenty years by reason of being a Jew, today I am not only a professor but also dean of the medical school. I am not a radical but I must acknowledge the debt of the Jews to the new rulers.”⁹¹

This is not to argue that anti-Semitism was defeated during this period; there is evidence that anti-Semitism still surfaced. However, the Soviet state actively punished anti-Semitism and managed to achieve both integration of the Jewish population as well as a degree of equality among the general public not seen before in Russian history.

These initial Soviet policies of integration and equality were not without their difficulties. Yuri Slezkine observes that “Ukrainian

⁸⁴ Petrenco 2008.

⁸⁵ Ovchear 2008.

⁸⁶ Levinski 2008.

⁸⁷ Nogachevskii 2008.

⁸⁸ Martin 2001, 389.

⁸⁹ Yarmolinsky 1928, 109.

⁹⁰ Yarmolinsky 1928, 107.

⁹¹ Yarmolinsky 1928, 116.

peasants were not enthusiastic about the arrival of Jewish agricultural colonists.”⁹² Yarmolinsky commented that “[a]nti-Semitism, so long a tradition and a policy in Russia, has survived the social revolution. . . . The ancient prejudice makes itself felt in many ways.”⁹³ However, he goes on to suggest that several factors contributed to a breakdown of anti-Semitism, including the integration of Jews into agriculture and industry. Most importantly for this article, Yarmolinsky emphasizes the following:

Another factor that tends to break down popular prejudice is the attitude of the Government. The Jews are treated by the State as citizens on a par with the rest of the community, and such discriminations are made not on the basis of nationality. Indeed, no Government is doing so much to combat the more patent forms of anti-Semitism as is the Soviet Government. Anti-Jewish propaganda is regarded as criminal, and its perpetrators are severely punished.⁹⁴

To be clear, we are not suggesting that the Soviet Union at this time was good, *per se*, for Jewish life. As with other religions, Judaism was heavily repressed by the communist regime, and support for Zionism was actively discouraged and heavily criticized in Soviet propaganda. What we are trying to emphasize, however, is the degree to which the state attempted to reverse a history of interethnic animosity, to fight actively against anti-Semitism, and to encourage equality among the ethnic groups and integrate Jews into Soviet society in a way that had never been done previously.

IV. TIME T+2: METHODOLOGY

What follows is a selection of quotations from survivor testimonies and memoirs, from the archives of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and of Israel’s Yad Vashem. We have selected quotes we feel are the most representative of all the testimonies we found. Some of the survivors experienced life in both territories, as the Romanian military and gendarmerie forcibly moved all Jews from Bessarabia to ghettos and camps in Transnistria (with large numbers dying en route); some of the survivors only experienced the Transnistrian side, as the Romanian and German authorities forcibly evicted members from their homes and moved them to local ghettos and camps, where most were killed.

We are not trying to suggest that all gentiles from these territories behaved the same way: *we found incidents of cooperation and conflict from*

⁹² Slezkine 1994, 436; see also Gitelman 1972, 386, 98, 402–3.

⁹³ Yarmolinsky 1928, 113.

⁹⁴ Yarmolinsky 1928, 115. See also Martin’s quotes on this point.

individuals of both territories. Yet there was a pattern of behavior apparent from those sources, and the quotations below are meant to be illustrative of that pattern. We follow the qualitative description with a quantitative discussion that will give the reader a more systematic comparison of non-Jewish behavior toward the Jews from each territory.

We encounter three major methodological problems with our sources. First, most of these testimonies were recorded years after the Holocaust. This leaves such testimonies open to common problems of memory failure, individual motivations for including, excluding, or interpreting facts, and telescoping (incorrect placement of events). Second, we have evidence only from *survivors*, and, as such, we miss those who were killed by local gentiles, died due to lack of assistance, or were betrayed by neighbors leading to their death at the hands of the security forces. This could lead to an underreporting of incidents of violence and an overreporting of incidents of cooperation and aid. However, the underreporting of violence should not systematically affect one territory more than another, and, despite this underreporting, the number of incidents of violent acts reported in survivor testimonies is nevertheless overwhelming.

A partial solution to both of these biases is to complement the survivor testimonies with materials from other sources, and we have done this to the extent possible by triangulating with (1) government archival material, such as police reports, (2) interviews conducted with over one hundred non-Jews who witnessed the Holocaust in Romania, (3) a mail-in survey, and (4) secondary sources. The pattern seen in the following quotes is consistent with the information we found using the other sources.

As we are examining only civilian non-Jewish behavior, we deliberately exclude an examination of individuals incorporated into state organs, such as members of the police or local officials who became part of the extermination apparatus of the Axis powers. Much has been written about the role of the state and its accomplices in genocide studies.⁹⁵ However, relatively little has focused on nonstate actors and almost nothing exists with systematic evidence.⁹⁶ Through our research, we encountered horrific acts committed systematically across both territories by the Romanian army, the Nazis, and their auxiliary units, but we do not incorporate those findings here.

⁹⁵ Those who do focus on the broader population usually link the population to state extermination activities. See, for example, Browning 1993; and Goldhagen 1996.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Gross 2001.

TIME T+2: EVIDENCE FROM WWII

Bessarabia was briefly occupied by the Soviet Union for just under twelve months (July 1940 – June 1941) following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. That ended with the Axis Powers' invasion of the Soviet Union, involving German and Romanian military forces.⁹⁷ Soviet forces quickly withdrew and both regions came under the control of Romanian and German forces within a month. At this point, the Jewish populations in both Transnistria and Bessarabia were very similar in percentage (7–8 percent) and aggregate numbers (two hundred thousand).⁹⁸

BESSARABIA UNDER ROMANIAN OCCUPATION: OVERVIEW

While some Bessarabians helped Jews being deported to Transnistria, the overwhelming impression one receives when reading survivor testimony is that, in general, the gentile Bessarabian attitude was decidedly negative toward their Jewish neighbors. For example, Michael Zilbering witnessed two pogroms, one organized in the village of Telenesti and another in the neighboring village of Dombrovitz, and described how locals “took axes, pitchforks, metal bars and went to kill and rob the Jews.”⁹⁹ The pogrom from Zguritsa has been cited in several other memoirs of survivors. Frenkeli Efim, living in Zguritsa, said that when the Romanians entered, they burned down the entire town and “the Moldovans¹⁰⁰ started to take everything, started to rape, the Moldovans started to beat, the Moldovans chopped off the head of a Jew with a scythe.”¹⁰¹ Another Jew from Zguritsa remembers his covillagers were very actively involved in the pogrom.¹⁰² Others survivors described locals as being “indifferent”¹⁰³ or “cold with the Jews.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ The German 11th Army was assisting the Romanians as well as the SS Einsatzgruppe D.

⁹⁸ The number of Jews in both territories declined from the end of the nineteenth century to the start of the Second World War largely as a result of emigration, death, and other demographic shifts. In Bessarabia approximately 7.2 percent (204,858) of the population was Jewish; while in Transnistria approximately 8 percent (200,000) of the population was Jewish. The actual number of Jews in Transnistria in 1926 was approximately 300,000, but an estimated 100,000 Jews from Transnistria were evacuated as the war began in June 1941. For statistics on Bessarabia, see Manuila 1940, XCIII; for population information on Jews in Transnistria, see Ofer 1993, 136.

⁹⁹ Zilbering 2006, 19.

¹⁰⁰ Many testimonies described the local population as “Moldovan” not Bessarabian and “Ukrainian” instead of Transnistrian, since people referred to dominant ethnic groups, not territorial confines (Moldovan here is used synonymously with Romanians). Nevertheless, ethnic Ukrainians in Bessarabia were also more frequently engaged in violent acts against the Jews, and Ukrainians in Transnistria were more likely to provide support; similarly ethnic Moldovans/Romanians in Transnistria were also more likely to be cooperative.

¹⁰¹ Frenkel, *Yad Vashem Archive*, 2–3, 14.

¹⁰² Gershman 2006.

¹⁰³ Aroni 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Gershman 2006.

One survivor stated that “[w]hen the war broke out the Moldovans immediately burned down our house. They were the ones who helped the Germans, they burned houses and people. . . . The Moldovans were worse than the SS. . . . They started to burn houses, chase out people We didn’t have anything that could be taken away, they were searching and grabbing from [Jewish] people who had things.”¹⁰⁵

While the Jewish population lived in both territories, within a matter of months, the population in Bessarabia was forcibly moved to ghettos in Transnistria, marching on foot for months at a time. On their way to Transnistria, passing through Bessarabian villages, the Jewish deportees were assaulted by local villagers: “You go through the village. Romanians are standing on both sides, local inhabitants with long sticks would hit whomever they could reach. My father was also beat severely.”¹⁰⁶ Another survivor, from Orhei (Bessarabia), stated that “[w]ith the exception of some individual people, the population greeted the isolation and the deportation of the Jews from Bessarabia tacitly, but many expressed these feelings in a visible manner.”¹⁰⁷

Another Bessarabian Jew from Bolgrad, whose family was hidden for several months by some friends, reckons that only “former friends of ours treated us differently, trying to protect us. . . . The peasants were completely indifferent: seizing all the goods, houses.”¹⁰⁸ Others describe how neighbors would betray those that were being hidden by friends, telling the authorities, which meant almost certain death for those Jews.¹⁰⁹ Even worse, one account talked of some peasants from Oniscani, who brought four Jews to the gendarmerie and asked that they be shot.¹¹⁰

One particularly shocking account came from a survivor near the town of Soroca, where peasants were waiting for the convoys of the deportees and were “buying” well-dressed Jews from the gendarmes; the peasants would then would kill them, gratuitously, and take their clothing.¹¹¹

TRANSNISTRIA UNDER ROMANIAN OCCUPATION

One of the most remarkable findings from all our research in Transnistria was actually a nonevent: *we did not find evidence of a single anti-*

¹⁰⁵ Sherman, Yad Vashem Archive.

¹⁰⁶ Mucinik, Yad Vashem Archive.

¹⁰⁷ Kupchik 2005.

¹⁰⁸ Genesco 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous (37) 2005.

¹¹⁰ Ancel 1986a, 448.

¹¹¹ Ancel 1986b, 579.

Jewish pogrom anywhere in Transnistria. Pogroms in Bessarabia were reported by survivors and are referenced in archival material and secondary sources, but the same cannot be said for Transnistria, as we found no evidence of such activities in survivors' testimonies, government records, or the secondary sources we consulted.

More generally, survivors made very different remarks when commenting on the people from Transnistria, which had been located in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Some survivors stated it explicitly: "In Ukraine the attitude was better than in Bessarabia."¹¹² Many of the survivors stated that "the Ukrainians¹¹³ did help,"¹¹⁴ that "the Ukrainians were not bad,"¹¹⁵ that they had "a compassionate attitude,"¹¹⁶ or that "the majority of them gave us bread."¹¹⁷ One survivor, a native of the town of Orhei (Bessarabia), stated that of his experience in Transnistria, "one [a Jew] could not feel too much hatred, with the exception of the collaborators," and his impression was that "the majority [of the local population] did not perceive the Jews with alienation . . . but rather . . . the majority perceived the occupying power as alien, but the Jews as theirs."¹¹⁸ Another survivor, this time a native of Transnistria, concluded that the population of his city (Moghilev-Podolsk) had a sympathetic attitude toward the Jews and that only a small minority was comfortable with the fact that the Jews were forced from the city to the ghetto.¹¹⁹ Several survivors recalled that, during the long marches toward the ghettos, many locals in Transnistria threw food from a distance and some peasant women even left packages with food on the road in front of the columns of Jews approaching.¹²⁰

Begging was another form of assuring one's existence in Transnistria. One survivor recalled, "[The Ukrainians] were good. They were as poor as we, but they gave us food when they could."¹²¹ It was mostly children who were involved in begging, escaping from the camps and wandering from house to house throughout neighboring villages for days, sometimes weeks. We read of cases where orphaned Jewish children

¹¹² Fishman 2006.

¹¹³ Survivors often used the word "Ukrainians" but this would include other groups, such as ethnic Russians. We still found that ethnic Ukrainians on the Transnistrian side were more likely to be cooperative and Ukrainians on the Bessarabian side were more likely to be more conflictual.

¹¹⁴ Bergher 2006.

¹¹⁵ Tsimerman 2006.

¹¹⁶ Miteliman 2005.

¹¹⁷ Strutin 2006.

¹¹⁸ In Romanian: "*Nu se simtea cine stie ce ura*"; Kupchik 2005.

¹¹⁹ Gaba 2005.

¹²⁰ Ancel 2001, 72

¹²¹ Gutman 2005.

survived in Transnistria almost entirely by begging.¹²² Similarly, children used the food they collected to support their younger siblings or sick parents in the camps; in these cases the survivors tend to recall the local civilian population they encountered with great fondness. Kashkova Alla, for example, a survivor of the Akhmechetka camp, described her escape to a nearby village where one peasant fed them and advised them on which houses to go to and which houses to avoid (where the police were located). The girls went through the whole village and “everybody was feeding us, our bellies were huge . . . we had bags full of food.”¹²³

There were also cases of Jewish children being sheltered by Transnistrian locals in their houses.¹²⁴ The Romanian counterintelligence reports confirm the occurrence of cases of Jewish children being adopted by the Ukrainian population in order to save them from deportation.¹²⁵ Hilda Schwartz, a survivor of Kopaygorod, described her escape to a neighboring village, where a woman housed her first and later her mother and sister as well. After the liberation of the camp, Hilda’s family continued to live with the woman for another two months.¹²⁶

While we did find individual cases of theft, beatings, and murder committed by the local population in Transnistria, the incidence was substantially lower than in Bessarabia. More importantly, the level of cooperation was overwhelmingly apparent in all sources we consulted, which was in stark contrast to what we found for Bessarabia. This becomes clearer with a quantified picture of events, which we present in the next section.

QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE

To strengthen our evidence, we have taken two other approaches. First, we have taken a random sample of fifty survivor testimonies (from a total of more than two hundred) and coded how many of the non-Jewish population from each territory are described as having engaged in “conflictual” or “cooperative” behavior vis-à-vis the Jewish population during the Holocaust. To do this, we created a coding scheme that went from -4 to +4 and used it to code actions described by each survivor when he or she talked about people encountered or seen. In other words, our unit of analysis is an interaction between a gentile and a Jew in Bessarabia and Transnistria, as seen and described by Jews who

¹²² Anonymous (46) 2006.

¹²³ Kashkova, *Yad Vashem Archives*, 13–14.

¹²⁴ Mitelman 2005.

¹²⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archival Material. RG-25.003 M, 279.

¹²⁶ Schwartz, *Yad Vashem Archives*.

survived the Holocaust in Romania. If the peasant's action is negative (for example, physical attack on either the survivor or another Jewish person that the survivor witnessed), we give it a negative score on our scale, whereas if it is a positive action (for example, providing food), we give it a positive score.

Much criminology research of the 1960s and 1970s demonstrates a remarkable consensus in society as to the "severity" of various crimes.¹²⁷ Survey after survey of civilians, including those incarcerated, agreed that, for example, assault was more severe than theft, that murder was more severe than assault, and so on. We use this to construct the negative scale. For example, -1 and -2 involve conflictual behavior without direct physical violence (-1 is rhetorical statements against Jews, -2 is plundering of goods belonging to Jewish families), -3 and -4 represent the use of physical violence against Jews (-3 is the use of physical violence short of death or actions that lead to any Jew being caught by state officials, and -4 is the use of physical violence leading to at least one death). On the positive side, +1 and +2 are for cooperative behavior without risk to the individual's own life (+1 is nonmaterial support, such as rhetorical statements in support of Jews; +2 is minor cooperative behavior, such as trading or bartering with someone known as a Jew but not going to authorities to report it); +3 and +4 involve material support to Jews with some risk to the individual's own life (+3 is providing food aid to Jews, and +4 is sheltering Jews in their homes or other aid involving great risk to one's own life).¹²⁸ The random sample of 50 testimonies produced 105 interactions of a positive or negative nature.¹²⁹

Figure 2 clearly demonstrates two trends: (1) the population from Bessarabia are more likely to commit conflictual acts in each category as compared with the Transnistrian population, and (2) the Transnistrian population is far more likely to have committed cooperative acts as compared with the Bessarabian population. We also present a simple cross-tab comparing conflictual and cooperative acts; it provides a statistically significant chi-square value at the 0.001 level. This random sample matches the pattern we saw in all of the testimonies we read. (See Table 1.)

¹²⁷ See, for example, Cullen, Link, and Polanzi 1982; Figlio, Tracy, and Singer 1985; Rossi and Berk 1997; Rossi et al. 1974.

¹²⁸ Romanian and German authorities prohibited the provision of aid for Jews. See Arad 2003, 244.

¹²⁹ Each testimony often had more than one peasant action described; if a statement mentioned a group in the plural (for example, "The Bessarabians did X" or "The Transnistrians did Y"), we recorded this as two peasants from that territory. Some interactions were neither positive nor negative (for example, a discussion between a Jew and non-Jew); these were not recorded.

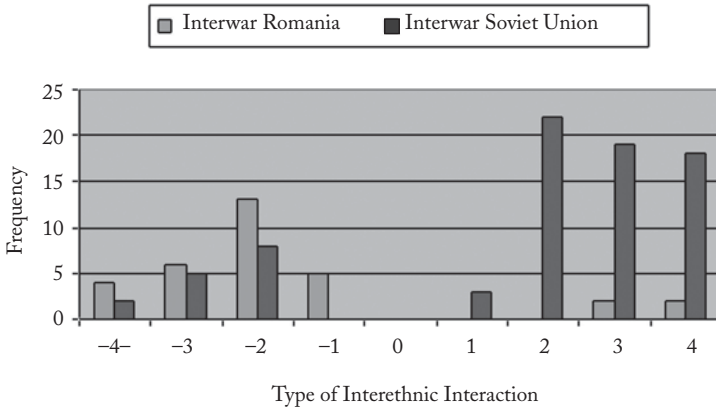


FIGURE 2
CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BASED ON PREWAR STATE NATIONALITY POLICIES
(N = 105)

There is, however, a methodological problem in these results that should caution our interpretation of the “cooperative” side of the histogram as it relates to our hypothesis on cooperation. While both Transnistria and Bessarabia had approximately the same number of Jewish inhabitants at the start of the war, the Jews who began in Bessarabia spent only a number of months in Bessarabia before being moved to Transnistria, where they remained for two to three years. This means fewer Jews in aggregate numbers experienced Bessarabia and more experienced Transnistria. This should bias our sample toward more incidents of cooperation for the Transnistrian side and fewer incidents of cooperation for the Bessarabian side, which makes our hypothesis about aid easier to support.

TABLE 1
CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BASED ON PREWAR STATE NATIONALITY POLICIES

| <i>Type of Action Perpetrated</i> | <i>Interwar Region of Actor</i> | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| | <i>USSR</i> | <i>Romania</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| Conflict | 15 (20%) | 26 (87%) | 41 (39%) |
| Cooperation | 60 (80%) | 4 (13%) | 64 (61%) |
| Total | 75 (100%) | 30 (100%) | 105 (100%) |

Chi-square = 40.02; Pr. <0.001

However, this bias affects both conflict and cooperation: the bias in our sample should be toward fewer incidents of conflict against the Jews in Bessarabia and more incidents of conflict against the Jews in Transnistria, which makes our hypothesis about conflict harder to support. In spite of this bias, we still see *systematically lower levels of violence committed on the Transnistrian side*, which strengthens our confidence in the results.

SURVEY

We also mailed a survey to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Romania who had been in either Bessarabia or Transnistria.¹³⁰ In addition to qualitative questions about their experience, we asked them to record, on a scale of 1–10, the attitude of the local population toward the Jews, where 1 was “very hostile” and 10 was “very friendly.” We received approximately sixty responses. However, for a fair comparison, we must restrict our sample to those who experienced both Transnistria and Bessarabia. Of the sixty respondents, eighteen had experienced both regions; given the restrictive conditions we have employed, and the fact that the period under consideration occurred more than sixty-five years ago, we consider this to be a fairly high number.¹³¹ However, with only eighteen, the figures are only suggestive. They nevertheless confirm the other evidence we presented so far: 87 percent of those respondents evaluated the attitude in Transnistria as better than that in Bessarabia; 13 percent gave equal scores to each territory; and *none* of the respondents scored Bessarabia’s population higher than Transnistria’s. The mean score for Bessarabia’s population was 2.4, and the mean score for Transnistria’s population was 4.3. Of the forty-two who had experienced the Transnistrian side only, they gave a mean score of 5.1 out of 10.

There exists little other systematic, comparative research related to the gentile populations’ attitudes toward the Jews during the Holocaust in this specific region. One exception is a recent article by Yitzhak Arad, who explored the attitude of the local population under German occupation in Eastern Europe using German *Einsatzgruppe* reports, as well as other, Jewish sources.¹³² If one looks at the regions of Arad’s analysis, the same general pattern that we suggest in this article

¹³⁰ Addresses were obtained through the USHMM database.

¹³¹ Due to the nature of the forced migration, there were no survivors who experienced only Bessarabia.

¹³² Arad 2003.

holds: according to these Nazi reports, regions that had been under twenty-three years of Soviet rule demonstrated lower levels of popular support for anti-Jewish activity. For example, in Lithuania, formerly under tsarist Russia but independent during the interwar period and therefore without the inclusivist Soviet policies, an *Einsatzgruppe* commander reports: "Since the occupation of Lithuania by the German Army, the active antisemitism that swiftly erupted there has not abated. The Lithuanians have been willing and indefatigable participants in all measures taken against the Jews."¹³³ Meanwhile, another *Einsatzgruppe* report from the formerly Soviet region of Belarus states:

The attitude of the population in general, at least in the areas of [eastern Belarus, which had been part of the Soviet Union], can be described as friendly toward the Germans. . . . A pronounced antisemitism is also absent. . . . Generally, however, the population has developed a hatred and anger toward the Jew and approves of the Germans' actions, but is incapable, of its own accord, of taking the initiative in regard to the treatment of the Jews. . . . It was almost impossible to stage pogroms against the Jews.¹³⁴

In fact, Arad states explicitly that "in most of the Soviet areas within the boundaries before September 1919, the local people generally related to the Jews with greater restraint and less overt manifestations of hatred."¹³⁵

In short, a review of archived survivor testimonies, a survey of Jewish survivors alive today, interviews with non-Jewish witnesses of the Holocaust in Romania, and other government archival material all point to the same conclusion: the gentile population in Bessarabia had a more antagonistic attitude toward the Jews in 1941, and the gentile population in Transnistria had a more cooperative attitude toward the Jews in 1941. These results demonstrate strong support for the notion that the interwar period was a critical period for the development of interethnic relations in these territories and that the changes were internalized by the individuals. If the relationships were only behavioral responses to carrots and sticks offered by the Soviet state, the gentile population's behavior would have changed when the Soviet state disappeared and the anti-Semitic Romanian state arrived. Instead, *the behavior of cooperation persisted, even when it posed a risk to the lives of those individual gentiles*. If Romanian control of Transnistria had persisted for longer, with its strong political will and state policies to promote anti-Semitism, it is entirely possible that gentiles in that area would

¹³³ Arad 2003, 235.

¹³⁴ Arad 2003, 236.

¹³⁵ Arad 2003, 244.

have eventually developed animosity toward the Jewish population, as had been the case during the tsarist period.

V. ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF TRANSNISTRIA AND THE ROLE OF UKRAINIANS

The Transnistrian territory was predominantly ethnic Ukrainian (with some Russian and Romanian) during the interwar period, whereas Bessarabia was predominantly Romanian. Could it be that the ethnic Ukrainians, as an ethnic group, are simply less hostile toward the Jews than the ethnic Romanians? We do not find this explanation convincing. There is no evidence of this in the literature and, if anything, the evidence points in the opposite direction, since Ukrainians are regularly stereotyped as being anti-Semitic. Gitelman, for example, refers to “a native tradition of anti-Semitism in the Ukraine.”¹³⁶ There is also a preponderance of case study material detailing a long history of violence against the Jews all over Ukraine. During the Russian Civil War (1917–21), the tsarist White Army often appealed to anti-Semitism in Ukraine as a tool for galvanizing support among the peasantry.¹³⁷ There was intense violence directed against Jews, with extraordinarily high numbers of deadly pogroms, particularly in Ukraine. These pogroms were frequent and extensive, committed by both peasants and the Ukrainian Nationalist military: Gitelman cites 1,236 pogroms in Ukraine between 1918 and 1919; Baron cites 30 major pogroms in Ukraine in 1918, 685 major attacks, and 249 minor attacks on Jews carried out by the end of 1919; and Arad estimates that between 30,000 and 50,000 Jews were murdered as a result of pogrom violence during the civil war between 1918 and 1920.¹³⁸

Moreover, we can look at predominantly Ukrainian regions *that did not fall under Soviet control during the interwar period*. We do not have primary research for these regions, but we have collected important secondary sources identifying violent action by ethnic Ukrainians against Jews of the same period. For example, the Western Ukrainian region around the city of Lviv was under Polish control during the interwar period. Poland at that time was known for its anti-Semitic policies (similar to those pursued by interwar Romania). As Petersen states: “The regime systematically excluded Jews . . . from government

¹³⁶ Gitelman 1972, 403.

¹³⁷ Yarmolinsky 1928, 55.

¹³⁸ Arad 2003, 233–34; Baron 1976, 220.

service. The state made efforts to eliminate the Jewish presence in business throughout the country.”¹³⁹ And, as Brubaker concluded: “If Zionism meant Jewish emigration to (Palestine), no one was more Zionist than Poland’s leaders in the late 1930s.”¹⁴⁰ When the Nazis invaded, there followed a series of pogroms and interethnic attacks by ethnic Ukrainians against Jews.¹⁴¹

As one of the survivors stated himself: “The Ukrainians [in Transnistria] helped! This is not the Western Ukraine, these are the Ukrainians that were inside of the Soviet Union, and so they would help . . . if not for the Ukrainian inhabitants, we would have not remained alive!”¹⁴²

FEAR OF THE SOVIET RETURN

Given the widely known repressive character of the Stalinist state, one possible explanation is that the lower level of documented violence in Transnistria during the Second World War was due to the population’s fear of punishment should the Soviets return. This explanation runs into difficulties for several reasons. First, there were other areas of Eastern Europe (including Bessarabia) that fell under Soviet control as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1940 and the local population immediately experienced fierce Soviet repression; nevertheless the local population did not appear to fear the Soviet return and instead turned to violent attacks against the local Jewish population. Second, until late 1942, the chances of a Soviet victory in the war were perceived as almost nonexistent. The question until 1943 was when, not whether, the Nazis would defeat the Soviets. Third, and perhaps most importantly, this theory cannot explain why people of Transnistria were more willing *to help* persecuted Jews. Sharing scarce resources, such as food and shelter, with Jewish internees was a personal decision and a private matter and was derived from an individual’s internal motives. Far from fearing persecution of a distant Soviet power, these citizens both sacrificed precious resources and risked their lives to aid their Jewish neighbors—a striking contrast to the violence and persecution meted out by the Bessarabians.

ROLE OF RESENTMENT

Roger Petersen’s book *Understanding Ethnic Violence* examines interethnic violence during many time periods in Eastern Europe, mainly

¹³⁹ Petersen 2002, 122.

¹⁴⁰ Brubaker 1996, 97.

¹⁴¹ Petersen 2002, 128.

¹⁴² Muchinik, Yad Vashem Archives.

near the Baltic republics, Belarus, and Poland in an attempt to understand motivations. Petersen concludes that the emotion of (status) resentment is the most compelling cause, although he also finds evidence in support of the presence of fear, rage, and revenge. He argues that a major portion of violence occurring against the Jews in 1941 by the local population resulted from resentment of the perceived participation of Jews in the government during the brief Soviet takeover after the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, from the fall of 1940 to spring 1941. While Petersen does not address the area of our study specifically, the Soviet Union did occupy Bessarabia, and it is accepted that the local population considered Jews to be collaborators with the Soviet government and with the group advancing professionally and politically under that regime.¹⁴³ When the Soviets left, according to this explanation, the local population had the opportunity to act on their resentment toward the Jews and target that vulnerable group.

We cannot exclude that some attacks in Bessarabia were motivated by a sense of emotional resentment. However, the same emotional resentment should also have motivated attacks against the Jewish population in Transnistria, but it did not. The communist takeover in Ukraine initially met with fierce resistance from the local Ukrainian population; there were large numbers of pogroms and violent attacks against the Jews, who were seen to be allied with the communists. Further, during the Soviet reign, as we have seen, the Jews also advanced in the government, in industry, in the security apparatus, and in other spheres; other groups were aware of this. Meanwhile Ukrainians are widely understood to have suffered, including a devastating famine that killed millions of Ukrainians in 1932–33. For our purposes, the key is not whether the Jewish population advanced under the Soviet regime; rather, it is that during the twenty-three years of Soviet control over Transnistria *the regime promoted a cooperative, integrated, and inclusive relationship between the ethnic groups and that cooperation was internalized by the population itself*. Governments have the power to address and counter some of the emotions discussed by Petersen, and we believe this was done successfully by the Soviet Union during the period under study.

MATERIAL EXPLANATIONS

Some accounts of violence against Jews in Eastern Europe cite the opportunity to plunder as a cause or motivation for gentile attacks.¹⁴⁴ In the cases of Bessarabia and Transnistria, there are some factors that

¹⁴³ On the perceived collaboration of the Bessarabian Jews with the Soviets, see Solonari 2007.

¹⁴⁴ Dean 2004.

could support this line of argument: the Soviet Union, for example, was a more egalitarian society and there was probably a greater level of equality between Jews and gentiles in Transnistria than in Bessarabia. However, this wealth disparity could by no means be a central explanation for the violence. We do not believe that wealth disparity in itself explains violent attacks of one group against another. Rather than wealth disparity, then, we look to how categories of people are perceived in society and what is deemed permissible and forbidden.

First, if violence against the Jews in Bessarabia was caused by wealth disparities, the poor and envious in that region should also have attacked wealthy Russians, Ukrainians, and Romanians. Instead, during the initial phase of the war, when the state was weak and local populations had opportunities to act with a degree of impunity, they attacked only the Jews and not other wealthy individuals. Of course, the Romanian state encouraged attacks specifically against the Jews, which could explain why only the Jews were targeted as a group. However, even within Soviet society, the Jews were disproportionately represented in government, law, medicine, and other valued professions that received greater material rewards from the Soviet government. When the Romanians arrived in Transnistria, some Jews certainly had material goods that could have been of value to opportunistic neighbors, or at least could have been used as a pretext for attack. Nevertheless, the Jews were not attacked as a group. There was opportunistic activity, to be sure: individuals robbed Jewish homes in Transnistria, and there were accounts of Ukrainians taking clothes off the backs of defenseless Jews. But there were few acts of wanton violence committed against the Jews and the overwhelming trend was, instead, one of cooperation and support.

Second, if this was about opportunism or envy, gentiles should have attacked only wealthy Jews. Instead, gentiles attacked both wealthy and poor Jews; they attacked old, impoverished Jews, as well as young children from wealthy and poor families. In fact, one survivor saw a poor Jew pleading with a Bessarabian civilian from his village not to kill him precisely because he was poor *and the Bessarabian knew he was poor*, but the Bessarabian nevertheless killed the Jewish man.¹⁴⁵

The violence in Bessarabia must be seen as separate from wealth disparities in society. Instead, the Jews as an ethnic group were denigrated within Romania long before the war began, and violence against that group was given a degree of permissibility. In fact, the Jews of

¹⁴⁵ Eni 1944, 47–48.

Bessarabia, as we noted above, experienced societal violence long before the war began, and they came under attack as an ethnic group from the press, from politicians, and from laymen in the years leading up to the Holocaust. It was this constant vilification, blame, and construction of the Jew as an enemy of the Romanian people that, in combination with a wartime regime that sought their destruction, opened up the possibility for local gentiles to unleash a wave of violence against their Jewish neighbors. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, had encouraged locals to view their Jewish neighbors not as Jews, but as compatriots, as neighbors, as equals. It is not enough to speak about wealth differentials in society. In Poland, after all, anti-Semitism continued in the post-World War II period despite the destruction of the vast majority of the Jewish population, the expropriation of private property, and a totalitarian government.¹⁴⁶

VI. CONCLUSION

This article has sought to build on the literature explaining interethnic violence and cooperation. We suggest that most mainstream approaches to ethnic violence rely on an extant interethnic animosity that is activated under particular circumstances. Although our conclusions do not detract from the value of these approaches, they suggest that the explanations may not be complete without an examination of the underlying relationships. More importantly, we suggest that underlying interethnic relationships can be manipulated by the state—constructed and reconstructed in relatively brief periods of time to build positive and enduring interethnic relationships that survive beyond the life of the state itself.

Our evidence comes from a natural experiment, focusing on gentiles interacting with the Jewish population in a region that today sits in Moldova and part of Ukraine. Bessarabia and Transnistria had both been subjected to heavily anti-Semitic state policies from at least 1812 to 1918; for the next twenty-three years Bessarabia continued with its anti-Semitism, while Transnistria's territory was under a strongly inclusivist nationality policy. We argue that, first and foremost, at the root of the Transnistrian success was the Soviet state's consistent and determined political commitment to end anti-Semitism and its commitment to building a cooperative interethnic society.

¹⁴⁶ For Polish anti-Semitism in the immediate post-World War II period, see Gross 2007; for evidence of continued anti-Semitism, see Warsaw's student riots in 1968 with heavy anti-Semitic content.

However, we point to three primary mechanisms through which that political will was manifested. First, the Soviet state provided full equality of rights for its Jewish citizens. Second, the state actively persecuted public manifestations of anti-Semitism, while simultaneously deconstructing negative stereotypes and constructing positive images of Jews within the mass consciousness. The Soviet state used its propaganda powers to encourage its citizens to adopt a progressive lifestyle that abandoned anti-Semitism; those that did not were branded counter-revolutionaries. Third, the state physically integrated the Jews into broader society while advancing their positions through radical affirmative action programs.

Without suggesting that anti-Semitism was defeated in Transnistria, we argue that these policies had a strong effect on the gentile population's attitude toward the Jewish population. During the war, under a Romanian government that encouraged anti-Semitism and violence against the Jewish population, the Bessarabian side was more likely to commit violent acts against its Jewish population than the Transnistrian side, which in turn was more likely to provide aid to the Jews. Since the Soviet state was no longer present, it appears likely that the gentile Transnistrian population had internalized the values of interethnic cooperation and therefore continued to support its Jewish neighbors despite a new government that rewarded victimization of the Jews and severely punished any attempts to assist them. We also provide evidence from interviews with gentiles who lived through the interwar period in Bessarabia and Transnistria that further suggests these ideas of affinity and animosity were indeed internalized.

We present confirmatory qualitative and quantitative evidence for our hypotheses from survivor testimonies, interviews with survivors, a survey conducted with survivors, evidence from state archives, interviews with non-Jewish witnesses of the Holocaust, and secondary material.

We see several different directions that this research can take in the future. Most important, we think it would be valuable to test this approach on societies today, examining nationality policies across Europe, for example, and whether they have any explanatory power on levels of low-level interethnic violence, such as ethnic riots and racially motivated attacks. If we are correct, states that demonstrate genuine political commitment to promote cooperation should result in fewer incidents of interethnic violence and higher levels of support. Such research could demonstrate that a state need not be totalitarian to succeed in constructing interethnic cooperation. After all, the U.S. federal gov-

ernment pursued many of those policies vis-à-vis its African American population in the second half of the twentieth century.

We also believe that our theory may have something to contribute to the debate over whether ethnic wars are mass-based “Hobbesian” wars of all against all or whether they are something more “banal,” unrelated to ethnicity.¹⁴⁷ One possibility is that although both types of conflict are defined as “wars” according to definitional criteria established by political scientists, they may be qualitatively very different when considered from the level of participation by civilian populations. If prewar mass hostility exists, violence may spread quickly within a population (for example, Rwanda) to create a Hobbesian war, whereas if prewar interethnic cooperation existed, wars would rely more on violence entrepreneurs and other state-led actions to continue. Each type of conflict would require very different policy responses by the international community to contain the violence and build long-term peace.

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¹⁴⁷ Mueller 2000; Mueller 2004.

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