

Isac Tinichigiu

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Brasov

Romania

Interviewer: Andreea Laptas

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Mr. Tinichigiu is a 77-year-old man; he lives in a three-bedroom apartment with his wife, his child and his father-in-law, who is now sick. It is a neat house and well taken care of. In the living room, where we talk, there are a lot of books, mainly about politics and literature – the classics. Mr. Tinichigiu tells me that this has been the only luxury he ever allowed himself to have: to buy books. The living room is where he sits comfortably every day in his armchair, watching TV. He seldom goes out, only when it is necessary or when the weather is nice. He is rather slim, and despite his age, his hair is not entirely white yet. But it shows that his health is not what it used to be: his hands shake violently when he lights up his cigarettes. He smokes a lot while he talks, and although he seems frail, he gets fiery when he talks about subjects that really interest him, such as communism, or the pogrom in Iasi [1](#). He doesn't pay much attention to details, but he can talk for hours about political concepts. When we finish talking, he resumes to watch TV: the news is on. Mr. Tinichigiu likes to know what is going on in the world.

Our ancestors came from somewhere in the South; my father said that his grandfather came to Romania through Galati [a town in south-eastern Romania, near the Danube]. They came sailing; I don't know if it was on the Danube or on the Black Sea. So I think that my great-grandfather was not Romanian, but my father didn't know where exactly he came from.

My paternal grandfather died before I could meet him, so I only knew my paternal grandmother; her name was Sara Tinichigiu. She lived in Iasi, together with two of my father's sisters: Rebeca and Sofia. But we didn't visit much, as my father had to work all day until late, so I can't say I knew her, or my aunts.

I only saw my maternal grandfather once, when he took me to recite the prayer for the dead – the Kaddish. I believe I was about five years old and I remember he spoke perfect Romanian to me, because I didn't know any Yiddish. But I didn't get to really know the grandparents on my mother's side; when she died, my father didn't keep in touch with them.

Iasi, the town I grew up in, was a beautiful and modern town, but we lived more on what one would call the outskirts, in a neighborhood called Ticau. It is famous in Romanian literature because this is where Creanga was born. [Ion Creanga (1839-1889): famous Romanian writer] There were no ghettos, but there were neighborhoods where Jews were very numerous, such as Cucului. The Jewish community in Iasi was big and powerful; it must have been more than a third of the town's population, maybe about 30,000 Jews. There were a lot of synagogues and prayer houses, with rabbis, chazzanim, shochetim and all other functionaries. Since the community was so big, of course we had mikves, cheders and yeshivot. About half of the Jews in Iasi worked in factories or in different shops. A lot of them had their own workshops, because many were skilled woodworkers,

watchmakers, shoemakers and so on.

My father, Avram Tinichigiu, was born in Raducaneni in 1897. He was illiterate; he couldn't read, but he could sign his name and he knew basic arithmetic. I don't know much about my father's life before his marriage, nor about what brought him to Iasi. He married Maria, my real mother here in Iasi. I don't remember her last name.

My sister Rifka was born in Iasi in 1923 and I in 1926. My mother died very soon after that. My father's second marriage with Sofia – I don't remember her last name – was an arranged marriage: my father was alone with two children. I remember that Sofia had a brother, Soil, but we weren't close with her family either. My father and Sofia surely got married in the synagogue, but in everyday life they didn't wear traditional clothes.

My father worked at construction sites, he was a skilled tinsmith. But even so, the financial situation of the family was precarious: in the summer we had food, in the fall mother would make canned fruit or vegetables, but during the winter we rarely saw meat because there was no money for it, just for bread. I'll never forget one woman, Marita, who gave us milk even if we had no money to pay; she would wait for that money until spring. Our house had two rooms and a wooden summer kitchen, and a courtyard of 100 square meters. We had no running water or electricity. We had seven trees there, three sour-cherry trees that, we, the children, were not supposed to eat from. The fruits were saved for cherry brandy the family would need for the holidays and for the winter. We also had four apple trees and from their apples my mother would make stewed fruit for the winter. We also planted parsley, horseradish and early radish.

Sofia was a housewife, and because we barely had money, she did all the chores around the house alone. I always considered Sofia a real mother; I loved her deeply. She was tender and good-natured, and she was devoted to us children. My mother and my father went to the market every Sunday morning, and near our house there was a Jewish grocery, where I went every day to buy bread. We could buy on credit, which my father would pay back weekly. The merchant trusted us and sold us groceries even if my father didn't have money to pay that week.

My parents never had a holiday, as far as I can remember. 'Holiday' meant that father was unemployed and that was very sad. My father worked hard, and so did my mother, and they had no time for a holiday.

Our close neighbors were all Christian, but they were very kind and I got along with all the children there. They were like me; they also had poor parents, and until 1938 I never heard anyone calling me a 'stinking Jew'. I first became aware of the fact that I was a Jew in 1937-1938, when I was about ten years old. I used to play with all children, be their names Ghita or Ion. [These are typical Romanian names.] I never knew I was different just because I was named Isac. Our neighbors were very nice and never treated us in a different manner. But then, right after the Goga-Cuza government [2](#) came to power, when my friends and I were sleighing, a hooligan who lived near our neighborhood grabbed me and wanted to hit me. Fortunately, the neighbors came to my help and beat him.

After that, I started to talk with my colleagues in the apprentice school about ethnic issues. They talked me into joining an organization, Dror [3](#), which prepared young Jews for immigrating to Israel. It was while I was in Dror that I first found out some things about Jewish history: the scattering of

Jews all over Europe, about the atrocities that were taking place in Germany and about the existence of the Soviet Union, where everyone worked for themselves and where there was no bourgeoisie. Then I remembered how hard my father worked and how, despite that, some winters we barely had food on the table, and I became aware for the first time of class differences. I was old enough to remember the invasion of Poland [4](#), the Anschluss [5](#) of Austria, the occupation of Czechoslovakia [see Munich Pact] [6](#). We talked about these things in the organization. And I witnessed, back then, the flight of Poles through Moldavia to Constanta; they were trying to leave Europe. [Constanta is a Romanian port at the Black Sea.] And I remember discussions among Jews that stated that we would share their fate if Hitler took over Romania as well. I was afraid, and so were my parents.

In our house there were no books except for the textbooks I needed in school and the ones I borrowed from the municipal library. My parents never told me what to read, but I had a very good advisor: my schoolteacher, Ion Rotaru; he taught all subjects. He was an extraordinary person who awakened in me this hunger for reading, so every Saturday I would go to the library and borrow books. That's how I met the famous writers Sadoveanu, Caragiale [7](#) and Ibraileanu.

My father wasn't very open, but not very strict either. We saw very little of him because he was working until late, and then he was too tired to talk to us. My mother, that is, my stepmother Sofia, was the embodiment of kindness. She taught me not to swear and not to lie – and I have never done so in my life. My parents were members of the Jewish community, and even though they went to the synagogue only during the high holidays, my mother lit a candle and then said the blessing over it every Friday evening. We also fasted on Yom Kippur. She tried to make a special dinner when it was possible, but usually there was no money for that. My father worked on Sabbath and the high holidays sometimes, if it was necessary; he couldn't afford not to. On the high holidays I would accompany my father to the synagogue. We also ate kosher, that is no pork, except for Saturdays, when my father would come home with some money and we, kids, would have some meat. We celebrated Pesach at home: we didn't eat bread, and my mother boiled all cutlery, so that it was kosher. We also ate matzah, pies and so on. I did go to cheder but I never had a bar mitzvah; my father was in the concentration camp [Caracal] at the time and I no longer believed in religion. I never had a favorite holiday.

My mother looked after me until I was seven and went to school; I would play with my sisters because my mother was busy making dinner and with the chores around the house. When I would go out and play football, she made for me shoes out of rags and thick felt, because otherwise I would have ruined the only pair I had to go to school with.

The elementary school I went to, the cheder, had been built and was supported by the Jewish community, and so was the apprentice school Cultura, where we, the Jewish kids, would learn different jobs. In school I took religion classes. I enjoyed geography, Romanian literature and mathematics. One class I didn't like and didn't take for long was Hebrew. When I came to school I only knew Romanian, but the melamed who taught us Hebrew only spoke in Yiddish. I couldn't answer him and he used to beat me, because he couldn't accept the idea of a Jewish child not knowing Yiddish. But one day he beat me with a liner over the face and when I went back home my father could see the marks. He asked where they came from and I told him the truth. Now, I must tell you, my father was a very proud man. Next day he didn't go to work but came with me to school. He spoke to the principal about the incident and then told me I wasn't to go to Hebrew

classes again until that 'old fool' would be replaced. But he never was so that's why I didn't study Hebrew for four years.

I got along well with everybody, Jew or not. They were boys from the neighborhood or from school, and we would hang out together, play football. But I don't recall being especially close to any of them. When I went to the apprentice school – it was a Jewish school – I had no time for hobbies or other activities: half the day we would study, and the rest of the day I had electro-mechanics workshop. But I loved gymnastics; one hour was compulsory, but I used to have two extra classes with my teacher, who was very well trained. His name was Strulovici.

My sister Sabina was born in 1931; my mother looked her after. We used to get along well. My sister Sabina went to a Jewish school for girls for four years and my sister Rifka to an apprentice school for seven years. Rifka got sick and died in 1938.

On holidays I would stay with my parents, but we wouldn't go anywhere. My days were split in half: one half I would be in the library, and the other half on the football field. That was until 1938 when I started spending my time at Dror, that organization. The only vacation I had was in 1938 when I went on a camp for watchmen. [King] Carol II [8](#) had founded the Watchmen Guard [Strajeria] [9](#), which taught young boys to be patriots, how to salute the king and how to march. It was held in Barnova, near Iasi.

Before the war, in 1940-1941, I worked in a grocery, but with no official papers; the owner didn't want to hire me officially because he would have had to pay taxes after me, and later it was no longer possible to hire Jews. The owner was Jewish, the other colleagues Christian, and we all got along very well. The owner died and his wife married a Christian for convenience, and officially her husband became the owner of the grocery. That way she could keep her grocery.

I first became politically involved when I joined the UTC [Young Communists' Union] on 21st January 1941, the day the fight broke out between Antonescu [10](#) and Horia Sima [11](#). When I signed up, I was given a choice: to be just a sympathizer whose job was to raise money and food for the communists in prisons, or to become an activist, whose main job was to spread leaflets against Germany. It was dangerous to be an activist, because you could get arrested and tortured to give up your connections. I was given time to think it over – a week – but I said I didn't need time. I chose to become an activist on the spot. So for four years I used to spread leaflets against Germany, usually at night, urging soldiers not to fight. I tried to talk my sister Sabina into joining the UTC but she didn't like the idea. We used to be close when I would be home, but after 1944 I became an activist. My job was to go around villages and convince peasants to join the UTC, and I would sleep at UTC headquarters often. Now I'm glad she didn't join the UTC, because she left for Israel earlier and didn't have to bear the communist terror.

I joined the Communist Party later, in 1948, because I believed in its ideology – not in the way it was put to practice that I saw later. I also read a lot of books about social issues, and after 23rd August 1944 [12](#), I knew my way in life.

Between 1942 and 1944 I worked in a pastry factory, together with four boys and six girls. They were Christians, but we were friends and thanks to them I was able to support my mother and my sister. I was paid only one third of the regular salary, the other two thirds would go to the Military Committee so that they wouldn't take me to forced labor like my father.

During the Holocaust I was in Iasi. On 28th June 1941 there was a massacre, in which 11,000 Jews were killed [the pogrom actually took place on 29th and 30th June]. The number is still under debate, some claim there were only 4,500 – which they equal to 0. On the day before we had found out that in Abator, a Jewish neighborhood, several Jews were killed in their houses by Iron Guard [13](#) members and hooligans. The next day – it was Sunday morning – a sergeant, Zamcanu, came into our courtyard and yelled: ‘All Jews out of their houses!’ We were taken out in the street and forced to march with our hands up. We were mainly women and children. We walked like that for five kilometers, to the police station. My mother was sick and couldn’t hold her hands up; a policeman hit her with his rifle over the shoulders, so I went by her side and held her hand up.

In the police courtyard they started giving tickets to women and children, which said ‘free’ and had been stamped, and they announced that every Jew that didn’t have that ticket would be shot. I remember somebody started saying: ‘He’s a dirty gipsy; he’s not a Jew! What is he doing here among us?’, and pointed to my mother and me. The man knew me and started talking like this because he tried to save me from a very certain death. He succeeded. I never knew who he was. That was the great trick, because many men who had gone into cover early morning came of their free will, to get their ‘free’ tickets and they never came back: some were shot down in the police courtyard – about 500 men – and the rest were taken to the railway station, and forced to get on a train, 130–140 people in each wagon. The doors and windows were closed and nailed, so there was no air. After a day and a night they stopped to get rid of the dead and bury them in mass graves. This went on and on until the town of Roman, where something very unusual happened. A lady, the president of the Red Cross Committee, imposed her will of giving water to the prisoners on the leaders of the convoy. Then the train went on from Iasi to Calarasi, where the rest of the men were forced to work on different estates. The Jewish communities, which keep an exact record in their books of the Jews in the synagogues, estimate that there were 11,000 people killed.

My father had been taken to the concentration camp some time before this happened, from June to November 1941. At the time he was working in a village in Roman, building a church roof, his normal job, when Antonescu’s order came that all Jews near Prut should be taken to concentration camps. So that’s how my father ended up in the concentration camp in Caracal.

During this time I had to provide for the family, because my father was at forced labor in a military unit. I lived with my mother and my sister Sabina, and I had to support them. I worked in a grocery for very little money, and then in a pastry factory, but the situation of the family was precarious.

More than half of my former colleagues from Cultura died in that massacre in Iasi; I know of three of them that they emigrated, and one still lives in Bucharest now. I didn’t agree with those who emigrated; I remember one of them, Onel Feldman, wanted to convince me in 1944 to rejoin the Zionist organization and learn to work the land before leaving for Israel. I refused him, and he asked me: ‘Aren’t you a Jew?’ And I answered: ‘I am first a worker, and then a Jew’. By then I strongly believed that the nation doesn’t matter but what matters is the bourgeoisie and working class.

After the war, picking up where we left off wasn’t so hard, because my father’s profession was very much in demand: he worked again as a tinsmith in Iasi. As for me, being an activist, it wasn’t hard at all. In 1948 I started my work as an economist for Centrocop [The Ministry of State Purchases] in Bucharest, then I moved on to the State Committee of Farming Products Management in 1950;

later I worked as an economist for UNCC [National Union of Consumption Co-operative farms] and UNCAP [Union of Production Co-operative farms].

The communist circles sustained that Israel was an imperialist country under British influence, a desert where very few Jews actually lived, but a lot of Arabs. So I never thought of emigrating, and my father never tried to convince me to. My father, after my stepmother died in Iasi in 1950, remarried. His new wife – I don't remember her name – had a brother who had emigrated, and my sister Sabina, after she got married to a man called Natan Weintraub in Barlad, also emigrated. Sabina worked in a textile plant here, but she was a housewife in Israel. Natan was a waiter here, and there he was a sailor. My father settled in the same town with them, Haifa, and he continued working as a tinsmith. My father's new wife wanted to go to Israel, where she had all her family, but my father hesitated, because I was in Bucharest, had a position: I was an economist for UNCC, so he came up to see me and talk. I told him: 'if Romanian communists needed me back in 1941, they must need me now as well. If somebody has a problem with that, I will deal with it'. So my father emigrated in 1958 and I only saw him again in 1979, when my son Paul was born; my father came back here to see his grandchild.

By the 1960s I had long left behind communism and I no longer believed in it, because I had found out some terrible things. For example, I was never told clearly that having a sister in Israel wasn't approved by my bosses. One day I was summoned and questioned about it; I told the truth, said that she, Sabina, came to visit, but that was all, that we weren't very close. They said they didn't want Jews in high positions who had relatives in Israel, and I replied: 'Fine! Fire me!' And I slammed the door behind me. But they didn't fire me because my work was very hard and they couldn't replace me. I was in charge of contracts between co-operative farms and the state. You had to know a lot about the real state of farms, you had to know the law, and to be firm at the same time.

But another incident that pushed me away from communism was that in 1962 I received a phone call from a former director of mine, who was a mentor to me, Dan Emeric: he had graduated from Economics in Hong Kong and from the Conservatory in Vienna. All his Sunday mornings were busy; he never came to work like others would, because he used to have some friends over and play chamber music. [Sunday was not a working day but what Isac refers to is that people in high positions occasionally went to work Sunday mornings to finish their work.] But that day he asked me to come see him in his office on Sunday morning.

He told me he was summoned for the next day to be questioned about the Patrascanu [14](#) case and that he wasn't sure he would ever come back. Patrascanu had been sentenced to death under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej [15](#) and executed. And all that happened because Dan Emeric used to be friends with a former lady-friend of Patrascanu. The Securitate [16](#) didn't believe that the woman told him nothing of what Patrascanu was up to. So Dan first explained to me that what happened to Patrascanu was in fact a horrible murder, which took place because Dej was afraid of the competition. Patrascanu was a great intellectual who could have replaced him. He was accused of nationalism on the basis of one declaration he once made – 'I am a Romanian first, and then a communist' – and of many other false things, and sentenced to death. Dan asked me to reveal all this when the times would allow it, or at least to tell his children when they would be old enough to understand it, in case he never came back.

What's more: the husband of one of my employees was a cultural attache in London. His name was Gabor Gavril and he was an English teacher, and an old communist too. He came back because he was in conflict with his colleagues, most of them Securitate officers and not diplomats, who always messed things up. Here he found only with great difficulty a job as an English teacher. I made friends with him and I asked him openly: 'Tell me your truth'. I knew whom I was dealing with and I told him what I knew about Patrascanu. In return he told me the truth about the Soviet Union and all the crimes Stalin committed.

Between 1964 and 1965 I experienced a sort of awakening. But emigrating was out of the question, because I used to work with top-secret documents, and I would have had to stay another four years in the country. But if it had been possible, I would have done it. So I calmed down and I reckoned that by doing my job as an economist for UNCAP I could help people. I knew the state was cheating on the farms through the prices: the prices were fix and didn't cover all the peasants' hard work. They were forced to accept the fix prices, and sell a share of their products to the state for those fix prices. What was left to them was barely enough to make a living, and my only purpose became to work for the peasants and against the state. This gave me a great deal of satisfaction, until the ministry I was working in became strictly political, with no other economic functions. Then I thought to move somewhere in the province, because I had never liked Bucharest. I wanted to move to Suceava, in Gura Humorului; I had no relatives there, but I liked the mountains. But in 1975 I had to go to Brasov for some studies about the market development here and that's how I came to work with my wife, Borbala Szakacs.

I dictated her a study about the local market and she made some observations concerning my study. I was amazed by her memory and intelligence and I started to come to Brasov more often. Finally I gave up the idea of moving to Suceava and I came to live in Brasov, officially for medical reasons - I had ulcer. My future wife worked for me as a typist, but she also worked in a hospital, doing secretarial work and medical statistics.

We got married in 1978, but not in a church or a synagogue, and we had a child, Paul Isac, in 1979. At first we lived with my wife's parents - until 1986, when we got our own house: I was sick and I wasn't allowed to make efforts, and their house was up a hill. We never celebrated any religious holidays in our home. I never had close friends here in Brasov, only acquaintances.

I myself didn't have serious problems with the system because I was a Jew, but I had one problem with the Securitate once. It was an incident that can be considered both funny and tragic, that involved my stepson, Alexandru and me, back then in 1979. He is now married and has three daughters. When he was in high school, he had a class about the Iron Guard system that existed in Romania. I had at home the book written by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu [17](#), Carticica Sefului de Cuib [18](#). It was put away in a drawer where I thought nobody would find it. But he did and he took it and showed it to his teacher. She announced it to the Securitate. So one day I received a phone call from a colonel, who invited me to pay a visit to them that day at their headquarters and to bring along all other Iron Guard books I might have. My wife was pregnant with our son Paul. I didn't tell her anything, but I told Alexandru to let her know if I wasn't back by 8 o'clock.

When I got there, the colonel took me to a cell, the last one in a row of cells, where a civilian waited for me. We shook hands and he invited me to sit down. Then he immediately lit a strong light right in my eyes. I said: 'Comrade, I don't know what your name is, because from your mumbling I

couldn't make it out, but if you don't put that light out, I'm not uttering one word, and you can do what you want to me.' He put the light out. He was a colonel who had come all the way from Bucharest to investigate whether my son, who was 17, was organizing an Iron Guard movement. I saw red. 'How can you, idiot colonel, imagine that a Jew could ever organize an Iron Guard movement?!! Go to hell!' That was the last thing I said, I would say no more. So we went to see the general, who laughed at the whole affair and let me go.

I didn't raise Paul to be a Jew. He knew that I was a Jew and his mother a Christian. But when he was in high school he studied informatics, and it happened that the Jewish community in Brasov received a computer lab. They didn't know how to operate it, but they knew my son studied informatics, so they asked him to help them. After that, he became involved in their projects, especially the choir. But how I became part of the Jewish community is also funny: when my father came to see Paul, he said nothing to me, but he talked to my wife and asked her to sign me up without my knowledge and then try to involve me in their activities. My wife did this, and I only found out when the Jewish newspaper was delivered to my home. I also receive help from them now; they pay for my medication.

I have no Jewish friends here in Brasov, but I have acquaintances at the community whom I meet on Saturday mornings in the synagogue. I don't participate much in other activities, but I'm in charge of the auditing committee of the Jewish community.

I visited my sister Sabina three times after 1989 [see Romanian Revolution of 1989] [19](#): in 1990, 1996 and 1998. She had already left for Israel in 1958. Before 1989 we kept in contact through some relatives of her husband, who would tell us how she was doing. Life had changed her; she was a very active woman. Her husband was a drunkard. He worked on a commercial ship, and when he came back, he smuggled textiles and other merchandise that was very cheap in Asia. Sabina used to wait for him on the piers and take the merchandise, otherwise he would have ended up in a bar, paying with the merchandise for his drinks. She also sold the merchandise. That's how she was able to raise her children. Her husband died in 2000.

The wars in Israel affected me, both because I was a Jew and a human being. I gave up on communism, a thing that was very difficult. I finally understood that the Marxist concept was inhuman. I also knew a lot of things about capitalism. I would like to quote Churchill: 'Our democracy is not perfect, but there is no better system.' I'm not thrilled about the present democratic system in the world, in which material interests prevail over moral and human principles. That's my opinion on the European states' attitude towards Israel. I'm familiar with the Balfour Declaration [20](#), with the hopes Jews had about it, with the United States resolution of 1922 and with the dirty game England played in order to maintain intact their relations with the Arab countries, which are the masters of oil resources, a game that is still going on.

I was glad about the Revolution. When the first riots began in Brasov in 1987 [see 1987 Workers Revolt of Brasov] [21](#), I was skiing with my son. When I came home in the evening, I found a friend of ours there, who told us what had happened. I started jumping from joy: 'Finally the working class is awakened. The fool [Nicolae Ceausescu] is going down!' So you can imagine what I felt in 1989. No matter how wicked the present system is, it is infinitely better than the old one, because you have freedom of speech. You don't have to be afraid that for anything you say you can be arrested by some hooligan just because he is working for the Securitate.

I retired two years ago, because I was sick with cirrhosis. Now I live a quiet life, with my wife and Paul, who became an IT instructor. I only go to the synagogue on Saturdays and the high holidays, but I'm still interested in politics, especially where Israel is concerned.

Glossary:

1 Pogrom in Iasi and the Death Train

during the pogrom in Iasi (29th-30th June 1941) an estimated 4,000-8,000 people were killed on the grounds that Jews kept hidden weapons and had fired at Romanian and German soldiers. Thousands of people were boarded into two freight trains; 100-150 people were crowded in each one of the sealed carriages. For several days, they were transported towards Podul Iloaiei and Calarasi and 65 percent of them died from asphyxiation and dehydration.

2 Goga-Cuza government

Anti-Jewish and chauvinist government established in 1937, led by Octavian Goga, poet and Romanian nationalist, and Alexandru C. Cuza, professor of the University of Iasi, and well known for its radical anti-Semitic view. Goga and Cuza were the leaders of the National Christian Party, an extremist right-wing organization founded in 1935. After the elections of 1937 the Romanian king, Carol II, appointed the National Christian Party to form a minority government. The Goga-Cuza government had radically limited the rights of the Jewish population during their short rule; they barred Jews from the civil service and army and forbade them to buy property and practice certain professions. In February 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship. He suspended the Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system.

3 Dror

Zionist organization that was active in Iasi, Moldavia in the 1930s.

4 Invasion of Poland

The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

5 Anschluss

The annexation of Austria to Germany. The 1919 peace treaty of St. Germain prohibited the Anschluss, to prevent a resurgence of a strong Germany. On 12th March 1938 Hitler occupied Austria, and, to popular approval, annexed it as the province of Ostmark. In April 1945 Austria regained independence legalizing it with the Austrian State Treaty in 1955.

6 Munich Pact

Signed by Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and France in 1938, it allowed Germany to immediately occupy the Sudetenland (the border region of Czechoslovakia inhabited by a German minority). The representatives of the Czechoslovak government were not invited to the Munich conference. Hungary and Poland were also allowed to seize territories: Hungary occupied southern and eastern Slovakia and a large part of Subcarpathia, which had been under Hungarian rule before World War I, and Poland occupied Teschen (Tessin or Cieszyn), a part of Silesia, which had been an object of dispute between Poland and Czechoslovakia, each of which claimed it on ethnic grounds. Under the Munich Pact, the Czechoslovak Republic lost extensive economic and strategically important territories in the border regions (about one third of its total area).

7 Caragiale, Ion Luca (1852-1912)

Very important Romanian playwright, prose writer and journalist, representative of the classical trend. He was a contributor for the most renowned humor gazettes of liberal orientation, and for liberal and conservative newspapers. Refusing to comply with the aesthetical and social taboos of his time, he made a deep analysis of the Romanian society in all his works, from plays and literary prose to humorous sketches, politically-biased columns and epistolary literature. In 1905, he settled in Berlin together with his family. He was the father of the prose writer and poet Mateiu I. Caragiale and of the poet Luca I. Caragiale.

8 King Carol II (1893-1953)

King of Romania from 1930 to 1940. During his reign he tried to influence the course of Romanian political life, first through the manipulation of the rival Peasants' Party, the National Liberal Party and anti-Semitic factions. In 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship. He suspended the Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system. A contest between the king and the fascist Iron Guard ensued, with assassinations and massacres on both sides. Under Soviet and Hungarian pressure, Carol had to surrender parts of Romania to foreign rule in 1940 (Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR, the Cadrilater to Bulgaria and Northern Transylvania to Hungary). He was abdicated in favor of his son, Michael, and he fled abroad. He died in Portugal.

9 Strajer (Watchmen), Strajeria (Watchmen Guard)

Proto-fascist mass-organization founded by King Carol II with the aim of bringing up the youth in the spirit of serving and obedience, and of nationalist ideas of grandeur.

10 Antonescu, Ion (1882-1946)

Political and military leader of the Romanian state, president of the Ministers' Council from 1940 to 1944. In 1940 he formed a coalition with the Legionary leaders. From 1941 he introduced a dictatorial regime that continued to pursue the depreciation of the Romanian political system started by King Carol II. His strong anti-Semitic beliefs led to the persecution, deportation and killing of many Jews in Romania. He was arrested on 23rd August 1944 and sent into prison in the USSR until he was put on trial in the election year of 1946. He was sentenced to death for his crimes as a war criminal and shot in the same year.

11 Sima, Horia (1907-1993)

Leader of the Legionary Movement from 1938. In September 1940 he became vice-president in the National Legionary government led by Ion Antonescu. In January 1941, following a coup d'état, with the help of Hitler, Antonescu assumed total control and unleashed persecution on the Legionary Movement. In 1944, when Romania turned to the Allies, Horia Sima became a political refugee. He continued to be the leader of the movement from exile and set up a Romanian government with headquarters in Vienna in the fall of 1944. After World War II, he fled to Spain. He was sentenced to death in absentia in 1946 by the Romanian people's tribunal.

12 23rd August 1944

On that day the Romanian Army switched sides and changed its World War II alliances, which resulted in the state of war against the German Third Reich. The Royal head of the Romanian state, King Michael I, arrested the head of government, Marshal Ion Antonescu, who was unwilling to accept an unconditional surrender to the Allies.

13 Iron Guard

Extreme right wing political organization in Romania between 1930 and 1941, led by C. Z. Codreanu. The Iron Guard propagated nationalist, Christian-mystical and anti-Semitic views. It was banned for its terrorist activities (e.g. the murder of Romanian Prime Minister I. Gh. Duca) in 1933. In 1935 it was re-established as a party named Totul pentru Tara, 'Everything for the Fatherland', but it was banned again in 1938. It was part of the government in the first period of the Antonescu regime, but it was then banned and dissolved as a result of the unsuccessful coup d'état of January 1941. Its leaders escaped abroad to the Third Reich.

14 Patrascanu, Lucretiu (1900-1954)

Veteran communist and appreciated intellectual, who successfully conducted an underground communist activity before the Communist Party came to power in Romania in 1944. Following this he was in charge of the Ministry of Justice. He was arrested in 1948 and tried in 1954. He was allegedly accused by Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, the leader of the Romanian Communist Party, of helping Antonescu in his war against the USSR and of being a spy for the British secret service. In fact, he was the only rival from an intellectual background Dej had. His patriotism, which he openly expressed, was interpreted by the communists as chauvinism.

15 Gheorghiu-Dej, Gheorghe (1901-1965)

Leader of the Romanian Communist Party between 1952 and 1965. Originally an electrician and railway worker, he was imprisoned in 1933 and became the underground leader of all imprisoned communists. He was prime minister between 1952-55 and first secretary of the Communist Party between 1945-1953 and from 1955 until his death. In his later years, he led a policy that drifted away from the directive in Moscow, keeping the Stalinist system untouched by the Krushchevian reforms.

16 Securitate (in Romanian

DGSP - Directia generala a Securitatii Poporului): General Board of the People's Security. Its structure was established in 1948 with direct participation of Soviet advisors named by the NKVD. The primary purpose was to 'defend all democratic accomplishments and to ensure the security of the Romanian Popular Republic against plots of both domestic and foreign enemies'. Its leader was Pantelimon Bondarenko, later known as Gheorghe Pintilie, a former NKVD agent. It carried out the arrests, physical torture and brutal imprisonment of people who became undesirable for the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party, and also kept the life of ordinary civilians under strict observation.

17 Codreanu, Corneliu Zelea (1899-1938)

Founder and leader of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known in Romania as the Legionary Movement (1927), which pursued paramilitary activities and political terrorism. In 1930 Codreanu founded the political organization of the so-called Iron Guard movement. This extreme right-wing organization propagated exclusive nationalism, 'Orthodoxism' and anti-Semitism. By the end of the 1930s it became a mass movement and came into conflict with King Carol II of Romania. Codreanu was arrested and shot on the king's orders in 1938.

18 Carticica Sefului de Cuib

The Booklet of the Nest's Leader, written by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. In this booklet he stated the organigram and internal laws of the Iron Guard, and the main ideas of how to organize Iron Guard cells. It was extremely popular among young Legionaries, who used it as a practical handbook rather than a theoretical booklet.

19 Romanian Revolution of 1989

In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife. A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.

20 Balfour Declaration

British foreign minister Lord Balfour published a declaration in 1917, which in principle supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. At the beginning, the British supported the idea of a Jewish national home, but under the growing pressure from the Arab world, they started restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. However, underground Jewish organizations provided support for the illegal immigration of Jews. In 1947 the United Nations voted to allow the establishment of a Jewish state and the State of Israel was proclaimed in May 1948.

21 1987 Workers Revolt of Brasov

The revolt took place on 15th November 1987 in Brasov, an important industrial center of Romania. The cause of the revolt was the catastrophic social and economic situation in Romania, generated by the communist system, which had become worse in the mid-1980s. 47,000 workers from the two main factories in Brasov marched to the Romanian Communist Party headquarters, ransacked the place and discovered what an opulent life the servants of the regime had led. The crowd gathering in front of the building destroyed the symbols of the totalitarian regime but, contrary to official reports, they did not vandalize the place.