

Miklos Kallos With Colleagues



This photo was taken when the library of the Jewish Institute of Babes-Bolyai University from Cluj Napoca was inaugurated.

I was just having a little keynote speech. In the photo there is also Moshe Carmilly, in the first row second from left.

Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger - rabbi in the Jewish Community from Cluj-Napoca during the Holocaust is known also as the author of 'Censorship and Freedom of Expression in Jewish History.

Great Ideological and Literary Conflicts in Judaism from Antiquity to Modern Times' (New York, 1977) and memorialistic and historical books as 'Jews in Transylvania from 1623 to 1944.'

He founded the Jewish Institute in Cluj Napoca which has his name. [Editor's note: He was Neolog chief-rabbi of Cluj Napoca between 1934 and 1944. His historical appreciation is controversial.

On the one hand every source admits that a great number of Jews escaped the deportation thanks to his efforts.

On the other hand he is criticized because he did not warn the Jewish community about the danger of deportation after the German entry (19th March 1944), although he knew about it.

He is also judged because of his contacts with Romanian extreme nationalists (as Raoul Sorban) in the 1980s.]

In the back, the man standing against the wall, is Professor David Bar-Ad from Israel, whose mother was born and grew up in Bukovina, and who has been teaching the Hebrew language since the foundation of the Jewish Institute.

Here's my situation now. In 1997, they proposed me for the presidency of the Jewish Communities in Cluj and they elected me. Are you familiar with the Beckett syndrome? Do you know Beckett?

There was a play, and there was a film too. So Beckett was a close friend of Prince Henry of England. Both of them were steady drinkers and womanizers and they never missed a party.

At a certain point, Henry made Beckett the head of the Anglican Church, as he wanted to have a trustworthy man up there. But Beckett took his position seriously and really began to act like the head of the church.

So when Henry asked him to separate him from his wife, he refused. And he was killed because of it eventually. It's a very interesting thing. This is what the Beckett syndrome means:

when you are appointed in a certain position and you try to take that position seriously. And this is pretty much what happened to me too.

In what way? They were in for a surprise when they elected me president of the Community. Since we're at it, I should tell you that I never denied my Jewishness; I couldn't have, even if I had wanted to.

I didn't turn religious or something, but I did tell them, at the very first community meeting, about my conviction that religion was the factor which played the most important part in preserving the Jewish identity throughout the entire history of the Jewish people.

I am the first to admit this. And I told them that, as president, I would do everything within my power to support the religious life. And this is what I really tried to do.