

Theodore Magder's Bachelor's Diploma



This is my Bachelor's diploma, issued to me upon graduation from the gymnasium in Kishinev in 1939. In 1926 I went to the Romanian gymnasium. There were 40 pupils in my class, seven or eight of who were Jews. Other classes had about the same ratio. I didn't take part in any Jewish activities and, like my father, identified myself as a Romanian to a bigger extent. It should be noted that before Romania became fascist, Jews had no problems in their relations with other nations. There was no segregation in the gymnasium: when Christian children had their religious classes, Jewish children studied the history of Judaism and Jewish history. This was an elective course and my father didn't force me to attend it, but I did as I found it interesting. Later it was closed. I was fond of literature. I read Romanian, French and German books in the original language. I studied these languages with private teachers. I also read the following Russian classics translated into Romanian: Tolstoy, Pushkin, Chekhov, Dostoevsky. I didn't know Russian. At that time it was even forbidden in Romania. There were announcements that Russian wasn't allowed in public places. I wasn't fond of Jewish literature. I only read Sholem Aleichem in Romanian. I also wrote essays and they were published in our gymnasium newspaper. After visiting my aunt in Egypt I wrote a few travel notes. I wrote critical articles and journalistic essays. My fondness of literature helped to pass my exam for the 'Bachelor's degree' very successfully. [In Eastern Europe the term 'Bachelor's degree' refers to the graduation after taking the final exam at high school.] This was a very important exam: about 140 incumbents from all gymnasia of the town had to come to a big hall. The commission included teachers and professors from Bucharest, whom we didn't know. We were to name a writer and be ready to answer any question regarding his life or work. I chose Caragiale a complex and contradictory author. However, I answered all questions and was awarded my Bachelor's degree.