

Arnold Leinweber

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Bucharest

Romania

Interviewer: Anca Ciuciu

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Arnold Leinweber is a self-taught man. He learnt to read before he went to school and he was able to read the newspaper in the first elementary grade. Today, at 84 years of age, he writes poetry every day. He authored four volumes of poetry: 'Anotimpuri' ['Seasons'], 'Roi de licurici' ['Swarm of Glow-worms'], 'Marturisiri' ['Confessions'], and 'Revelatie' ['Revelation']. He moves around with certain difficulty, but his eyes sparkle with intelligence. He maintains the stateliness of a man who could have broken ladies' hearts in his youth, but who chose a family life instead. He feels lonely after the deaths of his wife and his daughter, in the 1990's. He remembers dates and feelings with fabulous precision. His small studio is decorated with watercolors, a portrait of his great-grandfather, and old photographs. In the kitchen, he still uses towels made by his mother's hand; the old floral motifs are partly visible on them.



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My family story

From what I heard in my family, I know that my [maternal] great-grandfather, Mos [Uncle] Peretz [Moscovici], who lived in the village of Dragomiresti, in the Neamt County, was a petty barkeeper who had four children and who married a widow with five children of her own. He dedicated his modest work to this whole pack of children, who had to be raised. All the peasants loved him and respected him.. As a proof, here's one of my mother's stories. One night, two famous outlaws of the time knocked on his door. One was a tall, sturdy guy called Zdrelea, and the other was a short, thin character called Maruntelea. My great-grandfather was frightened, as he suspected who was at the door, but he opened anyway. The two men asked for tobacco and brandy and he served them. Then, they wanted the bill, to which Uncle Peretz, who was terrified, replied that he wouldn't take money from them. But the outlaws told him: 'Uncle Peretz, we know you, we know you're a poor man and you sell on credit to all the peasants who don't have money to pay you, so they'll probably drive you to bankruptcy.' And they were right. For what else could my great-grandfather sell in that bar except for tobacco and brandy? Matches hadn't been invented yet, so he also had

the steel, flint and wicks used to light the fire, and he had gas and large lumps of sugar, as granulated sugar hadn't been discovered yet. The peasants didn't need flour or fruit, since they already had them at home. So the great pub was more of a waste of time. And Uncle Peretz eventually left the village where he had been born and where he had raised his children, and went [with his family] to Piatra Neamt. There he earned his living teaching children to read and write in Hebrew. He died of old age. This is all I know about my great-grandfather.

I don't know anything about my paternal grandparents, the Marcus family. I don't know my grandmother's maiden name. I once saw her at an old age home of the [Bucharest Jewish] community, on the street where [Nicolae] Cajal [1](#) used to live.

I don't know the name of my father's elder sister, who raised him. [His brothers,] Simon [Marcus], and Marcu [Marcus] emigrated to Israel. [His sister] emigrated to America [before 1921], got married, and acquired the name Montbllat. She went mad when she found out that my father had been killed. She had two girls and two boys. Frances was the elder sister and lived in Florida. She and I wrote to each other for a while, but she moved and I lost track of her. The elder boy was a hairdresser and owned a shop in New York, which he passed on to his son. He also had a daughter; she had a brain tumor which pressed against her optic nerve and caused her eyes to close. The younger boy was a great union activist who got killed in a car crash.

During forced labor [in 1941], I met my [first degree paternal] cousin, Adolf [Marcus], for the first time in 14 years, and I visited his family. I recognized Uncle Simon, who was a shoemaker. I had seen him in my childhood, but didn't know he was my uncle. They all left for Israel [after World War II]. When I went there, in 1974, I saw Uncle Simon again. In 1977, I went to his funeral. I don't know if Adolf is still alive. I know his daughter went to Canada.

I found out my father had a second brother, Marcu, who was also a shoemaker, and whom I visited [in the 1940's]. He lived with his family on Carol Flevea [St.], in the vicinity of Dudesti [Ave], where Vitan [Ave] begins today. Marcu had four children: Stela came from his first marriage, and the others came from the second. I visited them in Israel. A cousin of mine was married to Bella Chitaristu' [the Guitar Man] [Ed. note: composer of the song 'Sanie cu zurgalai' ('Jingling Bells Sleigh'), very popular in Romania]. I knew fiddlers in the Tel Aviv area used to gather in a pub called 'Moara Rosie' ['The Red Mill', an allusion to the Parisian 'Moulin Rouge'], where all sorts of bands would be born. I went there and asked about Bella. He showed up, but I didn't tell him who I was. 'Mr. Bella', I said, 'a good friend of mine asked me to look for you and inquire what you know about his cousins.' - 'What's his name?' - 'Aronel, Aronica. Can I see your wife and talk to her?' He was carrying his instruments in his sidecar, but he said: 'Be here tomorrow, I'll take you to her.' They lived in a small Arab house. When my cousin saw me, she exclaimed: 'See, I told you it was Aronel!' She had guessed it only from the description he had given of me - you know, blood ties speak. She showed me a photo of her daughter, who had won the title Miss Army. On seeing her, I felt I was looking at my own daughter - so much they were alike. Thanks to my cousin, I saw the rest of the family, who gathered at a wedding which happened to take place there for several days. Bella and my cousin had three children: a boy who became an engineer, a girl who became a kindergarten teacher, and a second girl who became a school teacher in America. All of Marcu's children are dead now, except for one of his sons, Carol Marcus, who has the same name as my father.

My father, Carol Marcus, was [probably] born in 1900. He didn't have any education. He was an entrepreneur who made his own workshop of brushes and paintbrushes, although he had no qualification in this trade. He quit both his workshop and my mother who was pregnant and set off to join the Russian revolution. I don't recall ever meeting him. He only saw me once. He died in April 1921 and my mother remarried. I didn't have any relationships with my father's family for a long time.

Here's how I got to know the family of my biological father. In the first day of school I went to the Malbim School [Ed. note: This school founded in 1898, next to the Malbim Synagogue, was named Talmud Torah Malbim and consisted of four elementary grades. It was located in the Duesti quarter, a poor area inhabited predominantly by Jews.], where our social assistance center is based today. Headmaster Koritzer came outside and told the first-graders to line up holding hands two by two and to enter the classroom. I held the hand of a fair-haired boy with glasses and his mother said: 'Adolf, have you any idea who you're walking next to? Your cousin!' I turned to her and said: 'This is not my cousin. I only have two cousins, from Aunt Lisa [Lisa Gherman, sister of Mr. Leinweber's mother]. 'He is your cousin', she insisted. 'Your father and his father were brothers! Your father shot himself!' Well now, remember your own first day of school and the excitement of that moment. Can you imagine how it's like for a seven-year-old to learn such things on his first day of school?! This happened in 1927. My first day of school was the day I found out that I was an orphan and the man I was living with was not my actual father. I don't remember how that day went, but I know that, when I got home, I couldn't eat. And I bore inside me this psychological burden throughout my entire childhood and adolescence.

It was only in my adolescence that I started to inquire about my father's activities, so that I could determine what kind of person he had been – after all, this man had joined a revolution in his twenties. He was engaged in a conspiratorial activity, securing the liaison between the Romanian revolutionary committees in Kiev and Odessa, in the Soviet Union. He carried orders from all over the country on what delegates were to be chosen for the coming convention that was held in Bucharest, during which the Socialist Party moved from the 2nd International to the 3rd International. [Ed. note: On 11th May 1921, the Socialist Party Convention decided the transformation of the party into the Romanian Communist Party and its affiliation with the Communist International. The following day, the delegates who had voted without reserve in favor of the affiliation, which implied the subordination to the Comintern and to Russia, were arrested by order of the Government.] This and other conspiratorial activities led to that huge trial in Dealul Spirii. [Ed. note: 'The trial of Dealul Spirii' was held between 23rd January and 4th June 1922. The delegates of the 1921 convention and other communist militants were prosecuted. A great number of politicians and intellectuals made statements or wrote in favor of the Communists. On 4th June 1922, King Ferdinand I issued an amnesty decree based on which 213 out of the 271 people who had been arrested were freed.] My father's and mother's relatives were placed under surveillance – they were given a very hard time. My mother herself was dragged to the Siguranta [3](#). At that time, the printing press of the [Communist] Party [4](#) was removed from a former textile factory one day before the place was raided. Still, they found some typographical letters on the floor, and they took my mother to the scene of the crime. She was breastfeeding me back then and she almost caused me to get ill.

They caught my father in the North Railroad Station and found his pistol. The serial number proved that the gun came from a firearms depot in Ramnicu Valcea – which is why a gunnery warrant officer committed suicide. I know these things from the newspapers I read in those days. The records from the Forensic Institute show that my father was deposed there without official papers. There was no official report signed by a district attorney and he died with his lungs congested. They beat him to death. He did his duty; he didn't give away anyone or anything. They set up a suicide for him and took his dead body to my uncle's, Georges Gherman, who was their informant. All the people in his field bought the story. I noticed something was wrong with the records from the Siguranta. [Mr. Leinweber conducted his research in the 1970's.] The file contained a leaflet launched by the Bessarabian Communists, who didn't accept the idea that my father had committed suicide. It read 'Assassination of the famous Misa, the comrade who...' This is how I found out about his conspiratorial name. When I appealed to the Central Committee [of the Romanian Communist Party], they wouldn't find the time to have a forensic examiner and a law enforcement officer review my file, because all the data led to assassination. At the [Communist Party] Convention, out of the thousands of letters sent to Ceausescu [5](#), the Politburo picked four. They summoned me to tell me 'It was suicide, Comrade!' I felt like replying 'Suicide my foot!' The trial of Dealul Spirii ended without any convictions, because this would have probably made the acceptance of the Great Romania [6](#) by the Great Powers more difficult.

I don't know many things about my maternal grandfather, Haim Froim. Apparently, he was a tailor. He may have still been alive when his last child was born [in 1898]. My grandmother, Maria Froim, had no education. She was a peasant from the village of Dragomiresti who cultivated vegetables for a living. I know my mother was born in Bucharest. My grandmother – 'baba' [old woman], as my cousins and I used to call her – had come to the city [in 1898] because, having spent her entire life in the countryside, she was curious to see how they threw the cross in the River Dambovită on Twelfth Day, in the presence of the royal family and the metropolitan bishop. [Ed. note: Christian custom performed on 6th January, the day that celebrates the baptism of Christ in the Jordan River. The one who manages to swim across the icy water and retrieve the cross that was thrown in the river is believed to be blessed all year long.] My grandmother was on the verge of giving birth, so my mother was born that night in Bucharest. 'Baba' took her baby back to Dragomiresti, where she raised all her children. At a certain point, the family began to put pressure on her. They would ask her: 'Well, Maria, what are you going to do with your children, who will marry your daughters, what kind of education do the kids have and where are they going to get it? How long are you going to stay in this village?' So my grandmother left her house and the adjoining plot of land, which had been offered to her by a generous peasant – as she couldn't have afforded it on her own –, and she took her children [three girls and two boys – a fourth girl had already died] to Bucharest, where they all started looking for work. They arrived in Bucharest in 1918 or 1919, so the war caught them here. My mother [Surica] and her elder sister, Liza, joined a factory that produced brushes and paintbrushes. The working skills were easy to acquire and the payment was per item, so the harder you worked, the more money you made. Matilda [the eldest sister] worked as a tailor to provide for her children, as her husband was on the front. Uncle Moritz worked as a tailor too. Uncle Aurel, my mother's other brother, found a workplace at the Chrisovelon Bank. So, all my grandmother's children managed to find their way as well as they could.

My grandmother served as a maid in various households. Pastas couldn't be bought in stores back then, so they were made at home. Vermicelli, for instance, were made from a dough that was left

to dry and then was cut into small squares or split into small granules which were used to stuff the geese and turkeys. My grandmother was an expert in pickles and pastry. The clothes we, the grandchildren, wore came from those ladies that she worked for, who had children of their own and helped us – we were as poor as a church mouse. She was a very kind woman who looked after her grandchildren and dedicated her work to making our lives better and more comfortable. It makes you laugh to think that all her fortune consisted of 100 lei [the equivalent of an average salary] – and the whole family knew 100 lei was all that ‘baba’ ever had. Moritz [her son] would send his kid to her: ‘Go to «baba» to get 100 lei!’ One day the money got lost on the way. ‘Baba’ was left without her hundred, but Moritz never knew about it. The hundred was moved around so much that it disappeared.

My grandmother was a religious woman. She went to the neighborhood synagogue, dressed in black and always wore a kerchief. She had an asthma attack, suffocated and died [in the 1930’s]. Her end was probably precipitated by her lack of happiness, her worrying about the children, her troubles with Aunt Liza and that wretched Uncle George, who poisoned her life, my mother, who bore a child in her arms – and who was to marry a woman with a child? –, Uncle Aurel, who couldn’t find a job after the Chrisoveloni [Bank] went bankrupt, and Uncle Moritz, with his poor tailor’s shop and his five children.

My mother’s eldest sister, Matilda Pascal [nee Froim], was married to a tinsmith named Mahel Pascal. They had four children: Blima, Frima, Itic, and Julieta. Matilda died of tuberculosis. She caught it during the war [World War I], while attending the wounded and the sick. She was buried on 25th July 1923, in Bucharest, at the Filantropia Jewish cemetery. [My uncle] remarried, and then he died, so his second wife inherited his sewing machine, his whole fortune, three wardrobes full of dowry for the girls. I don’t know how Blima ended up a shop assistant in Targoviste. She later returned to Bucharest and married a certain Itcovici, who owned a vine cellar on 13 Septembrie [St.]. He was mugged and stabbed. Frima Vintila [nee Pascal] was a manicurist. She caught tuberculosis and died in 1944. She had a daughter, Florica Vintila. Itic Pascal ran away from home, led a tramp’s life and died from a lung disease, like his mother. He was buried at the Giurgiului [cemetery], with his elder sister, in a common grave. The youngest sister, Julieta Sabetay [nee Pascal], was taken by an uncle of mine, George Gherman, to a orphanage of the Jewish Community, opposite the Hala Traian. She stayed there until she got married to a lad from Craiova, Sabetay, whose brother was the president of the Jewish Community in Craiova for a long time.

Moritz Froim, my mother’s brother, had five children: Julieta, David, Zvi, Surica, and Mariana. Julieta [nee Froim] lived a hard life. Her husband was a war deserter and he had a terrible time until he was hired by the army again. I came across her when she was working in a soap factory near Carol Park – she was really backward, in a pitiful condition, and she had heart problems. She was buried at the Giurgiului [Jewish cemetery]. In order to be of some help, David Froim learnt the tailor’s trade from his father, of whom he didn’t lost sight. He did his military service in Israel, where he fought in the first war for independence, and he told us they had a gun – which was as old as the hills anyway – for five or six people. He had a large can which he would hit with a piece of metal, and so, bang-bang, they would attack making a lot of noise, and the Arabs would think the tanks were coming. To think that this is how they conquered the enclaves – it makes me laugh. After the war, he worked as a warehouse manager for the phone company in Haifa until he retired. He had three children: two boys and a girl. Moshe is in charge of a stable – he looks after the horses of

some wealthy guy and two or three of his own, which he uses to teach the children how to ride. Ronel is a bachelor and is always studying something. I don't know what he does for a living and he is staying at his mother's. Etti is a Hebrew teacher and works in an ulpan [7](#). She has two children of her own – a boy and a girl. Zvi left for Israel in when he was a child. He became a molding worker and a mechanic – he had his own workshop in Ashkelon and he employed a staff of two. In 1974, he came looking for me. He wanted to take me to his home, as he had just bought a small villa. He died, but left behind him a boy, Iair, who's specialized in electronics. Surica married a boy whom she met on her way to Israel through Italy. She stumbled and fell in a puddle; the guy saw her and went to help her get back on her feet. She was a pretty woman and they got married. They owned a house on Carmiel, in Haifa. She worked there as a shop assistant. She had learnt the tailor's trade and she fixed clothes in some great store in Haifa, which belonged to the army. She passed away in 1998. Mariana, the youngest sister, stayed here, in Bucharest. Those bastards wouldn't give her a passport for a long time. She stayed here for many years, got married, but didn't have children. She became a diabetic, was always a housewife and died many years ago in Israel. Her husband is still alive.

Lisa Gherman [nee Froim] had two children of her own, Isac and Iancu Gherman – my cousins with whom I grew up. They both died on Russian soil. Uncle George Gherman was a barfly, a good for nothing bastard, an informant of the Siguranta. He took part in the set up of my father's suicide, which everyone bought.

Aurel Froim is my mother's brother. I don't know when he was born. He was a clerk at the Chrisoveloni Bank, but he tried all sorts of other trades to earn his living: he distributed a magazine published on Sarindar [St.], he made candy on his own, he sold berets and caps on the street, and he took me with him to help him carry his suitcases full of boxes with merchandise. To sell caps, he would walk on Grivitei Ave. up to the North Station in the first day; in the second day, he would move to Rahovei Ave., from the Court house to Alexandriei Sq.; in the third day, he would be on Dudesti Ave., and in the Baratiei area; in the fourth day, he would reach Dorobanti Ave., Mihai Bravu [Dr.] and the Obor. He did that every week, over and over again. My soles and socks were ruined because he took me everywhere he went. I was 12, and the box I had to carry moved my muscle so much that my left lung can't be seen now. He died in 1933. Aurel had only one child, Bernard Froim. He had a beautiful wife who worked as a cashier in a store on Lipscani Ave. His mother remarried after many years of widowhood, so he changed his name to Teodor Brates – he no longer was Bernard. He worked in television until his retirement, after the revolution [8](#). We don't see each other.

I can't tell you much about my mother's youngest sister, because she died in Moldavia. She hadn't got married yet, she was hardly 17 or 18. She did the laundry for richer relatives in those cold waters of Moldavia and she died.

My mother, Surica Marcus Leinweber [nee Froim], came to Bucharest with her sister, Liza. She learnt to make brushes and paintbrushes, and she exercised this trade. She owned a workshop built by my biological father, but she couldn't keep it, so she sold it with workers included and ended up working herself in her former workshop. My mother's nature was such that I didn't feel affection from her, and craved it. I saw Auntie Liza play and fool around with her children and I envied them for living this joy of childhood that I was deprived of. My mother's behavior towards me was rather fair and natural, but she never gave me sweetness and affection, and this had an

impact on me. So did my finding out I was actually an orphan and the man at home wasn't my father.

My mother remarried in 1924. The one who adopted me and whose name I bear was a worthy man, Fischer Leinweber – Friederich, as they called him. His behavior was beyond reproach and I never felt he was my stepfather. I remember my mother introducing him to me: 'Look, daddy's here, daddy's here!' I was two years and a half. He never did raise his voice at me, curse me, pull my ears or slap me. On the contrary, whenever I beat up my brothers – his children –, he left the house and looked for something to do elsewhere, lest he should lose control and say something bad or hit me. So I can say he loved me. This is something I really felt when I was about 16. I was in a scouts camp in Bugaz [today in Ukraine], where the River Dniester flows into the Black Sea. My classmate from the vocational school got drowned. The news was published in the newspapers, but the name wasn't mentioned, so, naturally, everyone got worried. I didn't write to my parents that I was alive because I was upset with them: at my request, they were supposed to send me 100 lei of their own money, but they took it from my personal savings, which were kept by a cousin of my mother's. So I got angry and didn't write anything. When I came back from the camp, my mother was so happy I was alive that she burst into tears. She immediately sent me to Aurora St., near the Malbim Synagogue, to a brush maker's workshop where my adoptive father worked. I got there in the afternoon and found him resting on a bed. When he saw me, he jumped up and he embraced me with tears of joy in his eyes. What more proof did I need that this noble man loved me? To him, I was an adopted orphan, but he raised me and treated me nicely. How could I not cherish his memory and continue to bear his name with respect?

My father, with two brothers and two sisters, also had a cousin. His father had a brother in Storojinet, a glazier who fit glass into the frames of paintings. He came from Radauti at an early age, and he only went back to attend the wedding of two twin nieces of his – I was about 10 at the time, I believe it was in 1930. My father died in 1982.

Moritz Leinweber, my middle brother, was born in 1926, in Bucharest. He went to high school too. When the time came for him to earn his living, I sent him to a former schoolmate of mine from the vocational school, who was a skillful man, to learn about wiring, and he managed to acquire some experience. This was before the war [World War II]. On the spot where the National Theater lies today [Ed. note: The new building of the National Theater in Bucharest was opened in 1973, close to Magheru Blvd., in the center of the capital. The old building of the theater was inaugurated in 1852 on Victoriei Ave. and it was bombed on 22nd August 1944.], there was a line of stores built at that time. It was him who designed their wiring – he decided the number of circuits, electric meters, fuses, sockets etc. In two years he became very skillful. But the war came and there weren't any new buildings, so he learnt to paint houses. And he started painting and whitewashing. Afterwards, he became, like many others, a Party activist in the field of personnel, and he ended up a head of the financial department of the 6th district of Bucharest. He was awarded the Medal of Work. Moritz died of colon cancer in 1992. He had two children: Liviu and Marius. They are both in Israel now. Liviu became an agricultural engineer and Marius became a technician in the same field. Liviu lives in Haifa and has a daughter. Marius lives in Tel Aviv and has a daughter too.

Osias Leinweber, my younger brother, was born on 1st March 1932 in Bucharest. He was our first-day-of-spring gift. [Ed. note: 1st March symbolically marks the beginning of spring. People celebrate it by offering flowers and small presents to their loved ones.] Osias didn't go to high

school. He chose the way of playing in bands – he had an ear for percussion instruments. He joined Adesgo [Romanian stockings factory that still exists today] to learn a trade and be able to turn an honest buck. There he became a member of the factory band and he went to play at weddings and baptisms. At a certain point, he left Adesgo and got a job in the restaurants business. He played at a restaurant in Ferentari, and then at the ‘Dunarea’ [restaurant], and the ‘Pescarus’ [restaurant]. He also played at the dining terrace in Herastrau Park [the ‘Monte Carlo’ restaurant], until he was hired by the ‘Ion Vasilescu’ theater company. He went on tours to Israel, Russia, and Poland, and then he came back and played for the ‘Savoy’ [Theater]. Without letting us know, he submitted his emigration papers and left to Israel [in the 1970’s]. He didn’t spend much time there. He went to Germany, where he worked for a while, and where he has been living for 30 years. He played with Gaston Marin, the pianist, at a spa [in Germany], and with other Gypsy fiddlers. Some of them would remain there, others would return – all this went on until the communist authorities made it impossible to wander around. Osias had a stage name. When he joined his first artistic band, a Jew from Cernauti told him he would call him Fredy. So, this became the name he was known by in his world of artists and band players. His wife is a Christian woman named Emilia. Even now, at 77 or 78 years of age, she looks very well; she’s about 7 years older than my brother. They owned a bistro, but it went bankrupt in 1991 – its location had become unattractive. He applied for his retirement pension, and then he found a job as a receptionist in some hotel. He now works as a sort of guard for some stores. His wife used to be a tailor. She had good drawing skills and worked in a large store. Her retirement pension is not very high. She now works for the Jewish community club in Frankfurt and is highly esteemed.

Growing up

My name is Arnold Leinweber. I was born on 12th August 1920. My father’s last name was Marcus, but he died when I was 8 months old. My mother remarried and I was adopted by her new husband. At a very early age [2 or 3 years old], I started going out of the house, and this is how I became familiar with the neighborhood. My mother would lock me inside and go to work; my grandmother would go to her mistresses too, so I would get bored all alone. How long can one stay locked indoors? I would get out through the window. I would use a stool to climb on the table, which was by the window. This wasn’t hard to open. The distance from the window to the ground was small, as our house was rather low, so getting to the courtyard wasn’t a problem. I would go on the opposite side of the street, on a waste ground, and come back in the evening, with my hair full of thistles. One day, a lady who lived in the same courtyard razored my curls of hair. Once I jumped through the window, crossed Triumfului St. and Moruzzi St., and reached Nerva Traian St. Then I crossed another little street behind the matzah ‘factory’ – next to it was the Dobroteasca church, which is still there. So I left my house at the crossroads of Foisorului St. and Triumfului St., I walked seven or eight hundred meters barefoot and wearing just a shirt, and I climbed some wooden stairs to the second or third floor of a place where I knew my grandmother, ‘baba’, and my mother had gone to visit Aunt Matilda [my mother’s sister]. Poor Matilda had died of tuberculosis. She caught it during the war, while attending the wounded and the sick. She was buried on 25th July 1923 [Mr. Leinweber was 3 at the time]. I was familiar with her neighborhood because the girls, my cousins, had taken me there.

From the age of 8 until I got married, I lived in the Aparatorii Patriei [quarter]. The house had its charm because, when we moved, it was being built, so we witnessed its erection. The pillars were

already planted into the ground. They had been burnt to prevent them from rotting and fixed at an equal distance from one another. The space between the laths that united them was filled with bundles of clay mixed with straws and horse manure which I had collected in a bucket from the street myself. Hundreds of carts loaded with fruit and vegetable would come from Berceni and other villages and head towards the Natiunii Marketplace – the Great Marketplace, as they used to call it back then. So I witnessed how a house was built. The roof was hastily made, because we had no authorization for the house. If the gendarmes caught you building a house without authorization, they would stop you, unless the house already had a rood. So the pillars were fixed in a hurry, the roof was completed fast, and so were the timber walls. Reeds were added to the walls, and then came the plaster and the whitewash. Most houses were built directly on the ground.

My grandmother remembered her childhood and she took matters into her own hands in a room: she spread clay mixed with manure on the floor, so that the ground wouldn't make dust; that room bore a particular smell. The most beautiful moments I spent in this house were when I went under the bed. That iron bed was high enough for me to fit underneath, with half a loaf of brown bread and some book. The window shade was a little bent, leaving room to the ray of light that I needed to read. I read anything I came across: fairy tales, novels, theater plays – anything that was in prose, but no poetry. Those were books I had borrowed or received as gifts. I never bought one book in my entire life – I only read library books. They helped me to form my vocabulary, to forge my own idea about life, to polish my behavior towards people and society, to tell good from evil – in fewer words, I became a modest self-taught person.

I first went to school in Bucharest, at the Malbim School, which shelters the social assistance center of our Federation today. I continued my education in the Aparatorii Patriei quarter [at the outskirts of the city]. The 40 or 50 Jewish families of this neighborhood and all the other ethnic groups lived together peacefully. We had some Jewish neighbors who had come from Transylvania in search of a better life. In the winter of 1928-1929, they had nothing they could use to make some heat, so it was freezing in their house. They had a little girl and they would come to our place to get warm. They couldn't find a job and they had to stay indoors because of the cold. If we happened to have tea or something, my mother always offered them whatever we were having. This is how they lived through the winter, staying in our house most of the time. In this period, the head of the family tutored me in math. He had been an accountant at a timber warehouse and was a good mathematician. I, who used to hide under my desk in the first grade, so that the math teacher wouldn't see me, managed to decipher all the secrets of mathematics that an 8-year-old could grasp – from adding 1 and 1 to the rule of three or the calculation of the interest. He put everything down in a small notebook, but I lost it, and some of that knowledge faded away from my memory. At school, my teacher, Mihail Rangu, a special man, sensed I was well prepared and had me write the addition of 1 and 1 on the blackboard – putting the second 1 under the first and drawing a line beneath it –, so that all the children could see how they were supposed to write in their notebooks as soon as they could add; the numbers were no longer added on the horizontal, but vertically. I also showed on the blackboard how a division was made. That accountant had taught me to subtract using the addition, so I checked the result at the same time as I made the subtraction. The subjects were all the same to me. I had to read, and I read well, because I had learnt it before I went to school. My handwriting was relatively nice, unlike my current handwriting – I am frequently unable to decipher what I wrote down myself. The primary school went by, and I got the first prize every year.

I can understand Yiddish, but I can't speak its literary form. My adoptive father couldn't speak [Romanian] correctly. He always confused the feminine with the masculine, and the plural with the singular, making a mess out of it all. He came from Bucovina, where he had spoken German. From that, he could easily switch to Yiddish, the language my grandmother and my mother were using. But I always answered them in Romanian. When I entered first grade, I read Hebrew with the old vowels [Before and during the Jewish primary school, Mr. Leinweber studied with an old Jewish teacher whom he called Rebe.], and I pronounced 'Burih ata Adoinoi Eloheinu Meilah Uloilom'. The school taught me to say 'Baruh ata Adonai Elohenu Melah haOlam', so the language acquired a new fluency, a more uplifting sound, as there was a change in the way vowels sounded, and 'Burich ata Adoinoi' became 'Baruch ata Adonai'. Because I could read both ways, I find it very hard to identify the alef and the lamed of the Israeli alphabet today. I can't read anymore, and one of the reasons for this is that we all learnt [in Jewish elementary school] what to read and when to read it, but had no idea what we read. It was only after my first visit to Israel [in 1974] that I felt the need to express myself in Yiddish, even if that meant only a few words. Now I can say a number of commonly used phrases, but I'm totally lost in a normal conversation. My wife had heard her parents speak Yiddish too, she could understand it, but didn't speak it. Still, we sometimes used a Yiddish word or two, so that our daughter wouldn't understand what we talked about. There are some words that simply don't sound as good in Romanian.

When I went to high school, I was too old for new tricks [after World War II], so I struggled with the French, Latin, and Russian language. I passed my graduation exam at 40 years old, at the 'Zoia Kosmodemianskaia' school [Ed. note: This was the name that was given to the Central School for Girls after 1947, in honor of a teenage Soviet heroine who died for the communist cause].

My parents observed the holidays. My mother lit the candles on Friday, but they weren't devout Jews. They never missed the synagogue on holidays, but weren't so religious as to go there every day. Besides, they had to go to work. There was a synagogue in our neighborhood – it didn't have a specific name, it was the synagogue in Aparatorii Patriei. There could be no service held in the morning in our neighborhood, because most of the men went to work and the remaining ones weren't enough to complete a minyan. There was no service in the evening either, but holidays were treated with all the respect due to the historical moments they celebrated: Yom Kippur, Sukkot etc. It was a pleasure to see the sukkah built by the Jews of our neighborhood, one more beautiful and more elegant than the other. On Purim, it was a real joy when the masked characters came to your house, had a drink, ate your cakes, and thumbed their noses at you because you hadn't recognized who they were. We, the children, had a great time in those days. This lasted until the quarter was demolished. The Jews left to pursue the aliyah, and there were none left in the neighborhood.

I personally don't have a favorite holiday. To me, the Jewish holidays are historical holidays, holidays of joy, celebrations of certain events related to agriculture and to the ancient life of the Jews – there's nothing religious about them, in fact. The fact that, on Yom Kippur, people pray to God for forgiveness of their sins and for reconciliation between men who did wrong to one another, is a purely human thing. I was never a religious man. After my bar mitzvah – I did my duty, like any Jewish child –, the everyday work and my job prevented my contact with the Hebrew letters. When my father took me to the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, he put the tallit on my shoulder and had me read from the siddur, but I couldn't get it right – I read either too slowly or too

fast, and he never knew where I was. This annoyed me, because it made me feel stupid, and made me forget everything I ever read. Even if I go to the synagogue only on festive occasions, this doesn't mean I don't feel like a good Jew. I go to the temple [the Coral Temple], because there are no synagogues left in my neighborhood. There used to be scores of them in the past. Each street had its synagogue, and each guild had its synagogue – the carpenters, the shoemakers, the tinsmiths, and all the others. The members of each trade had the ambition to have their own synagogue, which was a very good thing.

I spent my childhood in Bucharest, in the Vitan quarter, on Foisorului St., where I was born and where I took a bite of all the games of that age. As a child, I would go out through the window while my mother was at the workshop, earning her living, and I knew the neighborhood very well. The Dudesti [quarter], where I lived, was inhabited by modest, hard-working people, and life peaceful there. One of the special events was when it rained heavily and the water coming from Vitan flooded Foisorului St., went round a hill, and headed down to the River Dambovita. The water's withdrawal was the kids' joy. When we looked in the street's gutter, we found wonderful trifles: marbles, steel balls, buttons, pierced coins from the time of King Carol [I] [9](#), and good money from the time of Ferdinand [I] [10](#). We used the change to buy half a Turkish delight, which was 50 bani, or a full one, which was 1 leu. This sweet was sold by people from Oltenia who had come to Bucharest. They made a living selling Turkish delight with cool water, of course, which they carried in a bucket. The water came from some springs which flowed into the Dambovita. One would get to them by going down some steps.

Apart from these moments of joy of our childhood, we were also happy when we had money. If we didn't, we would just yearn for what we couldn't have; we would stare at those Albanians or Turks who passed by yelling 'Cool «braga» [millet beer], cool «braga»!', and carried a device on their back, a sort of pump, on which they would lean to fill the glasses. There was another sort of Albanian merchant who cried his merchandise in the street too: he sold some green and red peppers on a stick, or some red lollipops on a stick. The kid who had money would buy this delight and, while he was licking it, the others were, of course, yearning for it. The rest of the commerce was equally picturesque. In the morning, the men from Oltenia came from what is called today the Natiunii Marketplace, carrying baskets loaded with vegetable and fruit. They would sell on credit, marking the debt in red chalk on the door frame, from where no one would have dared remove it. They would say: 'It's all right, Ma'am, you'll pay me when you have the money!' People were poor and had no cash. The milk lady used the same chalk marks. She would draw one, two, three, four lines, and, when she got to the fifth, she crossed all of them with a line. Five crossed lines represented five liters of milk. In the afternoon, another man from Oltenia would come – he sold fish on credit. There was also the man who sold an exceptional yogurt – only seeing him slice a portion made you drool.

Since electricity hadn't been introduced in people's homes yet, there were no electric irons, but only charcoal-based irons. Charcoal had to be bought from the people who walked the streets yelling 'Get your charcoal!' People would come out and buy this charcoal; it was as vital to their existence as water, which was carried in water-carts and sold by the bucket. The water was brought from Dudesti Ave. The water-carts gathered on the spot where the [Vitan] post office lies today. The first electric tram passed by this water supply center. The tram number 19 left from the end of Vitan St. and went downtown. It ran on Dudesti Ave., Vacaresti Ave., the then-Bratianu

Blvd., and got to 1 Mai Blvd., to the Chibrit Bridge. These are my modest recollections of that time. The older kids would have kite competitions. Razor blades were added to the kite in order to cut the string of the adversary. We were divided into camps, according to whom we supported – we really admired them. We, the younger kids, would make firecrackers with dirt or would play with the spinning top – this was a lot of fun. The spinning tops had various colors and they imitated the rainbow's lights when spinning. We also played with the hoop – we drove iron hoops and circled the neighborhood on the paved sidewalks of the time. These were all joys of my childhood. But the most exciting moment was when my [maternal] grandmother took me to Victoriei Ave., to the LaFayette store – the Victoria store today –, to admire the windows. There was a Santa Claus, a little Christmas tree, a train that kept moving in a circle, a doll, a little car, and I was happy to see all those things. But I never got to actually touch and play with such toys – I didn't even have a rag ball. My regular toys were the firecrackers, the hoops, the 'arsice' [jackstones], the marbles – these were all part of my childhood.

There were many Jewish families in the Aparatorii Patriei quarter – over 60 families –, so the need was felt for someone to perform religious duties. The neighborhood was founded in 1927, at the outskirts of the capital, on a ground divided into lots. There was no pavement, no electricity, no sewerage, and no drinking water. There was a well here and there, from which water was extracted from a depth of 25 meters. We couldn't afford an outside man, so a cooper from our neighborhood, named Rotstein, who had a lot of children and was familiar with the elements of the Judaic cult, became our religious servant. But on holidays, we still had to bring a hakham to slaughter our poultry. And since this cost pretty much, Mr. Rotstein went to a hakhamim school, probably at the Community. He was authorized to perform the ritual slaughtering, so he was both the religious servant and the hakham of the neighborhood. He was also the one who continued to teach children to read and write in Hebrew. The problem we faced was where to hold the religious service, as we didn't have a synagogue. So a Jewish citizens' committee was founded to deal with this problem. We needed a building large enough to allow room for us all – and there were many of us. And we organized a sort of balls in order to fund this building that was also going to shelter the kindergarten. The Romanians' committee of the neighborhood did the same - they were more than we were. Jews went to the Romanians' balls and the Romanians filled the Jews' hall. I don't know how much money was raised at these balls, because I was only a kid. The president of our committee, shoemaker Saraga, who owned a small store on Regala St., and counsel Stoica [the president of the Romanian committee], the only man in the neighborhood who had a brick house, agreed to do everything together. The money was gathered in one place and it helped to build a school with two classrooms - since the neighborhood didn't have a school -, a church, which is still there today, and the synagogue [it didn't have a name, it was known as the synagogue in Aparatorii Patrieie], which sheltered the kindergarten for all the neighborhood children. The opening of the kindergarten was attended by the prefect of the City police, Gen. Marinescu.

When the time of the racial laws [numerus clausus] [11](#) came, there was no change in the social relations in our neighborhood. We had the same degree of friendship and understanding between people. The cause was our poverty. Everyone left downtown or came there to exercise their trade, which hardly provided them with enough to survive. Except for counsel Stoica, shoemaker Saraga, and a clerk who worked at the Pop and Bunescu store, today the Bucharest [store], our neighborhood had no intellectuals. All the inhabitants were craftsmen, people who led a hard life, so there was no time for chauvinistic, anti-Semitic manifestations. The neighborhood also had

Hungarians, Germans and Gypsies. Of course, there were a lot of Jews too. But the majority population was Romanian.

Until I finished school, I wandered through the fields. I never play soccer, I didn't like it, but I played other kid games: marbles, 'arsice', 'capra' [leapfrog], 'cal de print si de imparat' [prince's and emperor's horse]. You had to throw the marbles in the hole. If you didn't miss any throw, you were the emperor. If you only managed to put five marbles in the hole, you were the prince. If you put four, you were the emperor's horse, and if you put three, you were the prince's horse. A fifth boy threw the balls, and the result could turn the emperor and the prince into horses and the vice-versa. The emperor and the prince were afraid of the result, while the horses thrilled with anticipation. This was the whole game. I particularly liked 'turca' [tipcat]. There was a square piece of wood with a number on it that you fixed near a line. Then you threw a stick [the 'turca'] at it, and, according to the number on the wood, you had to throw it again, gaining ground or losing. These were the games that we played at school. The girls liked 'sotron' [hopscotch], or played with the ball and the jump rope. These were the innocent games of our childhood.

Since we lived in the Aparatorii Patriei quarter, we would go to the Berceni Dr., which was full of caravans of carts loaded with vegetable and fruit. Of course, we, the kids, followed them and cried: 'Won't you give us a tomato or a pepper? May your horses live long! Won't you give us a water melon, Mister? May your horses live long! May you have a good sale at the marketplace!' The people were good-hearted and they gave us peppers, eggplants, tomatoes and water melons. We would eat the tomatoes and the water melons on the spot, in the ditch by the side of road. The drive was on higher ground, and there were bushes on the edge of the ditch. Everyone put down his 'harvest', and we didn't go home for lunch anymore. The first time I came back home with fruit and vegetable in my shirt, my mother was scared and astonished: 'What happened to you?' She was preparing to beat me. 'How could you beg?' - 'Well, all the other kids did it, so I did it myself!' This was part of the fun too. There was this boy who kept beating me. He was more robust than me, and was the son of a carpenter named Wasserman. He left the neighborhood and I don't know what became of him. I can't get him out of my mind. He had a neighbor, a tinsmith's nephew who abandoned his trade to become a barkeeper there, on Berceni Dr. He sold what he could, especially wine and brandy, and this is how he was able to raise his two daughters.

When I was nine and a half years old, a Jewish association, the 'Lumina' Lodge, gathered all the needy Jewish children at the Cultura High School [12](#), on Zborului St. After being examined by a medical commission, I left to Poiana Tapului on holiday. Aunt Liza said to my mother: 'Oh, Surica, all the children left to a camp in Poiana Tapului! Quickly, you must send him too!' My mother bought me a train ticket and took me to the station, where she passed me on to the lady who went there and who promised her she would take me to the camp too. It was then that I saw the mountains [the Carpathians] for the first time, and I fell in love with them. The son of the headmaster from the Moria School happened to be in the same camp with me. A rivalry was born, as kids became attached of me. I had my own fir tree, and it was tall enough, and the upper branches were curved in a way that allowed me to sit comfortably and swing. In order to get rid of the kids, I used to climb in it, and from there I could say whatever I wanted to. It was a very beautiful month. I experienced the magnificence of a fantastic moment: after a rain, on the other side of the railroad, where Zamora was, the foot of a rainbow was formed in a clearing. This image remained in my memory all my life. It was fabulous, it was huge, it had two strips. Last year I wrote

a poem about it: 'Poiana Tapului, Zamora, with proud mountains and fir trees / Somehow kept me at their bosom / For a moment at noon. / The Prahova was flowing slowly, carrying the whisper of springs, / The tiles on the roofs charmed me with their color, / In the forest, the Urlatoarea, a raging waterfall, / Went its' way, cool, fresh, gay ... After the rain had stopped and the skies had slowly cleared, / A rainbow foot towards the Zamora appeared.' ['Poiana Tapului, Zamora, cu munti falnici si cu brazi / M-a oprit cumva la sine / Intr-o clipa de amiazi. / Prahova curgea alene, purtand murmur de izvoare, / Tigla pe acoperisuri fermeca cu a lor culoare, / In padure, Urlatoarea, o cascada tumultoasa, / Cobora si ea la vale, rece, proaspata, voioasa ... Cand a incetat si ploaia si s-a inseninat cu greu, / S-a ivit, chiar spre Zamora, un picior de curcubeu.']

At 16, my school sent me to the seaside [by the Black Sea]. I was sent there three times. The third time, the reason was the good job I had done as head of my group at school, which determined the camp's commander, doctor Dumitrescu, to call us there. I saw the place where the Dniester River flows into the sea [currently on Ukrainian soil]. The water there was clearer than a spring's, and the beach was very wide, with sand dunes in which the foot would sink. When we had to return to the camp at noon, after having frolicked for hours, we couldn't walk, but we had to run like crazy to reach the ground, because the sand was too hot to walk on. Another nice thing about that place were some very small mollusks in the sea, which died once they were thrown on the shore. In the evening, we would walk on the shore and find phosphorescent lights – the sea was full of shiny little stars. My boy scout's hat had a sort of lyre-shaped lily on it. I would put these small crawfish on it, and my hat would glow in the dark. I enjoyed scouting very much. We slept in tents. The tent was partly buried in the sand, so that the wind wouldn't blow it away and the tide wouldn't drag it to the sea. Some ropes tied it to stakes. There were pretty tall weeds growing there, and we used them to make the base of our tent. We put the tent sheet over it, we stuffed the pillows with weeds, and this was our bedroom. I stayed with the other two heads of groups in a tent of three. Others stayed in tents of six, eight or ten. One day we were playing with a brick that was thrown in the water. The one who found it had the right to throw it further away, and the others had to look for it. Eventually, all my companions got bored, so I continued to play on my own. The current began to drag me towards the Dniester. As it was growing stronger and the water was getting deeper, I was getting tired. I was swimming towards the shore, but was not succeeding in getting away from the current. In that desperate moment, when I was facing death, I remembered that one of the boys, Tache, had said before a bonfire: 'The current is a lot less strong at the bottom!' So I dived to the bottom and started swimming. From time to time, I surfaced to breathe, and then I dived back. It took me an eternity to get to the shore. I just lay there for a while, to regain my powers. The following year, I could swim much better, as I was already a grown-up, and I raced for kilometers. My last swimming race was in Neptun, about two years before my retirement [1978]. I haven't seen the sea since then. I am a great fan of nature; I miss it and yearn for it. I couldn't say that I can easily afford it – but, look at us, our legs and hearts can't stand this harmful air for much longer.

I had many occupations. I could do anything, if I was shown how to do it. At home, I used to help my parents make paintbrushes, which I took to the peddlers. I went to work, and, on my way back, took the orders from the peddlers. I made the paintbrushes at night. From 15th March 1933, when I was twelve years and a half, I spent 3 months preparing to become a zincographer. Zincography is divided into several parts. You see, the photograph taken by the reporter is put on a piece of glass. The light goes through and the image is transferred on the glass – the black becomes white and

the white becomes black. The glass is then taken to a copying section, where it is placed on a zinc plate exposed to light. On zinc, the black becomes white and the white becomes black. The negative is immersed in hard water three or four times. Iosif Berman [Iosif Berman (1891-1941): Jewish photographer who was famous in the interwar period for his illustrated reports. He was nicknamed 'the man with a thousand eyes'. Between 1920 and 1930, he contributed photographs to the 'Adevarul' newspaper, the 'Realitatea ilustrata' magazine etc. He was a correspondent for 'Berliner Tageblatt', 'London Express', and 'New York Times'.] was accompanied by two apprentices. They were two grown-ups, Cioc and Matei, whom I met in the period when I had started to work as a zincographer. When they came back from the field, they passed through the zincography workshop, took the back stairs, for there was no elevator, and went to their lab. They developed the photos there, and brought them to the zincography workshop. Berman was loved by the people. One time he photographed me in front of the 'Zig-Zag' bar, on Matei Millo [St.], behind Otetelesanu's [dining terrace], where the Telephones [the Telephone Company Palace, on Victoriei Ave.] are today. I don't know what had caught my attention. I had climbed the fence to look at something, and he caught me on film. This is how I made it in the newspaper, in 1936 or 1937. In 1938, the newspaper had to be closed. I spent six years and a half at 'Adevarul' and 'Dimineata' [1933-1939].

Then I worked in a lighting appliances factory [in 1939 and 1940]. I did assembling, I was a locksmith, I polished the fittings of the bronze elements to give them a light color, I worked with the 'druckbanc'. The 'druckbanc' was a sort of lathe on which the tin plate was shaped by pressing it with a 'druck', a metal bar. The plate glided in front of the handle, which was lubricated with animal fat so that the 'druck' would slide easily. I had to hold this plate inclined and bring it to the shape of the model. These parts were for lighting appliances. They were either the elements that would cover the connection between the ceiling and the lamp, or the components which would support the shade, including the tin ornaments which united in the center of the lamp to embellish the line of the rod.

During the war

In 1940, I was living with my parents. On the night of 8th October, we were woken up by the chief of the gendarmes' station of the neighborhood; he was accompanied by five other individuals, one of whom was wearing a green shirt [he was a Legionary] [13](#). Claiming to be looking for subversive materials, they searched the entire house, frightening my elder brothers, and they took my father with them when they left. We went through a terrible night. Towards dawn, the chief of the station came back with other Legionaries and took my mother and myself to the station. I was 20 and my mother was 42. From the gendarmes' station, we were taken to the 27th precinct police station on Pieptanari St., opposite the Bellu cemetery [a very old cemetery in Bucharest where many personalities are buried]. There we found my father together with Mr. Goldstein and Mr. Rozentzveig, who were more or less our neighbors. The ones who were there entertained themselves by slapping us; they also had my father clean the urine in the toilet with a handkerchief. Towards noon, we were all taken to the City police prefecture, where we got separated from my mother. They took us, the 4 Jews of the neighborhood, to the basement. There my father was systematically abused: first they hit his palms with a rubber cane, then the soles of his feet, until they swelled. To make them come back to normal, they made him dance until he collapsed. Then they went on with the beating; their sole purpose was to make him give away the

names of the Communists he knew. The others were next. Towards the evening, when the abuse ended, we were taken to the third floor of the prefecture, where we found my mother and many other people who were forced to face the wall with their hands up. Meanwhile, people picked up by the Legionaries in the street kept pouring in. We stayed in that room until late at night, without food, water, sleep or the possibility to go to the toilet. Finally, an army colonel showed up. He examined each of us; he wanted to know our name, where we had been seized from and what we knew about our arrest and the abuse we had been submitted to. Shortly after he left, a commissioner came and asked us to go home.

In June 1941, after the outbreak of the anti-Soviet war, Bucharest was bombed by the Russian Air Force. The bombs hit Justitiei St., located close to 11 Iunie St., right at the foot of the Metropolitan Cathedral's Hill, a house in our neighborhood [at the outskirts of the city] and a wing of the Hospital no.9 for mental illnesses. I don't know whether there were any rumors or suspicions concerning the Jews. What's certain is that, on 22nd July 1941 [Ed. note: in observance of Order no.4599/1941 of the Internal Affairs Ministry], all the Jews in the neighborhood were gathered [by the gendarmes]. All the [male] Jews from 18 years old to the oldest age were herded inside our synagogue and in its courtyard and forced to stay there. In two or three days our group was enlarged with some other men from Giurgiului Dr., the Progresul [quarter], Pieptanari Dr., Colentina Dr., the Bucurestii Noi and the Traian quarters, and Oltenitei Dr. We were more than 60 people and we were detained there for five weeks, guarded by the gendarmes. Only family members were granted access to us. No one from the Community or the Jewish Central Organization showed any interest in our fate. I saw hunger with my own eyes, in those whose wives or mothers had nothing else to bring from home. I remember the moments when one shared with his neighbor or friend what he had got from home, and the moments when one had to hide from the others in order to secretly eat something. However, our situation got better thanks to a former [Jewish] tenant from our neighborhood named Ascher, who managed to provide us food every day at his own expense. When the late Asher, may God rest his remains and his soul, brought us the necessary food, our morale went up, humiliations disappeared, and we simply lived there under the gendarmes' watch. As I am probably the last inmate alive, I try to remember the names and occupations of those people in the camp [Ed. note: When using the term 'camp', Mr. Leinweber refers to the enclosure where the Jews were forced to live under military surveillance and which they were not allowed to leave, not a concentration/extermination camp proper], and various situations of that time.

After 5 weeks, at the end of August, an official decision [Ed. note: Order no.31200/1941 of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] freed us from the camp and put us under the authority of the Drafting Center, which sent us to various detachments; it was the beginning of the forced labor. The first detachment I was sent to was the one working at the shooting range in Bucharest; ditches had to be dug in order to allow the troops to train better. I did everything I was skilled to do: I painted beds at the Cantacuzino Hospital, in Gemeni Sq., which had actually been an employees' dispensary named 'Albert Thomas', and I made over 1,000 mattresses at the Patronage Council. At first, they taught me how to stuff the mattresses with straws, so that they could sow the sponge on the margins. I became the head of a team made up of electricians, a tailor, a shoemaker and a bootmaker. None of them was an upholsterer. The one who had taught us was the son of a Jewish upholsterer who had regained his Polish citizenship and didn't have to do forced labor. While we were looking for work, I came across engineer Maxim Branisteanu's workshop for hydrophore sets and electric engines coiling, on Magheru [Bldv.], where the subway entrance is today. I found a man there who

wasn't an engineer, but who was consulted even by engineers with a degree. He explained to me in natural, simple words, how magnetism appeared, where electricity came in and out, why the engine rotated, why its rotation was faster or slower depending on the number of coils. Thanks to his teachings, I became capable of building an engine in one day. This was like a test to me, because the things I had done as a young craftsman, as an electrician, were totally different from that. Apart from this, everyone knows what forced labor was like. If one was lucky, one got to places that weren't too harsh. This situation went on until the end of the war.

Moritz Leinweber, my brother, went to Transnistria [14](#), but his lot wasn't thrown in a concentration camp, like the people from Bessarabia and Bucovina [15](#) and those from Northern Moldavia [16](#). They remained under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Army. They were deported in 1942, which means that they spent almost 2 years there. My mother managed to send him some clothing through the liaison man at the drafting center. That character had his share of the deal, but he was a decent man, and, thanks to him, we were able to keep in touch with Moritz. The members of the lot were repatriated in an organized manner. Many of them scattered around the city of Iasi because they were afraid the Russians would seize them and send them to the front. They got to Bucharest after 23rd August [1944] [17](#), with a great delay, because they had taken detours and had traveled at night in order to avoid the Russians, who were approaching the capital too. Transnistria meant the end of my adoptive father's relatives. Uncle David was married and had a child – they all died. He had a brother – I don't know what he did for a living. I came across his wife and daughter in Haifa, in 1974 – they had survived. He also had a sister in Vatra Dornei, who died there [in Transnistria].

After the war

From 1946 until 1948 I worked as a head of the administrative service of the district committee of the Romanian Communist Party. Then I moved to the Ministry of Trade, where I worked as a financial inspector until 31st December 1951. I did these things because I was given the opportunity to. At the Ministry of Trade, I was annoyed by the primitive system of recording the materials and the lack of proper inventories, so I asked Patrascanu's [18](#) uncle, who was an accountant at the Party section of the 3rd [district], to teach me accounting by transcripts. I established a functional inventory system; for instance, if anyone were to ask what item no.10 was and where it could be found, I was able to check my records at any time and say that item no.10 was the typewriter with wide carriage and it could be found at the X division, room Y. Everything was accounted for. The Party and union leadership were impressed by these achievements, which belonged, after all, to a man who had only been to a vocational school. Following the decision of the Council of Ministers, which required that the advanced workers be turned into financial inspectors, I had to attend the financial inspectors' school for 3 months.

One day I was waiting in line at the union organization of the 3rd district. A tall individual, Ion Stoica [member of the Romanian Communist Party] asked me: 'Hey, Nicu [Ed. note: 'Nicu' is a diminutive of Arnold – Aronica, Nicu.], you live in Aparatorii Patriei, right? There used to be a family there, a brush maker who had three sons. Do you know anything about them?' – 'Of course I do, Comrade Stoica, I know them!' He couldn't believe his ears. 'When you needed my parents [Surica and Friederich Leinweber], you all came barging in; you slept and ate at our place, while I was staying in a ditch, watching your backs – in case some suspicious fellow would show up, I was ready to get you out through the corn field, so that you wouldn't get arrested. And now, after 23rd

August [1944], have you totally forgotten the people who gave you a helping hand?' They left their materials at my father's, based on nothing but trust. Someone else came to get them after a number of days, and they were hidden next to one of those old-fashioned gas lamps. The lamp stood in a vessel and the papers were placed between the lamp and the vessel. My parents were some poor old people, they had no money and no one cared about them. But they risked their freedom nonetheless... [Ed. note: Before 23rd August 1944, the Romanian Communist Party led an underground activity.]

[In the 1950's] we created a band at the ministry. The Ministry of Trade was located on Victoriei Ave., on the spot where the Bucharest Hotel lies today. We had the theater hall where the meetings were held, and we had three employees who played the instruments, plus some lad from another division, who played the violin and the piano – and the band was born. I was the drummer. We started with Russian songs – this is how everything started. My coworkers couldn't believe their eyes when they saw who played the drums – they all knew me because I was the head of the inventory and logistics department, and anyone who needed a chair, a filing cabinet, a carpet, a typewriter, pencils, paper etc. had to come to me.

In 1952, I applied for a transfer to the Public Food Trust, on a similar position. At the beginning, I worked for about three months to determine the cause of the losses reported by a fruit and vegetable store. Then I started to audit many public food trusts, which administered restaurants, pubs, confectioner's shops and their labs. I was withdrawn from this line of duty [in 1958] by the trade and finances union, who was familiar with my activity as the trade union's official in charge of cultural events in the capital. They sent me to work at the 'Spartac' Central Sporting Council, which included all the employees in trade, finances, cooperatives and the food industry. I was in charge with analyzing the financial problems which had come up in this association. As I was good at target shooting, I joined the team of the 'Spartac' Association. I competed with Iosif Sarbu, Carmen Stanescu, Herscovici, a multiple national champion, and many other worthy sportsmen that this country had in those days.

[In 1960] I returned to the ministry as a financial economist and I was transferred to the Chemical Materials Wholesale Trade Enterprise in Bucharest. I was in charge with keeping the records for all the refrigeration equipment that came from abroad. As soon as the machines crossed the border, I was supposed to know everything about their status – I was a sort of analyst. Payments were made by means of credit. When the machine reached its destination, I was informed of its receipt, and then I went to the Development Bank on Academiei St. to get the credit. Until then, I was the one who paid the interest. And so I started working with two bank accounts. I didn't have a university degree, so the state secretary issued a permit on my name. I was the only trade employee who had such a permit. For this, 200 lei were cut from my salary. I was responsible with the electronic and technical field; I purchased and sold lighting appliances – there were over 2,000 items. Some of them were interchangeable – they fit to any rod –, others were special, and I had to have some of each – irons, components and all that. I worked with about 36 suppliers and there were times when I had to sign thousands of contracts. I supplied the entire capital – this is what I did in my last 20 years of activity, until I retired, on 1st September 1980.

I met my wife while working for the Party. She was a very quiet and decent girl. Her father was rather old and they had no means of existence; they had been bombed during the war and were as poor as a church mouse. I found them living in an attic in the Lanariei quarter, on Diditel St., close

to Serban Voda [Ave.]. I met her in 1946 – I was a financial supervisor and she was an accountant. At a certain point, Comrade Secretary got me cornered: ‘Listen, when are you going to pull yourself together? When are you going to get married?’ – ‘Get married? With the money I’m making, Comrade Secretary?’ I lived with my parents, dined at the canteen and had a tea in the morning. ‘Look at me’, the secretary insisted. ‘I’m married and I have two children’. I refrained myself from reminding him that it was I who was paying for his extra money – this was our duty. There was this saying: ‘Who will climb the barricades in the name of the revolution?’ – ‘The activists.’ – ‘Who are the activists?’ – ‘The members of the district’s Party bureau!’ We, the others, were cattle; we were nothing compared to them, the seven hotshots, the great Party officials of the district. They would get bonuses, benefits, all sorts of assistance loans that were never paid back. So I shut up. But I had to admit that bachelorhood wasn’t a good idea. So I started looking for a wife. I searched in the 27th precinct, in the Progresul quarter, in the 26th, 23rd and 24th precincts, at this or that factory, but I couldn’t find someone right for me. I met quite a number of girls at balls and parties – we all had our balls and parties. So I narrowed the area of my search and I got to the Party staff and to my administrative department – and then I saw my accountant from a new perspective. We both left to attend a meeting at the City’s Party bureau, and I dragged her into a cinema against her protest. ‘Comrade Nicu, we can’t be doing this! Let’s go back!’ – ‘Oh, forget about them, they’ll wait for us. Right now, let’s see a movie!’ And this is how the courtship began.

My wife, Melania Leinweber [nee Reischer], was born in Roman, in 1926. She had three siblings: Herman Reischer, Iancu Reischer and Rebeca Saper [nee Reischer]. Herman worked as a photographer in Focsani, then he went to Israel, where he was a cook on a ship, and he died in a sanitarium. The younger brother worked at the ‘Vulcan’ [Plant in Bucharest], and then he left for Israel, where he worked with the lathe in Haifa. He died a tradesman there. Rebeca died in 1996, in Israel. Melania went to high school and became an accountant. It was with difficulty that we managed to have a child together – she miscarried several times. She spent three months and a half in bed when she gave birth. She worked as an accountant for the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party until she had the baby, and then she moved to a food store. When I was in high school [evening classes], she used to translate to me book fragments from Latin or French into Romanian. She had a good reputation, so the Ministry of Light Industry appointed her head of a millinery department. Then she moved to the knitwear and ready-made clothes department, where she was in charge with all the centers countrywide. Knitwear contracting was her responsibility – she had become an expert. She retired in 1981.

My ‘dowry’ consisted of a blanket and an eiderdown that I had made myself, and some sheets and pillows given by my mother. My wife didn’t bring anything – they had lost their house in a bombing. According to the law, when people got married, they got an extra salary. With our money combined, we bought a wardrobe, a lousy carpet, a desk, an electric lamp and a gas lamp, and this is how we started our home. Since I was a Party activist, we occupied half of an apartment – we had a living room that measured 3 meters by 3 and a half, a bathroom, a kitchen, and we shared the hallway with someone else. It was at 14 Unirii Embankment, opposite the Morgue. Now there’s a large apartment house there. After my wife gave birth [in 1949], my father-in-law died, and my mother-in-law came to live with us. We never had any spare time. Money wasn’t enough. The cost of living went up, so I, the great economist, had to work at home to make some extra money – electric work and some hand-made objects. We put a small bed at the entrance, as if we had a common bedroom; and there was also the baby’s crib. In the morning, we took it out in the

hallway. I asked the union for a place to live and I got one on Sfantul Gheorghe St. We didn't have a bathroom, only a toilet with a small sink, and a kitchen. Such were our living conditions. But at least we had a large room for us and our little girl and her iron bed. My mother-in-law's bed was in the living room. My wife was assigned a three-room apartment in the Balta Alba [quarter]. It had two bathrooms. We purchased it [after the revolution], but I had to sell it [later], because I was unable to pay the utilities.

My wife and I rarely went on vacation together because our vacations weren't at the same time or we had to work extra. We went to Sangeorz, to Eforie once, to Neptun once, to Slanic Moldova once. From Neptun, she came back with a broken leg, but she recovered. We also went to Buzias, Borsec, Brasov. When in Tusnad, she became ill with aneurism. My wife died in Bucharest, in 1990.

Victoria [their only child] was born in 1949. She went to the kindergarten on Zamfirescu St. She loved to dance. She went to elementary school on Mantuleasa St. and to high school on Mosilor Ave. She chose the Transportation Faculty, where she was among the top ten students. Her final average was over 9, and she got a 10 at the graduation exam. She was assigned as an intern in Brasov, to prepare her graduation exam. They were glad to have her there and treated her with respect, but she wouldn't stay. So the minister of light industry talked to the minister of transportation and the latter ordered the research institute on Grivitei Ave. to hire her. I'm not saying those people were anti-Semites, maybe they were just bad – in any case, they didn't want her there. She had to pass another exam: she was given a railroad station in Brasov and she had to establish the quality of the terrain, the goods and the passenger traffic in Brasov – an economical analysis. In college, she had got a 10 on a similar topic. [Ed. note: In the Romanian grades system, the highest grade is 10, while the minimum grade required not to fail is 5.] But those guys gave her an 8 because she didn't know how the goods containers were fixed. I told her: 'No matter how high your grades were in college, no matter how skillful and competent you are, you have to be better than a man. Remember this, in order to be accepted as a woman, you must prove extraordinary qualities, that aren't required from a man!' She became a head of department at the financial division – markets and prices analysis. When she was sick, the manager called her home to ask her what to do – the people there didn't know, they had all been taught by her. She was a real expert. She also had research contracts with the ministry. She was very friendly, she was a good organizer, she was competent and took her position seriously. She rebelled against injustice, she was very outspoken. I tried to determine her to be more balanced, more careful – I knew it was because of my straightforwardness that I hadn't been able to gain management positions. After she got married [in the 1980's, to a Christian], her name became Niculescu. She died from a pancreatic cancer on 30th December 1993. She is buried at the Giurgiului [Jewish cemetery] in Bucharest. I have a grandson, Daniel Niculescu, aged 21.

I confess I gradually became an atheist. But I am still a man who loves and respects people. My parents-in-law, my parents, my relatives who stayed in Romania, my mother's cousins and their wives, my first degree cousins, they are all buried at the Giurgiului cemetery. Only my biological father and Aunt Matilda, my mother's eldest sister, are buried at the Filantropia cemetery. When I visit their tombs, I recite the Kaddish, of course, but this is a formality which doesn't help at anything – it is about tradition, about one's feelings, about one's paying respect to the memory of the people whom one knew and loved. The Judaic religion so many rules concerning human relations and hygiene, and the kashrut leads straight to absurdity. There is a difference between

cooking in a vessel that had milk in it and cooking in the milk vessel or the meat vessel; then you must have a whole different set of vessels for Passover. If you don't, you must boil them with sodium carbonate to make them clean. You mustn't eat bread, but only matzah – I mean all this seems a little extreme to me. I had an argument with one of my father's cousins in Israel. I called him without realizing it was Friday night, and his wife picked up and told me he was at the synagogue. The following day, he told me: 'Well, Nicu, you committed a great sin. You called me and my wife had to answer the phone!' - 'Yes, I did that. And you are so right', I said ironically, 'I committed a huge sin, I used the phone and you didn't answer!' And I asked him: 'Do you take your wife out for a walk on Saturday?' - 'Sure I do.' - 'So this means you should leave your door unlocked; and if you feel the need to go to the toilet, you should refrain yourself. If your wife's answering the phone was a sin, so is locking the door on Saturday, flushing the toilet, eating, doing anything, right?' This is all absurd in the year 2000.

No matter where they are born, people are helpless in their fight against nature, so they feel the psychological need for some support, and this is God. But everyone has a god: Buddhists, Adventists, Christians, Muslims, Pentecostals, Protestants, Lutherans, you name it. We, the Jews, stuck together because of our 'Next year in Jerusalem!' and the persecutions, which forced us to be united; morally united, because, from a material perspective, every man had his own tent. We are the people of the Bible, those who passed the 10 Commandments on to the world through Moses, the one who spent I don't know how many days on the mountain and broke the plates against their heads when he found the idol they were worshipping. These commandments were the source for Napoleon's code, the judicial code that was adopted by everyone. This and many other wonders were possible thanks to the Jews, these people who knew how to keep their history by means of the word. So I am not religious, but I am a Jew. The Torah ceremony is a historical event. When entering the sukkah, people celebrate their harvest. The oil that kept the candle burning created the Hanukkah, another moment of joy, the holiday of light, which Rosen [19](#) used to create the Hanukiad – something that astonished all those foreigners, who came here to see what it was all about. [Ed. note: The Hanukiad is the name that Mrs. Moses Rosen gave to the tour encompassing the Jewish communities in Romania, which was created in the 1970's, on Hanukkah. Foreign guests were invited to these visits that were organized by the leadership of the Jewish community.] Rosen himself said we don't have a religion, but a tradition which we observe: the tradition of food, the tradition of relations between people, the tradition of celebrating some events. Man needs to cling to something, he needs some moral support, and I respect that.

In 1948 [when the State of Israel was created], there was joy, there was enthusiasm, there was momentum. I was surprised – Sada had come to Jerusalem, to the Knesset, to make peace. I was in hospital at the time; I avoided having a stomach operation. This is how I felt when I first went to Israel [Mr. Leinweber reads one of his own poems]: 'I once descended from a plane / And a porter sitting by the stairs greeted me: Shalom. / This made me feel human, / A special human being, wrapped in the warmth of this word. / Shalom, this welcome word tickled my heart and my feet. / (Why was I so moved?) I stepped upon your holy land full of history / A land that was longed / By a Diaspora that has always wanted / To have its own country, in days good and bad. / You welcomed many and held them up in your arms / Together you erected what many others failed to erect. / Your creation, a paradise on Earth, and the one on Mount Sinai / Bear the flag of Zion / Which will for ever wave. / Shalom.' ['De pe scara unui avion candva am coborat / Si un hamal ce langa el statea mi-a spus Salom! / Eu am simtit ca sunt un om, / Eram un om mai deosebit, caldura ta m-a

invaluit. / Salom!/ Acest cuvânt de intampinare eu l-am simțit în suflet și picioare./ (De ce am fost emotionat?) Paseam pe al tău pământ plin de istorie și sfânt, / Un pământ ce a fost dorit / De o Diaspora ce a voit / Mereu să aibă țara ei la bine și la greu. / Pe mulți tu i-ai îmbrățișat și cu căldură i-ai ridicat. / Împreună ați clădit ce mulți alți n-au izbutit. / Creatia ta, gura de rai și cea de pe Sinai / Poarta standardul cu Zion / Și flutură în veci / Șalom.'] My feet got soft. I couldn't walk and I felt a sort of drowsiness; I couldn't control myself. I felt the same in front of the Western Wall. Only thinking of it makes me feel excited. It's as if something were falling upon you, pressing and squeezing you, then lifting you up into the air. It's hard to explain. And we wonder why people cry there – a surface in a mere square.

Why didn't we move there? We were about 40 years old, our girl was in high school, so her education was a problem. My wife was a brilliant, highly respected clerk at the ministry. What was she to do down there? Be a maid? Who needed an accountant who didn't speak Ivrit? Besides, neither my wife nor my daughter could cope with heat. When summer came, we stayed indoors. Our house was cool and we felt good in it. We would lock ourselves in to prevent people from bothering us. 'We're leaving! We're not leaving! We're leaving!' There was a certain state of mind that pressured you to leave, to let yourself be carried away by the wave. We had an iron door on the outside and we would shut it to make people believe we had left and live in peace. I saw everything there was to see in Israel – beautiful girls and all that –, but only as a tourist. It's hard to live there, with all the scumbags from Vacaresti Ave. and Ducești Ave. who became successful, while the competent people who believed in moral values struggled with poverty until they got on their feet a little.

Our relatives from abroad wrote to my mother. All those who left, both those from my father's side of the family and her own, had first passed through her place. So she had all their addresses. When I went to Israel, in 1974, I took all those addresses, plus those of the people from the old neighborhood. Some put me in contact with others, so I managed to visit around 50 families of relatives, acquaintances and friends. I got to 75 [families] in 1977. I would go on my own and was a surprise to them. When I went to Israel with my wife, in 1981, I couldn't do the same thing – I had to take her with me in my visits, so I didn't manage to tackle as many families as before. The last time I went there was in 1996. I knew many had died in the meantime. I came back a sad man.

My mail was read [by the Securitate] [20](#), but I didn't mind. I once wrote that my girl had been courted by a police captain. He was a crime investigator at the police station in the Balta Albă quarter, where we lived, and they had met in the trolley-bus. The man was examined. 'You know', he told me, 'they started asking questions about my planning to get married!' He was kept under surveillance by the Securitate officers from the police station – they knew everything about him, because it was their duty to keep an eye on their personnel. In order to arrange for their marriage, I had to go to Aneta Spornic, a former minister of education. 'What have you got against this boy? He fell in love with a girl whose father was a Party activist, whose grandfather was involved in revolutionary activities, and whose step-grandfather, Leinweber, risked his freedom to host outstanding Party figures who are now ministers!'

I listened to the Radio Free Europe [21](#) and kept myself informed. Considering myself an honest and fair man, I couldn't accept the humiliation of people who had to stay in line to buy bread. In order to buy cheese and meat, one had to queue up in the evening to make sure he'll get something the following day. People didn't buy what they wanted, but whatever was available. I felt frustrated.

Had such things happened during the bourgeois regime, the Communists wouldn't have accepted them and would have urged the people to rebel. But if you protested, you were seized immediately and sent to cleaning windows or wiping floors, or put under arrest.

The old Aparatorii Patriei quarter disappeared in the 1980's. A sea of apartment houses lies today in the area that was used for farming. The place where our house used to be is now surrounded by new buildings and streets. I, who spent my childhood in the middle of nature, inhaled fresh air and saw the starry sky, confess I still miss it. None of the buildings I knew survived. Everything was demolished during Ceausescu's regime and new buildings were erected to accommodate more people who came from outside than people from the neighborhood. The terrain was cleared by the demolition [22](#) of the modest houses, which had small courtyards and orchards. My mother was given a studio somewhere on [Ion] Sulea [Dr.], in the Energeticienilor quarter. Then I took her at my place, because she couldn't live alone anymore. And so, the people of the old neighborhood scattered around and they lost track of one another.

I thanked God when they killed Ceausescu. I would have shot him myself for having betrayed the confidence of honest people like myself and many other Jews who had joined the communist camp to give a helping hand, but were later removed. After [the revolution of] 1989, little changed. My wife, who was ill, died, my daughter got ill and died, I remained alone and I got ill. I went to visit my brother [in Germany], but his economic situation made me come back.

I had no part in the Jewish life after the war – I was too busy with my work and didn't have time for such things. I asked for the support of our social assistance center when my mother-in-law broke her femoral bone and I needed to hire someone to look after her. As I was ill, I was only working four hours a day, and so was my wife. Our daughter was in high school and we just couldn't cope from an economical point of view anymore. There was this young man at the social assistance center, who also worked with Rosen. He positively reviewed my mother-in-law's file, so she got the support she needed. When my wife died, Amalia [Rabbi Moses Rosen's wife] came to me and gave me some money. When I remained alone and my retirement pension wasn't enough anymore, I ate at the canteen. I became an assisted man, I received medical care and medicines, and a financial aid in fall [in the 1990's], which came at the right time. I had a heart attack in 1993 and I stayed at the Caritas [Hospital]. When I got better, I was sent home with an expensive treatment that I still use today. I had signed up for Cristian [a retreat of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania located in the Brasov County], but my heart attack made them erase me from the list. I needed some rest after the 40 days spent in hospital, so I talked to Wiener, who's a decent man. Since then, I have gone to Cristian every year. As a token of gratitude for their work, I dedicated occasional poems to them. Now I hear they added them to my file. When I asked why, they told me 'Why not? Just in case.'

I have no future here anymore. My future is my eternal resting place, next to my mother, my father, my wife, my daughter, my mother-in-law, my mother's cousins and my own cousins. I'm too weak to go to the Filantropia [Jewish cemetery] now – I have to stop and rest three times before I get there, because my legs hurt, my pelvis hurts, my joints hurt. Only my mouth is all right – I say whatever crosses my mind. I used to look at my adoptive father – at 82, he was a wreck, he forgot things, he used a walking stick. I still have a lucid mind, I write poetry, I talk to our 'younger' members at the daytime center. I make mascots using white, gray and beige fur. I make puppies, lions, monkeys. I was born here and I lived here, and, despite all the persecutions, I remained a

man of this land. I have notebooks full of poems: lyrical, for children, about nature, and patriotic poems. I am now working at my stellar poems – I have 30 poems about the stars, the sky, the comets and all that. Try to identify yourself in here: ‘You look around you cautiously, / But let your heart speak, / When you walk, your body shivers, and you feel it grow complete, / You wait for the kiss that rests on your lips to be stolen, / You want to replace time with your swinging thighs, / Your heart is tense and you feel like tearing its garment. / The night’s warm wind gives you the thrills, / Your face is burning as the wind surrounds you, / ‘tis love and innocence that you bring along with you on the path of life, / You’re like the morning dew under the ray of the sun.’ [‘Privesti in jur prudenta, / Dar inimii dai glas, / Pasesti vibrandu-ti trupul, ce simti cum se implineste, / Iti vrei furat sarutul ce gura il odihneste / Cu coapse in leganare, sa inlocuiesti vrei timpul, / Ti-i inima in incordare si ai vrea sa-i rupi vesmantul, / Te simti infiorata sub vantul cald de seara, / Arati imbujorata privind cum te inconjoara, / Aduci pe drumul vietii iubire si candoare / Ca roua diminetii sub razele de soare.’]

Glossary

1 Cajal, Nicolae (1919-2004)

President of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania between 1994 and 2004. PhD in medical sciences, microbiologist and virologist, he wrote over 400 scientific papers in virology, with important original contributions. He was the head of the Virology Department of the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacology in Bucharest, a member of the Romanian Academy as well as numerous prestigious international societies, and an independent senator in the Romanian Parliament between 1990 and 1992.

2 Partidul Socialist (The Socialist Party)

In November 1918, the Social-Democrat Party changed its name to the Socialist Party and adopted a new platform entitled ‘Declaration of Principles’. The document stated that the Socialist Party was ‘a class party inspired by the ideas of scientific Socialism, aiming at abolishing all form of exploitation of labor’, that it fought for political power and the instauration of the workingmen’s dictatorship ‘in order to achieve the communist ideal’. The central press organ of the party was entitled ‘Socialismul’. In 1920, the Statute of the Socialist Party was adopted, and the process of unifying the Romanian workers’ movement intensified. At the convention in May 1921, the decision was made to turn the Socialist Party into the Romanian Communist Party.

3 Siguranta Generala a Statului (The State General Security)

Created as a result of the Law for the organization of the Internal Affairs Ministry of 20th June 1913, it was subordinated to the Department of Police and General Security. It was the main secret agency whose duty was to collect and use intelligence that was relevant for the protection of the State security. It was composed of two departments: the Data Department (central body which gathered and synthesized intelligence) and the Special Security Brigades (territorial bodies in charge of field operations and counter-espionage). In 1929, the Security Police Department was restructured into two services: the Intelligence Service and the Foreigners Control Service.

4 The Romanian Communist Party in the interwar period

The Romanian Communist Party was born on 11th May 1921, by laying the Socialist Party on communist bases, as a result of the decision taken at its convention. Its joining the 3rd International, which placed it under Moscow's orders, determined the response of the Romanian home security forces. The following conventions of the Party (Ploiesti, 1922, Vienna, 1924) maintained the affiliation with the Communist International and established that the fight to separate some Romanian provinces from the State territory was a priority. The Vienna convention chose Elek Koblos as secretary general. Until 1944, this position was held by Romanian citizens belonging to minority groups (Boris Stefanov, Stefan Foris) or by foreign citizens (Vitali Holostenko, Alexander Danieluc Stefanski), because it was believed that Romanians didn't have a strong revolutionary spirit and nationalistic inclinations. In 1924, the 'Marzescu law' was passed. The activities of the party became illegal, and its members went underground.

5 Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989)

Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of nationalism and non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries. The internal political, economic and social situation was marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police. The Ceausescu regime was marked by disastrous economic schemes and became increasingly repressive and corrupt. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, which made everyday life unbearable. In December 1989 a popular uprising, joined by the army, led to the arrest and execution of both Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, who had been deputy Prime Minister since 1980.

6 România Mare (new)

In the early 20th century, almost half of the Romanians lived under foreign rule, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Bukovina and Transylvania) and in Russia (Bessarabia). With a view to fulfilling the national ideal, Romania joined the Entente, in 1916, during the reign of King Ferdinand I (1914-1927). As a result of the national liberation struggle, of the military defeats and other events, the big empires collapsed at the end of World War I. In 1918, democratically elected bodies with a parliamentary role decided on the union of the Romanian provinces with the Kingdom of Romania: in Kishinev, they decided Bessarabia's union with the mother-country on April 9, in Cernăuți they decided Bukovina's union on November 28, and Transylvania's union with Romania was decided in Alba Iulia on December 1. It was a great achievement, won at the cost of sacrifices made by many generations and about 800,000 casualties in World War I. In 1919-1920, the peace treaties signed in France sanctioned the new Romania, which comprised all the Romanian territories within its borders.

7 Ulpan

word in Hebrew that designates teaching, instruction and studio. It is a Hebrew-language course compulsory in Israel for newcomers, which rapidly teaches adults basic Hebrew skills, including speaking, reading, writing and comprehension, along with the fundamentals of Israeli culture, history, geography, and civics. In addition to teaching Hebrew, the ulpan aims to help newcomers

integrate as easily as possible into Israel's social, cultural and economic life.

8 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.

9 King Carol I

1839-1914, Ruler of Romania (1866-1881) and King of Romania (1881-1914). He signed with Austro-Hungary a political-military treaty (1883), to which adhered Germany and Italy, linking this way Romania to The Central Powers. Under his kingship the Independence War of Romania (1877) took place. He insisted on Romania joining World War I on Germany and Austro-Hungary's side.

10 King Ferdinand I

1865-1927, King of Romania (1914-1927). He supported Romania's engaging in World War I on the side of the Entente, against the Central Powers, thus putting the interest of the nation beyond his own German origin. The disintegration of empires in the aftermath of the war made it possible for several provinces to unite with Romania in 1918, after a democratic referendum: Bessarabia (in April), Bucovina (in November) and Transylvania (in December). On 15th October 1922, Ferdinand was crowned king of the Great Romania at the Reunification Cathedral in Alba Iulia, a symbol of the unification of all the Romanian provinces under the rule of a single monarch.

11 Numerus clausus in Romania

In 1934 a law was passed, according to which 80 % of the employees in any firm had to be Romanians by ethnic origin. This established a numerus clausus in private firms, although it did not only concerned Jews but also Hungarians and other Romanian citizens of non-Romanian ethnic origin. In 1935 the Christian Lawyers' Association was founded with the aim of revoking the licenses of Jewish lawyers who were already members of the bar and did not accept new registrations. The creation of this association gave an impetus to anti-Semitic professional associations all over Romania. At universities the academic authorities supported the numerus clausus program, introducing entrance examinations, and by 1935/36 this led to a considerable decrease in the number of Jewish students. The leading Romanian banks began to reject requests for credits from Jewish banks and industrial and commercial firms, and Jewish enterprises were burdened with heavy taxes. Many Jewish merchants and industrialists had to sell their firms at a loss when they became unprofitable under these oppressive measures.

12 Cultura Jewish High School in Bucharest

The Cultura School was founded in Bucharest in 1898, with the support of philanthropist Max Azriel. It operated until 1948, when education reform dissolved all Jewish schools and forced the Jewish

students to attend public schools. It was originally an elementary school that taught the national curriculum plus some classes in Hebrew and German. Around 1910, the Cultura Commercial High School and Intermediate School were founded. They ranked among the best educational institutions in Bucharest. Apart from Jewish children from the quarters Dudesti, Vacaresti, Mosilor or Grivita, non-Jewish students also attended these schools because of the institutions' good reputation.

13 Legionary

Member of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Legionary Movement, founded in 1927 by C. Z. Codreanu. This extremist, nationalist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic movement aimed at excluding those whose views on political and racial matters were different from theirs. The Legion was organized in so-called nests, and it practiced mystical rituals, which were regarded as the way to a national spiritual regeneration by the members of the movement. These rituals were based on Romanian folklore and historical traditions. The Legionaries founded the Iron Guard as a terror organization, which carried out terrorist activities and political murders. The political twin of the Legionary Movement was the Totul pentru Tara (Everything for the Fatherland) that represented the movement in parliamentary elections. The followers of the Legionary Movement were recruited from young intellectuals, students, Orthodox clericals, peasants. The movement was banned by King Carol II in 1938.

14 Transnistria

Area situated between the Bug and Dniester rivers and the Black Sea. The term is derived from the Romanian name for the Dniester (Nistru) and was coined after the occupation of the area by German and Romanian troops in World War II. After its occupation Transnistria became a place for deported Romanian Jews. Systematic deportations began in September 1941. In the course of the next two months, all surviving Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina and a small part of the Jewish population of Old Romania were dispatched across the Dniester. This first wave of deportations reached almost 120,000 by mid-November 1941 when it was halted by Ion Antonescu, the Romanian dictator, upon intervention of the Council of Romanian Jewish Communities. Deportations resumed at the beginning of the summer of 1942, affecting close to 5,000 Jews. A third series of deportations from Old Romania took place in July 1942, affecting Jews who had evaded forced labor decrees, as well as their families, communist sympathizers and Bessarabian Jews who had been in Old Romania and Transylvania during the Soviet occupation. The most feared Transnistrian camps were Vapniarka, Ribnita, Berezovka, Tulcin and Iampol. Most of the Jews deported to camps in Transnistria died between 1941-1943 because of horrible living conditions, diseases and lack of food.

15 Bukovina

Historical region, located East of the Carpathian Mountain range, bordering with Transylvania, Galicia and Moldova. In 1775 it became a Habsburg territory as a consequence of the Kuchuk-Kainarji Treaty (1774) between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empire. After the fall of Austria-Hungary Bukovina was annexed to Romania (1920). In 1939 a non-aggression pact was signed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), which also meant dividing Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of interest. Taking advantage of the pact, the

Soviet Union claimed in an ultimatum from 1940 some of the Romanian territories. Romania was forced to renounce Bessarabia and Northern-Bukovina, including Czernowitz (Cernauti, Chernovtsy). Bukovina was characterized by ethnic and religious pluralism; the ethnic communities included Germans, Poles, Jews, Hungarians, Ukrainians and Romanians, the most dominant religious persuasions were Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. In 1930 some 93,000 Jews lived in Bukovina, which was 10,9% of the entire population.

16 Moldova

Historic region between the Eastern Carpathians, the Dniester River and the Black Sea, also a contemporary state, bordering with Romania and Ukraine. Moldova was first mentioned after the end of the Mongol invasion in 14th century scripts as Eastern marquisate of the Hungarian Kingdom. For a long time, the Principality of Moldova was tributary of either Poland or Hungary until the Ottoman Empire took possession of it in 1512. The Sultans ruled Moldova indirectly by appointing the Prince of Moldova to govern the vassal principality. These were Moldovan boyars until the early 18th century and Greek (Phanariot) ones after. In 1812 Tsar Alexander I occupied the eastern part of Moldova (between the Prut and the Dniester river and the Black Sea) and attached it to its Empire under the name of Bessarabia. In 1859 the remaining part of Moldova merged with Wallachia. In 1862 the new country was called Romania, which was finally internationally recognized at the Treaty of Berlin in 1886. Bessarabia united with Romania after World War I, and was recaptured by the Soviet Union in 1940. The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic gained independence after the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and is now called Moldovan Republic (Republica Moldova).

17 23 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.

18 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.

19 Rosen, Moses (1912-1994)

Chief Rabbi of Romania and president of the Association of Jewish Religious Communities during communism. A controversial figure of the postwar Romanian Jewish public life. On the one hand he was criticized because of his connections with several leaders of the Romanian communist regime, on the other hand even his critics recognized his great efforts in the interest of Romanian Jews. He

was elected chief rabbi of Romania in 1948 and fulfilled this function till his death in 1994. During this period he organized the religious and cultural education of Jewish youth and facilitated the emigration to Israel by using his influence. His efforts made possible the launch of the only Romanian Jewish newspaper, *Revista Cultului Mozaic* (*Realitatea Evreiască* after 1995) in 1956. As the leader of Romanian Israelites he was a permanent member of the Romanian Parliament from 1957-1989. He was member of the Executive Board of the Jewish World Congress. His works on Judaist issues were published in Romanian, Hebrew and English.

20 Securitate (in Romanian)

DGSP - Direcția generală a Securității 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.

21 Radio Free Europe

The radio station was set up by the National Committee for a Free Europe, an American organization, funded by Congress through the CIA, in 1950 with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features from Munich to countries behind the Iron Curtain. The programs were produced by Central and Eastern European émigré editors, journalists and moderators. The radio station was jammed behind the Iron Curtain, team members were constantly harassed and several people were killed in terrorist attacks by the KGB. Radio Free Europe played a role in supporting dissident groups, inner resistance and will of freedom in communist countries behind the Iron Curtain and thus it contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of Central and Eastern Europe.

22 Systematic demolitions

The passing of the Law for the Systematization of Towns and Villages in 1974 incited a large-scale demolition of Romanian towns and villages. The great earthquake of 4th March 1977 damaged many buildings and was seen as a justification for the demolition of many monuments. By the end of 1989, the time of the fall of the Ceausescu regime, at least 29 towns had been completely restructured, 37 were in the process of being restructured, and the rural systematization had claimed its first toll: some demolished villages north of Bucharest. Between 1977 and 1989, Bucharest was at the mercy of the dictator, whose mere gestures were interpreted as direct orders and could lead to the immediate disappearance of certain houses or certain areas. Old houses and quarters, the so-called imperialist-capitalist architecture, had to vanish in order to make room for the great urban achievements of Socialism as it competed with the USSR and North Korea.