

# Ticu Goldstein

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Bucharest

Romania

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Interviewer: Georgeta Pana



Ticu Goldstein is a man of a very agreeable nature. He is a genuine intellectual, a bonhomous individual, and one of the most active scholars of the Jewish community in Bucharest. He translated into Romanian scores of works of the Judaic literature and philosophy, including Moshe Idel's *Mistica si mesianism* [Mystics and Messianism] (1997), Alexandru Safran's *Intelepciunea cabalei* [The Wisdom of the Kabbalah] (1998), Carol Iancu's *Emanciparea evreilor din Romania* [The Emancipation of the Romanian Jews] (1999) and Emanuel Levinas' *Dificila libertate* [The Difficult Freedom] (1999). He lectured and held scientific presentations on Levinas' philosophy, the Kabbalah etc. and contributed (and still contributes) articles to Israeli and Romanian periodicals like *Revista cultului mozaic* [The Magazine of the Mosaic Cult], *Realitatea evreiasca* [The Jewish Reality], *Observatorul cultural* [The Cultural Observer] or *Minimum*. He lives with his wife in the Dorobanti quarter, in a peaceful and green neighborhood. Their apartment is decorated with good taste. Here and there one can spot traditional Romanian and Russian objects, but also Judaic religious objects. However, what catches the attention most are the books. They are Mr. Goldstein's greatest treasure.

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## **My family background**

All I know about my maternal grandparents is that they were named Iancu and Rebeca Tobias. My grandfather was born in Piatra Neamt, and my grandmother in Bacau. Grandfather Tobias was a tailor and taught my mother this trade. Both my grandfather and my grandmother were religious, traditionalist people; they used Yiddish at home, but they spoke Romanian pretty well too. I don't know the names of their brothers and sisters.

One more thing I know about my mother's side of the family is that they were better off than my father's family. Some cousins of hers from Piatra Neamt named Pescaru (my grandfather's nephews) owned some restaurants in that Moldavian town. There were also some lawyers, journalists and artists in my mother's family. I only remember one of them, named Ionel Tapu, one of her cousins. He was an artist in the proper sense of the word. He played the violin and was very

talented, so the family sent him to study in Paris and supported him with great financial efforts. But he was a Bohemian and the only thing he acquired in Paris was a new violin. He came back at the end of the 1930s and gave up the violin for the drums. He was hired by the most important variety theater in the country, the Carabus-Savoy in Bucharest. He went on tours across the entire world with them. But in 1941, he was kicked out of the theater, like all the Jews for that matter. During the war he was able to play at the Jewish Baraseum Theater, in the Capital. After the war, he was hired by the prestigious Orchestra of the Radio Broadcasting Company. [Ed. note: The Jewish theater in Bucharest was founded around 1890 and constituted a permanent presence in the artistic life of the Capital. In 1941, when Jewish actors were forbidden to perform on other stages, they found refuge at the Baraseum, where they put on very popular variety shows.] The funny thing about him was that he had his family write his partitions. His entire family worked for him. He had a daughter, Virginica, who left for America after the war.

My mother had a brother, named Tobias Iules. Uncle Iules lived in Bacau, where he owned a pub. The place was called 'The Fair Horse'. In the interwar period, when our material situation gradually deteriorated, Uncle Iules would send us supplies: little barrels with cheese, olives and sausages. Even though he had a better material situation, he had the time to think about his sister's problems and helped her the best way he could. I know that when the war came, he was already married to Silvia, a Jewish woman of an exceptional inborn intelligence. In 1940 or 1941, they wanted to leave for Russia, but they were told at the border that things were very serious there and that it was risky for them to go on. So they came back. After the war they made aliyah to Israel, settled in a kibbutz and took up high performance agriculture. I kept in touch with them even under the communist regime, when sending letters abroad was difficult. Iules and Silvia had a son, Felix. He was an officer in the Israeli army and fought in the war of 1967. My son bears his name.

My mother, Tobias Surica, was born in 1895, in Piatra Neamt. Unfortunately, her mother died at her birth, so she was raised by an aunt of mine, Tipora, my mother's sister. Her father was a tailor in Piatra Neamt. It was him who taught her this craft, which she exercised with great ability, especially in the times when our family's financial situation was precarious. In 1920, she left for Bucharest on her own, to find a job. It was a matchmaker who helped her meet my father. In 1922, he was serving in the army, and they got married before he had gone out. First they got engaged, on 3rd June 1922. A few months later, they became husband and wife. They had a Jewish wedding, before the rabbi, under the kippah, but they also went to the civil authorities. The party took place in a house on Romulus St. My mother kept in touch with the matchmaker who had introduced my father to her. I remember they would sometimes meet and talk about family, hardships and children. Although their union was arranged, my parents got along with each other very well all the time. They respected each other and had an enduring marriage.

My paternal grandfather, Goldstein Simon, was born in Husi, towards the end of the 19th century. I know he was very religious, devout even; he wouldn't let himself be photographed, because he thought this would mean breaking the commandment not to have idols. The only picture of him had been taken without him being aware of it. Unfortunately, that picture was lost. I know for sure that his native tongue was Yiddish; but he also spoke Romanian. He lived and worked all his life in Husi. He was a tailor. I don't know anything about other relatives of his, and I know very little about my father's brothers and sisters. I do remember a sister of his, Adela, who was born in Husi and who emigrated to Canada together with her husband and children, before World War II began.

Adela was moderately religious: she celebrated the holidays and went to the synagogue once in a while. I can't remember the names of her children. I think her husband's first name was Ilie, but I couldn't tell what his surname was. Simona was another sister of my father's. She left for America at the end of the 1930s, and she wanted to take us with her. But the break of the war was near and nobody wanted the Jews anymore. My father had a brother, Lupu Goldstein, whose original name was Wolf. He was born in Husi, and settled in Dorohoi. During the war, he was deported together with his wife and three children to Transnistria [1](#). They all survived and left for Israel immediately after the war. Unfortunately, there is little information about my relatives, and I'm the first to feel sorry for this. My father's family was poor and was mostly made up of craftsmen: carpenters, joiners, clocksmiths. Still, we used to keep in touch with them, although many of them had a lot to suffer because of the authorities of the Antonescu regime [2](#) during World War II.

My father, Lazar Goldstein, was born in Husi in 1900. His only education consisted of four elementary grades, as he had to start earning his living at an early age. He left his home at about 18 and ended up in Bucharest. I don't know who taught him carpentry, but he was very skilled. He owned a workshop in Bucharest, where he had two apprentices. He was very industrious and persevering and valued a thing that was well crafted. He made the pieces of furniture all the way from the beginning to the end. He often worked for important people, like the writer Liviu Rebreanu [Liviu Rebreanu (1885-1944): Romanian prose writer and playwright, author of significant social novels such as *Ion*, *Rascoala - The Uprising -*, and *Padurea spanzuratilor - The Forest of the Hanged.*] or the prominent politician Armand Calinescu [Armand Calinescu (1893-1939): president of the Ministers' Council, an anti-Nazi and anti-Legionary figure, advocate of the alliance with France and England; he had the courage to tell King Carol II, in 1939, that 'the Germans are a danger and an alliance with them equals a protectorate'. He was assassinated by the Legionaries on 21st September 1939, in Bucharest.]. The house and the workshop were in fact one and the same thing, and my mother would get upset because the house was full of sawdust. My father would have liked all the family to help him in his work, as the two apprentices weren't always there. I used to help him pretty often. Although I was only 10, I was familiar with timber and I enjoyed the smell of new furniture. My job was to polish the furniture. It was no easy job, for, if my arm got tired, I had to quickly remove the brush imbued with chemical substances from the piece of furniture, lest it should imprint itself and burn the material.

At a certain point, my father lost the workshop, because he didn't manage to pay his taxes. So one beautiful spring day, some people from the police and the city hall came. They were beating this huge drum, reading aloud the decision that empowered them to take my father's workshop away from him. It was a scene worthy of the Middle Ages. After that, my father became a free-lance worker. He would usually go to his customers' places. Our situation went from bad to worse and my mother was forced to start working as a tailor (a trade she had learnt from her father in her childhood).

My mother took care of everything at home: washing, cleaning, looking after the children and my father, as we could never afford a nurse or a maid - there never was any question about that. She would dress according to the fashion of the time and had the advantage of being able to make her own dresses. On holidays, after preparing the house for the celebration of Pesach, Purim or Chanukkah, my mother would go to the Choral Temple, not to the Malbim Synagogue, where my father used to go. She loved to go there because she wanted to see other people and to be seen by

other people. The Choral Temple was a place where friendships and relationships would be started more easily... We, the children, would play in the synagogue's courtyard or would send kisses to our acquaintances who were up in the balcony. Every year on Yom Kippur, my mother would say: 'Oh, what an easy fast we had this year'. It was obvious she had a lot of practice in the field of fasting. My brother and I would sometimes eat surreptitiously, but my mother pretended not to spot us. All her life, she was endowed with an extraordinary vitality.

## Growing up

My parents only had two children: my brother, Marcel Goldstein, born in 1924, and myself, the younger one, born in 1929. I remember Marcel as a handsome and elegant boy. He would've made a good actor. I don't know whether he went to the kindergarten or not, but I know he attended a Romanian school, in a time when that was still possible. He started working at a very early age, when he was about 12. Unfortunately, he wasn't too keen on studying, although he was very intelligent, loved to read and read enormously. When we were kids, we would both stay up till late at night and read, and, the following day, we would report who had been the last to fall asleep. Actually, it was him who brought books in our house, as all we had before that was one book about reading the future in a coffee cup. He also brought a gramophone on which we played synagogal music and operas. My brother was crazy about opera and would often go to concerts at the Romanian Opera. He would get in whenever he wanted to, as he bribed the ticket collector. He had a cheerful nature and he loved to go to parties. He had many friends among the students, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Most of them were poor, and he would help them once in a while, as he was already employed and earned money.

First, my parents sent him to be the apprentice of a clock smith named Carniol, in order to learn this trade that was widespread among the Romanian Jews with little means. That was in 1936 or 1937. Unfortunately, Marcel sort of lacked the patience required by this profession: he would fix the clock with one hand and scratch the wall with the other, out of boredom. However, after the war, fate ironically had him placed in charge over the clocking devices of the Electromagnetica Enterprise for a while. So he had to be the first to get to work and he was forced to wake up at 4 every morning. His nickname was Pendulica [a diminutive for grandfather clock in Romanian], because grandfather clocks were his hobby. He had managed to make up a pretty fine collection. Anyway, after the clock smith apprentice routine, my parents sent him to be an apprentice at Bernard Kaufman's stores, where my brother worked as a shop-assistant for a few years, until around 1940.

I was born in Bucharest, on 7th October 1929. My name, Ticu, comes from Tipora [bird in Hebrew], which was the name of an aunt of mine who raised my mother. My parents were expecting a girl and had thought of that name. I spent my early childhood in a reasonable place, on Logofat Tautu St. But soon my parents had to move, and so we ended up on Negru Voda St., in two shabby rooms. [Ed. note: Negru Voda St. was located within the Vacaresti-Dudesti area, which was then a peripheral, destitute zone of Bucharest, with the highest concentration of Jews. The city never had a ghetto in the strict sense of the word. Jews could settle anywhere they could afford to buy a dwelling.]

I was sent to a private kindergarten when I was about 4. The mistress was Miss Jenny, a kind, tender woman. Unfortunately, the fee was too big for my family's budget, so I stopped going there

after a while. From my kindergarten days, I keep the memory of my first automobile ride – which was, of course, a luxury in those days. We had to go to the Savoy Theater, where my kindergarten had a festivity; the ones who had to perform on stage were taken there by car. I only had one line to utter: ‘My pity for you makes my heart break’. But the stage fright made me say it wrong: ‘My heart for you makes my pity break’. Everyone laughed, although that was supposed to be a tragic moment. Thus, my actor’s career began and ended with the same line.

## My school years

I went to elementary school at the Jewish School on Colonel Orero St. There were only Jews there, so I was protected to a certain extent. Charity was a rather common practice back then – I would eat at school and I would sometimes get clothes and footwear from there. But there were times when I was unable to get to school for no reason other than the fact that I didn’t have any boots or shoes to put on. I was sorry because we didn’t have Romanian classmates, and because it wasn’t a mixed school – this way, I could’ve met some girls too. I used to get good grades and I was awarded prizes at the end of the year several times. I loved the Romanian language and I acquired a passion for reading: I would read a book every two days. Back in those days, physical punishment was still present in schools; it was still believed that ‘all beating comes from heaven’ [Romanian proverb]. A crowbar always leaned against the teacher’s desk, but it only served as a means of intimidation, for no one ever used it. What they did use was an extremely stiff linden ruler. After a beating session (the ‘felon’ would get 40 hits on each palm), the palm would swell three times. One would be punished for truancy, for not doing one’s homework and for not having learnt one’s lesson. The calligraphy teacher, who was a bit insane and had fits of hysteria, used other methods: she would have the pupil lying on the floor and would trample him; or she would pull the pupil’s whiskers until plucking them off.

After finishing the elementary school, I wanted to go to the [Romanian] Regele Ferdinand Secondary School. I passed the exam, got admitted, and... that was it. It was the summer of 1940 and the law banning the Jewish children from the Romanian schools was passed [according to the Jewish Status] [3](#). So I had to go to a Jewish school again, the Malbim Complementary School, which was virtually useless, as it didn’t count as a secondary school. Until the end of the war, I also attended the Cultura Theoretical High School, which was Jewish too. I received a scholarship, because I was a good student and my parents didn’t have the means to pay for the tuition.

In high school, I was on good terms with Principal Litman and his nephew, Dan Alter. My father used to do some carpentry work at the principal’s house, somewhere by the [Kiseleff] Highway, in a residential part of Bucharest. The man had a great and generous heart. His school was a refuge for many teachers and pupils who had been banned from the Romanian schools. There were two or three teachers of Latin or History. Litman didn’t really need them all, but he wanted to help them survive. This remarkable teacher once showed us some pictures taken in Paris with him in the company of Bergson and other French scientists [Henri Louis Bergson (1859-1941): important French philosopher, though placed outside the philosophical trends of his time. His works include *L’Evolution creatrice* and *Matiere et Memoire*]. After the war, Litman left for Israel, where he taught philosophy and opened a psychotherapy practice. When I finished high school, he wrote me a dedication on a book I used to prepare my graduation exam in philosophy. It went like this: ‘Don’t forget Eretz Israel even when you do philosophy’. You will later see how right he was.



My mind also kept the memory of a French teacher, although I don't know his name – he didn't even teach at my class. We were out on break, having a snow fight – it was winter –, and I accidentally hit him right between the eyes. I was petrified by what I had done. I apologized, and he walked away like a lord, without saying one word. His distinction and understanding struck me as something extraordinary.

Of course, teachers had no easy time either. Our French teacher, Mrs. Lupu, was very beautiful, but also very wicked. Because of that, we had nicknamed her 'lupoica' [she wolf in Romanian; also, 'lupu' means wolf in Romanian.]. She was wicked until she gave birth to a child. Then she changed dramatically. Anyway, I did study French, and I did it very well, given the fact that I am now a translator from this language.

I also went to the cheder, on the street formerly named Mamulari, near the Tailors' Synagogue, where the History Museum of the Jewish Community in Bucharest is now. It was a sort of yeshivah, where I trained myself for the bar mitzvah under the supervision of Alexandru Safran [4](#), who was a young rabbi back then. I was the head of my class and I spoke at the Choral Temple on behalf of all the boys who were confirmed then. I was fascinated by the personal charm that rabbi Safran already possessed. He didn't lower himself to the level of the herd, but lifted the herd to his own level. Many years later, I told the rabbi – some works of whom I translated into Romanian – about the impression he left on me when I was a child. I was told that young rabbi Safran was once in Bacau, inspecting the Mosaism courses provided to the Jewish pupils in the Romanian schools. A non-Jewish principal, impressed by his refined appearance, told him: 'Forgive me for saying this, but this is how I have always imagined Jesus Christ'. I met rabbi Safran again when he held his reception speech at the Romanian Academy. We could all admire his Romanian, still exemplary after 60 years of exile.

I would spend my vacations at our relatives in Moldavia, in my brother's company most of the time. Before the break of the war, in 1940, we would go to Bacau and Piatra Neamt every summer. The landscapes there were truly magnificent. A lot of Jews used to inhabit these towns back then, many of whom were intellectuals. Vacations were always a time of indulgence for us, as the material situation of our relatives was far better than ours. Everything was ritualized in their house, even the preparation of the coffee. It was roasted in the kitchen and its ravishing smell spread across the entire house. Every time I smell roasted coffee I remember the vacations of my childhood. In Piatra Neamt I discovered an extraordinary, unique dessert: the seven-layered sherbet – with cocoa, vanilla, orange, lemon, raspberry, strawberry and rum. I had a long teaspoon and I always tried to reach the last layer. Our relatives offered us trips and picturesque parties, in the middle of nature. We went sightseeing or fishing. There was a Chinese man in Piatra Neamt who looked after the plants of an absolutely superb garden, while his son played the violin and I climbed the trees, picking up apples and pears.

Uncle Iules invited my brother and me to spend a part of our vacation with his family every year. I liked to go the banks of the Bistrita River, to raft, or to play with the other kids at the Mosilor fair. This fair was held in the summer, in July, on Saint Ilie – the prophet Elijah of the Tannakh, assumed and celebrated by the Christian-Orthodox tradition. It was held in the open air, at the outskirts of the town. It was full of people, carts, horses, smaller domestic animals and poultry. There was an indescribable hubbub. A circus would sometimes come too, and the children would immediately gather around it. The fair gave the peasants in the area the opportunity to sell and buy everything

they needed: cattle, fruit, and household utensils. Jews attended these fairs too, as some of them were peddlers and had a very important economic function in these villages, where they brought essential necessities: salt, matches, oil etc. When I got home from vacation, I felt drawn to the North Station; in fact, coming back home meant returning to this railway station. It's hard to explain why I missed the station, not my home...

It hasn't been long since I saw a French film in which a bunch of children, divided into two rival gangs, played a game that actually imitated the political scene of their country and of the entire Europe in the wake of World War II. I once went through a similar experience. There was a German family living on our street, the Meltzers. One of their children had already learnt a few things about Nazism and anti-Semitism. One day, he and his 'gang' pursued me in order to 'shoot' me with a toy rifle (whose pellets stung very hard though). They were chasing me, and I went out from the Negru Voda St. to the Vacaresti Ave. Because I was scared and wasn't paying attention to where I walked, a car knocked me down. I fell on the pavement and lost consciousness. When I recovered, I saw a lot of people around me. They were asking me where I lived. I had regained consciousness, but I couldn't move one finger. It was as if I had become paralyzed. I didn't tell where I lived, as I didn't want my parents to find out what had happened to me. After I got better, I went home on my own and I didn't tell my parents one single word about this accident which fortunately didn't have tragic consequences.

It was obvious that the situation was becoming tenser and tenser for the Jews. The Legionary anti-Semitic propaganda was growing more and more powerful every day, being justified, to a certain extent, by the fact that many Romanian intellectuals had adhered to this fascist movement. There were posters on walls showing 'Jew grinders' and things like that. The Legionaries were marching across the Jewish quarter in their uniforms and belts, singing their funeral songs and urging people to take revenge against the Jews. The anti-Jewish legislation initiated in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government [5](#), carried on by the Gigurtu cabinet (in the summer of 1940), and completed under the Antonescu regime until 1944, affected our family too, but not as much as it affected the more prosperous Jews.

At the beginning of 1940, my father was drafted and was sent to Bessarabia. Beside military drills, he also dug trenches and made furniture for the superior officers. Jews were still considered citizens of this country, not its 'enemies', as they would become after Romania entered the war. My father told me that the Jews who served in Bessarabia were invited over to Jewish families every Friday evening and Saturday morning in order to celebrate the Sabbath.

While my father was away, we rented his little room to a young man who had come from the North of the country. His name was Sulam Weber. He was a Hasid and he had come to Bucharest to solve his citizenship problem. He was the one who first told me Hasidic stories. They were miraculous, of course, but I don't remember them anymore now. This man gave my family the most beautiful Pesach of my childhood. Until the beginning of the celebration, Sulam had been very secluded, because of the strict kashrut. He cooked on his own and no one was allowed to get inside his little room, which was actually an entrance hall with cement on the floor. However, on Pesach, he decided to join us: he sat at the end of the table and put some order in our holiday. On the bright, immaculate table, he laid the egg, the potato, the bitter roots, the piece of meat and some matzah. The poverty of this table was soon overcome by his warm, baritone voice reading, reciting the psalms and commenting the Megillat Ester. Being the younger child, I asked, like I did every year:

‘Ma nishtanah halaila hazeh mikol halailot’. The young Hasid sat at the head of the table, like a prince, and he officiated and sang, despite the fact that, in the previous day, he had come back home after having been molested, humiliated and robbed of his shoes by the thug of the neighborhood, whom we had nicknamed Goliath. At a certain point, Sulam stood up and showed us an object he had crafted on his own. He was planning to give it to a magistrate on whom depended the solving of his citizenship problem and who kept postponing him. It was a sort of lamp that projected two majestic lions on the wall. One day after Pesach, Sulam went to the magistrate and gave him the gift. The magistrate accepted it, but had Sulam thrown down the stairs, without helping him; he never got his citizenship and died at Auschwitz, a few years later.

### During the war

After Romania lost Bessarabia and Bucovina, as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact [6](#), my father was discharged from the army. He was able to work during the war, for a very small salary, of course. He worked at the Brancovenesc Hospital in Bucharest, in the field he was trained for (furniture repairing and maintenance). My mother occasionally worked as a tailor. My father worked 8-9 hours per day. Of course, he could eat at the workplace; but we had a very hard situation at home, as the rations of the Jews were smaller than the ones of the Romanians. So my father did himself justice sometimes and brought home a fish that he kept hidden under his shirt. I think this is how his lungs got ill – the fish was cold and he kept it pressed against his skin for several hours. He was very happy when he was able to cook for us the fish he would bring home from time to time.

I remember one time when the school sent me together with others to collect all sorts of items from the Jewish families, who had to donate clothing, blankets, money and other things for the war effort and to the benefit of the needy families – but who knows where all these actually went?

During World War II, my brother had to do forced labor [Ed. note: According to the law-decree no.132 of 20th January 1940, regulating the military taxes owed by the Jews, the military and pre-military duties of the Jews were turned into forced labor and fiscal obligations.]. I was too young for that, I hadn't turned 16 yet – this was the age limit; any Jew over 16 had to do forced labor under military supervision. If a Jew didn't report for forced labor, he was considered a deserter and the case was trialed by the Martial Court. Thus, many got deported to Transnistria, from where they never came back. My brother first worked on the Alba farm owned by Antonescu [7](#), close to Bucharest, then he was sent to Dragasani, at hundreds of kilometers away from home. He came home on holidays, but very seldom. He told us about the many Russian men and women working on the Alba farm, as prisoners of war. One spicy detail was that the daughter of the farm's superintendent (a Christian girl, of course) had fallen in love with my brother, which brought upon him the strong dislike of her father. Naturally, there was no chance for a romantic relationship between the two of them in those times.

During the Antonescu-Sima [8](#) government, when the Legionaries [9](#) had the power and terrorized the Jewish population, I went through an experience that I would like to share with you. My father had a co-worker named Marcel Carlin, who had come from Russia. When the man saw that the times were hard and troubled in Romania, he decided to go back to Russia with his wife and children. So we all met on an October evening, in 1940, at the place of a relative of his who lived on Vacaresti Ave., in order to say good-bye. Suddenly, a group of Legionaries burst in, accusing us



that we were having a Bolshevik meeting and asking for money in return for their ‘forgiveness’. We quickly made a collection and gave them the money. The problem was that my father’s friend had the passports for Russia on him and, should the Legionaries have found them, they would have probably killed us all. So, taking advantage of a momentary lack of attention, he hid the papers in the children’s pockets, which the Legionaries would have never thought to search. (This friend of my father’s eventually managed to get to Russia. Unfortunately, he was assassinated because he sold bread and an inspection revealed some problems. Whether these problems were real or not, I don’t know – this is how things went during the war.)

At the rebellion [10](#), the Legionaries murdered and mutilated hundreds of Jews, destroyed houses and stores and set fire to many synagogues in Bucharest. I watched it all from our window. Gun shots and all sorts of weird sounds could be heard. The Legionaries shared their loot by the light of the lanterns. I also saw well-to-do people stealing from the Jews: they came with baby carriages and loaded them with things from the ravaged houses of the Jews. We barricaded ourselves in our house and didn’t open the door to anyone. But they didn’t come after us anyway, because we were poor. An episode to remember was when a former apprentice of my father’s, a gypsy man named Dumitru (everyone called him called Mitica), knocked on our door. We were paralyzed with fear and said we wouldn’t open. He insisted, as he had brought us food, and he passed it to us through the half-open door. It was an act of humaneness in a time of inhumanity.

The Kaufman family, for whom my brother worked as an apprentice, had a tragic fate during the Legionary rebellion. They were known to be affluent people, so the Legionaries broke into their house. Kaufman’s daughter was raped, and then killed. Bernard Kaufman (my brother’s employer) was terribly beaten, dragged outside and shot to death. No one knows what happened to Mrs. Kaufman, who was psychically ill and was confined to one room all the time. The son, Jacques Kaufman, was a sportsman (a boxer and a bodybuilder), so he resisted. He fought the Legionaries – I think he even killed a couple of them –, but finally they shot him. The only survivors were two children who were not at home. After the war, they emigrated to England.

Behind our street was Cauzasi St., where the Forensic Institute was located. After the pogrom was over, Jews were informed they could go there to identify the bodies. We didn’t go, for we had no relatives in Bucharest. There was no talking about the suffering caused to the Jews by this Legionary rebellion, as Antonescu wanted the emphasis laid on the Legionary wrongdoings against the Romanian society, on the fact that, because of them, this society lived in a state of anomie etc.

I insist on telling you about an incident that has marked me all my life. It was during the war, when things were very tough for the Jews. My mother had just finished a dress and sent me deliver it to her client and collect the money. The woman gave me the coin (which was desperately needed at home), but, unfortunately, I lost it along the way, although I held it tight in my hand. It was in the evening. I looked for it for an hour, I think, even in the gutters, but I never found it. Because of my carelessness, my mother (who was waiting so much for that money, in order to buy us food), had worked in vain. This incident haunted me my entire life; even today, I still feel pain when I remember it.

I spent the last part of the war mostly in air raid shelters, to escape from the bombings. Once, a bomb exploded right next to the shelter where I was with my mother, and the room was flooded. When the alarm was sounded, even dogs knew their way to the shelters. However, I was only a kid,

and I didn't understand much. We would still play, make up bands, sing like fools... It was probably a reaction of defense.

We were lucky we didn't get deported, although we kept hearing rumors about Jews from Bucharest sent to Transnistria. There was a man named Segal who lived on our street. He owned a confectionery. The authorities had a Segal on their deportation list. They couldn't find him, so they deported our neighbor instead, who happened to have the same name. All they cared about was deporting a Segal – it didn't matter if he was the right one or not... We also had some relatives in Moldavia who got deported; but they came back, and then they emigrated to Israel.

The truth is that during the war we didn't really know what was happening with the Jews. We didn't have a radio, because Jews had been forced to hand over their radio sets to the police ever since August 1940. But rumors still found their way. Some of them were so appalling that they could hardly be taken for granted. We couldn't believe that the Romanian Army and Gendarmerie were killing children, women, men and elderly people who were all innocent – or guilty of having been born Jewish.

### Post-war

After the war, the most important thing for me was to continue my education, so I registered at the Technical-Medical School, planning to study medicine. But the communist authorities forbade those who went to this school to pass the admission exam for the Medical University, so I had to go to another college. I chose Philosophy, because I felt drawn to the world of ideas and I liked to speculate. This is how I fulfilled a part of the prophecy that Mr. Litman had made in that dedication written on the philosophy book, when I finished high school.

The other part of the prophecy, the one concerning Eretz Israel, also came true to a certain extent. Right after the war, I joined the Zionist left-wing organization Hashomer Hatzair [11](#) [The Young Guardian, in Hebrew], which militated for the emigration to the young State of Israel. At a certain point, the communist authorities banned these Zionist organizations. There were some trials, Zionists were investigated and some even went to jail. Unlike others, I chose to write in all my resumes that I had been a member of that organization. And this caused me a lot of problems. For instance, when in college, I couldn't get elected head of my class or of the student syndicate, because I had declared myself that I had been a member of a Zionist movement. This detail was as disturbing as a tin tied to one's tail. After graduation there was the same story. When I got drafted, in 1951, I stood before a so-called medical commission (which was in fact a military-political commission) and told them who I was and where I was coming from; the result was that they saw me as an enemy of the people. They refused to understand that being a Zionist wasn't the same thing as being a fascist or a right-wing extremist. The Romanian Communist Party did not acknowledge Zionism as a movement of national liberation.

In 1955, I was sent to work at the Radio Broadcasting Company. I had a trial period of two or three weeks. Then the editor-in-chief congratulated me for how I had worked, but, two days later, I was told my services were no longer needed. A secretary from the faculty advised me to contact Harry Dona, Jewish co-chairman of the Radio Company, and tell him about the problem with Zionism. The next day after I talked to him, Human Resources called me back. But I never managed to get a raise or a promotion, although no one ever reproached me with anything – this was an unspoken, implicit rule.

My father was an apolitical man par excellence. He didn't read the newspapers, didn't comment on politics and wasn't interested in it. This had a good influence on me indirectly: I never became a member of the Romanian Communist Party. After the war ended, my father became a factory worker and this is all he did until his retirement. He remained the same pedantic individual, the same distinguished man who would spend one hour in front of the mirror every day before going to work. He used to shave every morning. As we didn't have money to buy blades, he would use the same blade for months, sharpening it on glass. He died at the age of 63, in 1963, and was buried at the cemetery on Giurgiului St., according to the Jewish ritual. We observed the Yahrzeit, and the one who recited the Kaddish was my brother.

Many years after my father's death, my mother remarried, towards the end of the 1970s. Her new husband was a friend of our family, Segal User. He was a man with an extensive knowledge of the Jewish culture. He had tutored my brother in Hebrew, and he sometimes served as a substitute for the various rabbes, not in the synagogue, but in private meetings with the parishioners who always came asking for his advice. In my opinion, this User Segal was a fabulous character. He came from Russia after the socialist October Revolution Day [12](#), in 1917 or 1918. He escaped seven times from the hands of sundry Romanian authorities thanks to the seven rings (which were family heirlooms) he traded for his life. Someone had told him that the Romanian authorities were corrupt and could be 'bought' with money or other goods. So he sewed these rings in the lining of his coat and used them to save his life every time he was in danger. Many people said that the Romanian Jews were lucky because, unlike the Germans, who did their job thoroughly, the Romanians were corrupt and there were ways one could find to save one's life. In Romania, User Segal became an underground Communist and, during the Antonescu regime, he printed anti-fascist manifests right at the headquarters of the Official Gazette, where the anti-Jewish law-decrees were printed too. There was a man named Popescu there, the head of the printing shop, who collaborated with Segal and with other underground Communists. During the war, Segal was already pretty old, he was about 60. He had five children: four girls and a boy. The boy fell in love with a Russian woman and left for the Soviet Union. Cerna, the most beautiful and the most intelligent of the girls, committed suicide; the other three girls left for Israel after World War II.

My father had been a friend of Segal User's. As long as he lived, they visited each other quite often, helped each other when in need and went to parties together; but I don't know under which circumstances they met. When my father passed away, Segal helped my mother overcome that difficult moment. After a while, the two of them got married, as my mother was afraid to spend the rest of her life alone. It would have been a pity for her to stay a widow until the end of her days. After she turned 70, my mother developed a passion for reading. Although her only education had been the elementary school, she read with an unusual fervor. Through everything she stood for, my mother played an important part in my life. She died in 1984, at the age of 89. This time, it was me who recited the Kaddish and observed the Yahrzeit. She was buried next to my father, at the Jewish Cemetery on Giurgiului St.

After the war, my brother, Marcel, took a specialization course at ORT [13](#), where he learnt the trade of clocksmith again. He got married in the 1960s. His wife, Blanche, was very beautiful and cultivated, although she had not attended any higher education. They didn't have children. At a certain point they got divorced and she left for Israel. My brother remarried a Romanian woman named Coca. Unfortunately, they had hardly anything in common – they were not compatible at all,

their natures were much too different from one another. My brother died at a relatively early age, at 64, in 1986. He is buried at the Jewish Cemetery on Giurgiului St. He didn't have any children.

I worked for the Radio Company for 18 years. I was an editor for the cultural broadcasts. Most of the time, I would make documentaries for these broadcasts, which fortunately had nothing to do with politics. At the beginning of the 1960s there was a sort of scandal. According to an order come from above, the institution had to be purged of Jews, on the pretext that there were too many foreign collaborators. This made me angry, so I became more radical and started doing everything I could in order to get kicked out. In 1963 the Securitate [14](#) investigated me because I had allegedly introduced decadent art in the Radio Company. It was, in fact, an album of modern art that I had shown to some co-workers. I had to sign a declaration in which I promised I would maintain 'a healthy environment around me'. In 1973 I got fired from the Radio Company because there were too many employees. A commission was made up to help us find other employments. They sent me to work as an editor for the Firemen's Magazine. I turned down this assignment. Then, a former co-worker of mine, Lia Lazarescu, put in a good word for me with doctor Penciu from the Hygiene Institute. My transfer was done at a ministerial level: the president of the Radio Company phoned the minister of Health and arranged for me to be hired at that institute. I had to write my own characterization; I praised myself and, in order to have at least one negative thing, I mentioned I didn't... look good on TV! I worked at the Hygiene Institute as a sociologist. I would do family inquiries and medical statistics. I retired in 1989.

More than 20 years have passed since I became a contributor for the Community magazine, Realitatea Evreiasca, the former Revista Cultului Mozaic. I wrote my first article on the occasion of Spinoza's tricentenary. Victor Rusu, who was then editor-in-chief, probably in 'complicity' with Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen [15](#), told me he wouldn't publish that article, as it had nothing in common with the magazine's profile. The whole world celebrated Spinoza that year, the whole world except us. A few years ago, at an anniversary of the magazine, I was asked about my debut. I told them what I have just told you, but they never mentioned that my first article was rejected. My boss from the Hygiene Institute always wondered how come my articles were published on the first page, next to the Chief Rabbi's. Under the communist regime, there was a time when I signed a serial about the Bible, in which I condemned the personality cult and the idolatry.

Until 1989 [until the Romanian revolution] [16](#), all windows towards Judaism were closed. But after that, I was able to activate in this field. Of course, I had read things, I had searched books, I had photocopied materials about the Jewish history and Judaism etc. Speaking of photocopying, I remember an interesting incident. I had a friend who was making a living out of it. And this was a rather risky enterprise, for most of those who were in this business were either employees or collaborators of the Securitate. This is why I preferred to work with intermediaries. At a certain point, this friend of mine, who was Jewish and wanted to leave for Israel, got caught while making clandestine photocopies. They confiscated his passport and told him he would get it back if he told what he had photocopied and for whom. One day, he came to me with an apologetic face and told me I was on the 'black list'. I had to get rid of all the photocopies I kept at home for my friends, as all the materials were forbidden by the regime: books on Judaism, the history of religions etc.

One other time, I was working with an intermediary. I gave him a Hebrew grammar awarded by the French Academy, which I had taken from the library of the Community. He was supposed to photocopy it for me. After three days, I went to get it back. The man stared at me and told me I

shouldn't have brought him such a book and that I was going to be held responsible for that. "Take it and run", he told me. I said it was just a grammar book, not Mein Kampf [by Adolf Hitler]. 'This is worse than Mein Kampf', he replied. Terrified, I ran all the way back home, as if someone had followed me. I was 60 at that time.

Before I entered college, I didn't have too many Romanian friends, as I mostly frequented Jewish circles. I had all sorts of fellow-students in college, but I only made friends with girls. After each stage in my education was over, I was concerned about staying friends with my former mates. I think the matriarchate is something worth trying – it would be a chance to see the world with more responsibility, sympathy and kindness. When it comes to my relationships with girls, I have to say that the Jewish world was petit bourgeois – not as much from the point of view of its material situation as it was from the point of view of its conceptions. My access to a Jewish girl was virtually impossible. Whenever I entered a Jewish home, the girl's parents and her other relatives immediately figured out that I wasn't a good business. My female friends were Romanian. There was no social barrier in the friendships with them. But the Jewry had a very strict class stratification, and it was difficult to penetrate the upper layers.

There was a time when I had some friends who had come from Russia: Octavian Madan, whose father was a priest, or Sasa, who told amazing things about Russia. There were people there who refused to eat bacon because it was sold in Bolshevik stores; people who lived all their life at the periphery of society. David Millstein was (and still is) another friend who came from Russia. His father had been the Joint [17](#) representative to Russia and was assassinated there in suspicious circumstances. After the war, David left for Israel, where he had an interesting career – he was an economist. An uncle of his came to me one day and told me David missed his friend, namely me; he asked me if I didn't want to do aliyah too, and offered me his help. After I got married, I abandoned the idea of leaving Romania.

## **My wife Velea**

My wife, Velea (nee Konig), was born in 1933, in Moscow. Her father was Romanian and her mother was Austrian. She came to Romania with her father, who repatriated himself in 1958. Her maternal grandfather, Spielman, an engraver by trade, was a Jew who had converted to Christianity in order to marry a Christian woman. During the Nazi terror, he had to hide in the mountains because, according to the racial definition of the Jew, he was still considered a Jew, even if he had changed his faith. My wife's mother had three sisters; I could say that their fate was the fate of the European Jewry. One of them ended up with her husband in Kazakhstan, where they had to cope with a terrible poverty; another one, Carla, ran from Vienna to Italy, but Fascism followed her there, so she had to take refuge in London, where she worked as a maid in a castle. She met Deutsch (a Jew from Czechoslovakia) and got married. This Deutsch had been a member of the French Resistance, but had been wounded and his comrades had taken him to London. After the war, Carla and Deutsch settled in Czechoslovakia, where he had a little tin can factory. But the Communists threw him in jail because he was a kulak. They had a daughter, named Ilus. She was born in London and this is why she was persecuted by the Communists when the family moved to Czechoslovakia. The third sister, Mitzi, stayed in Vienna. The owner of the enterprise where she worked tolerated her, as she was a very good worker. She had social-democratic views and believed in Communism. And when the Russian Communists got to Vienna, she was raped by some of them.



My wife went to the Medical School in Petersburg. In Romania, she worked as a physician at the Ana Aslan Geriatrics Institute. She was always interested in Mosaism and the Judaic tradition, partly due to my own preoccupations, partly due to the fact that she had had a Jewish grandfather.

I met Velea thanks to a friend named Kadar (a Russian by origin) and thanks to music, which we both loved. This friend, who was a neighbor of my future wife's asked me one day if I was interested in meeting an interesting girl. He had probably asked her if she wasn't interested in meeting an interesting man. Kadar was sure the two of us were good for each other. Our first date took place at the Romanian Athenaeum, at a classical music concert.

Music, theater and books were actually a psychological refuge for many under the communist regime. This sort of suppression led to the implosion of the communist regime in our country, not to its explosion. We never had a samizdat literature [18](#) in Romania, like the Russians did, for instance. They had a real opposition. We only had a few exceptions here. In all those wretched years of Ceausescu's [19](#) dictatorship, I only saw one single manifest, and it was pretty mild too. Someone brought a flyer to the Institute; it condemned the regime for the 'poor quality bread'. I passed it on like a fool – I could have got in trouble, for people talked. I went to the head deputy of our lab and showed it to her. She said she wanted to show it to someone else, but, when I asked her to give it back, she told me she had thrown it in the toilet. The Russians had more courage. On the other hand, Ceausescu did attempt a form of pseudo-liberalism in the 1960s, but he ended up on the nationalist slope.

My son, Felix, was born in Bucharest, in 1963. He went to elementary school in the vicinity of the Romanian Peasant's Museum and he graduated from the I. L. Caragiale High School in 1982. Then he attended the Faculty of Mathematics in Bucharest. As a teenager, then as a young man, he didn't feel drawn to the religious side of Judaism. But he used to participate in the Pesach seder and he loved the Purim, because his mother would invent all sorts of costumes for him. He sang for a while in the choir of the Community. He took part in some performances and even went touring in Israel with this very talented choir of the Choral Temple, which sang in Yiddish and Hebrew.

He always had a passion for photography. In 1991, at the mineriada [20](#), he took some shots that were compromising for the government of the time. They were featured in some Western magazines. He was afraid something bad would happen to him, so he left for Israel. He settled in Jerusalem and went to a second college, the famous Bezalel Art School. I think that my interest in Judaism also helped him become more familiar with Israel. When he was a child, I never urged him to do aliyah; but he eventually did it anyway. From 2001 to 2003 he studied for a master's degree in Helsinki. It was there that he met Julie, an Austrian girl. They got married in 2003. They now live in Vienna.

Of course my life changed after 1989; so did the life of any other Romanian. We are able to travel and to speak freely and we have better prospects, although the situation is not very bright in the country. I worked (and I still work) a lot for the Hasefer Publishing House of the Jewish Community in Bucharest, founded in 1980.

When it comes to politics, there are many things that can be said. Deep down inside, I think my admiration goes to the United States. For too many times, Europe proved itself cowardly and ready to repeat its mistakes a thousand times. It didn't learn anything from the lessons of the past and this disqualifies it, if I may say so. America is extraordinarily dynamic when it comes to Jews,

colored people and other minority groups. Thanks to the fight led by the American civil society, many things changed for the better. On the contrary, in Europe, the monstrous coalition between the extreme Right and the extreme Left, both anti-Israeli, is more than surprising. I knew the extreme Right was anti-Semitic. But I see the extreme Left is anti-Semitic as well.

I visited Israel in 1992 and I have extraordinary memories about it. I was impressed by everything that I saw. The libraries delighted me, for I was able to find everything I was looking for, and much more. I remembered the communist era, when the books on Zionism from the Academy Library in Bucharest were kept next to the Legionary books, in a restricted documentary fund. Even today, this important Romanian library suffers from a lack of materials on Judaism; and I wonder whether this is accidental or not.

Nevertheless, I enjoy staying in Romania. I am glad the Jewish life in Bucharest has intensified and I noticed there are non-Jewish young people who are interested in Judaism. I have a very active contribution to the Jewish intellectual life through my articles and my translations. I go to the synagogue on the spring and autumn holidays, and I attend the meetings and conferences held by the Judaism centers in Bucharest and Cluj or the events organized by the Embassy of the State of Israel on various occasions.

## Glossary

### **1 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.

### **2 Antonescian period (September 1940- August 1944)**

The Romanian King Carol II appointed Ion Antonescu (chief of the general staff of the Romanian Army, Minister of War between 1937 and 1938) prime minister with full power under the pressure of the Germans after the Second Vienna Dictate. At first Antonescu formed a coalition with the Legionary leaders, but after their attempted coup (in January 1941) he introduced a military dictatorship. He joined the Triple Alliance, and helped Germany in its fight against the Soviet Union. In order to gain new territories (Transylvania, Bessarabia), he increased to the utmost the

Romanian war-efforts and retook Bessarabia through a lot of sacrifices in 1941-1942. At the same time the notorious Romanian anti-Semitic pogroms are linked to his name and so are the deportations – this topic has been a taboo in Romanian historiography up to now. Antonescu was arrested on the orders of the king on 23rd August 1944 (when Romania capitulated) and sent to prison in the USSR where he remained until 1946. He was sentenced to death for his crimes as a war criminal and was shot in the same year.

### **3 Jewish Status or Anti-Jewish laws in Romania**

The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941- 1944 under the Antonescu regime. According to these laws all Jews aged 18- 40 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery. More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the 'Romanisation campaign'. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc. Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

### **4 Safran, Alexandru**

born in Bacau, Romania, at 1910. Son and Disciple of Rabbi . Bezael Ze'ev Safran, whom he followed as a rabbi in his native city. At 29 years of age, Alexandru Safran is elected to be the Chief Rabbi of Romania. Senator of law, he lives in Bucharest. During World War II, though he was a hostage under the fascists, he is the president of the Jewish Clandestine Salvation Committee. In 1948 he is designated as Chief Rabbi of Geneva, and since then he teaches Talmudic thinking patterns at a local university. His writings, in Hebrew and not only, engulf all assets of Jewish spirituality, being considered very complex and comprehensive. Thinker of great originality, serious and bright scholar, Alexandru Safran is one of the most important rabbinical figures of modern times.

### **5 Goga-Cuza government**

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

introduced a one-party system.

## **6 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**

Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

## **7 Antonescu, Ion (1882-1946)**

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

## **8 Sima, Horia (1907-1993)**

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

## **9 Legionary**

Member of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known in Romania as the Legionnaire Movement, founded in 1927 by C. Z. Codreanu. The aims of this extremist, nationalist, anti-semitic and xenophobic movement, developed in the interwar period; was to exclude those who think differently as regarding political and racial matters. The Legion was organized in "nests", every "nest" having a leader. The mystical rituals were essential for the movement, considered to be by its members the way to a national spiritual regeneration, meant to create "The New Man". It based its rituals on the heritage of Romanian folklore and historical traditions. The Legion was not a political organization. Its activists had founded the Iron Guard as a terror organization, carrying through the political murders, embracing the concept of "Purification by Death". The political twin of the Legion was the "Everything for the Country", that represented the movements electoral and parliamentary branch. Even if Codreanu was a great sympathizer of Mussolini and Hitler, the movement founded by him wasn't the copy of other fascist-types movements, and while a lot of Romanians considered them as the protectors of the traditional Romanian values, they really had

popularity at a certain level. Its sympathizers were recruited from the young intelligentsia, students, orthodox clericals, peasants. From the mid 1930's on it was supported by King Charles II, who tried to use them for destroying the democratic parties and the parliamentary system. Proved to be too dangerous even for the king's ambitions at the dawn of the Second World War, the Legionnaires Movement was decapitated by the monarch in 1938.

## **10 Legionary rebellion**

failed coup d'état intended by the legionaries in January 20-27 1941, which culminated with the pogrom of the Jews in Bucharest. In aceste zile legionarii au ucis aproximativ 120 de evrei bucuresteni, au distrus zeci de sinagogi, au devalizat magazine si case evreiesti. After its defeat, Ion Antonescu established military dictatorship.

## **11 Hashomer Hatzair**

Left-wing Zionist youth organization, started up in Poland in 1912, and managed to gather supporters from all over Europe. Their goal was to educate the youth in the Zionist mentality and to prepare them to emigrate to Palestine. To achieve this goal they paid special attention to the so-called shomer-movement (boy scout education) and supported the re-stratification of the Jewish society. They operated several agricultural and industrial training grounds (the so-called chalutz grounds) to train those who wanted to emigrate. In Transylvania the first Hashomer Hatzair groups had been established in the 1920s. During World War II, members of the Hashomer Hatzair were leading active resistance against German forces, in ghettos and concentration camps.

## **12 October Revolution Day**

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.

## **13 ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training) (new)**

It was founded in 1880 in Sankt Petersburg (Russia). The architect of ORT concept was Nikolai Bakst. He believed that education and productive labour would ensure the survival of his fellow Jews but that specific training was necessary. He was an authority on Anti-Semitic literature, he was firmly anti-Zionist, believing Jews should participate fully in their own society. From these ideas, he developed in philosophy of ORT : training people in skills that would earn them dignity and independence.

## **14 Securitate**

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



undesirable for the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party, and also kept the life of ordinary civilians under strict observation.

### **15 Rosen, Moses (1912-1994)**

Chief Rabbi of Romania and the president of the Association of Jewish Religious Communities during communism, between 1948-1993. He was a complex person and led activities throughout the country in order to help the Jewish Romanians during the communist period as well as preserving traditional Jewish life in the country's communities.

### **16 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.

### **17 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)**

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during WWI. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

### **18 Samizdat literature**

The secret publication and distribution of government-banned literature in the former Soviet block. Typically, it was typewritten on thin paper (to facilitate the creation of as many carbon copies as possible) and circulated by hand, initially to a group of trusted friends, who then made further typewritten copies and distributed them clandestinely. Material circulated in this way included fiction, poetry, memoirs, historical works, political treatises, petitions, religious tracts, and journals. The penalty for those accused of being involved in samizdat activities varied according to the political climate, from harassment to detention or severe terms of imprisonment. Geza Szocs and Sandor Toth can be mentioned as Hungarian samizdat writers in Romania.

### **19 Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989)**

Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries and of national Stalinism in the same time. The internal situation and the political, economic and social realities were marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police. Marked by disastrous economic schemes, increasingly repressive and corrupt the system degenerated more than in any other East European country of that time. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, making 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.

## **20 Mineriade**

In 1990 and 1991, waves of miners from the Jiu Valley came to Bucharest to 'restore order'; the acts of street violence directed at those who protested peacefully in the Revolution Sq. against the newly-installed power destabilized the internal political life and were even considered a coup attempt. They affected the positive perception that the Romanian revolution of 1989 had created abroad, of fight for freedom.