Gavril Marcuson

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Bucharest
Romania
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Mr. Marcuson is a tall man aged 91. He's a writer (he wrote 'Potemkinistii in Romania' ['The Potemkinists in Romania'], 'Rascoala taranilor din 1907' ['The Peasants' Uprising of 1907']) and a translator specialized in the French literature (he translated Chateaubriand, Louis Hemon, Honore de Balzac, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Alfred de Musset). The passion to read more and to find out more is what keeps him alive. He reads extensively, from literary works to the newspapers which he buys every day, from a newsstand close to his home. He lives in the center of Bucharest, in an all-house area whose architecture and gardens are reminiscent of the interwar period. On reaching the second floor, one finds Mr. Marcuson surrounded by his books and his memories, in a very warm room. His wife, with whom he was and is still in love, died in 2000, but she looks back, always smiling, from the numerous photographs in every corner of the room.

Family background

I hardly knew my paternal grandparents, Aizic and Ernestina Marcussohn, from what my father told me about them. They lived and died in Iasi. I don't know what my paternal grandfather did for a living, and I can barely recall my paternal grandmother. I met them in Iasi during World War I, when my family, like so many other people from Bucharest, sought refuge in Iasi, since the capital had been occupied by the German troops [between November 1916 and November 1918]. I remember how my grandfather once had me drink tuica [alcoholic beverage obtained by fermenting and distilling plums or other fruit], while my mother was away, and I got drunk and fell under the table. My mother came back, found me sleeping under the table and started a terrible fight with my grandfather because he had let me drink. I was so little that I had hit my head against the table. I was as tall as the table.

My father had two brothers and a sister; I never met any of then. They spent their entire life in Iasi. His brothers were called Heinrich and Lazar Marcussohn. Actually, I'm not sure he even had a sister. I just think he did.

My father was born in Iasi, in 1888. He studied in Vienna, at the Commerce High School. He was a very gentle man and I'm glad I resemble him – I inherited his phenotype, appearance and nature. He looked after us and loved us in a way that was more intelligent than my mother's, because he was more intelligent and more cultivated. He never scolded me and beating was definitely out of the question. He was a literature enthusiast, he could read German, and he had a German library. He was a subscriber to 'Der Kampf' ['The Fight'], a social democratic magazine published in Vienna. He was also a subscriber to the Romanian-speaking press and to the Jewish press. He read two newspapers every day: 'Dimineata' ['The Morning'] [Ed. note: Romanian daily newspaper published in Bucharest between 1904 and 1938, with interruptions], and 'Adevarul' ['The Truth'] [Ed. note: Romanian newspaper of democratic opinions. It was published in Iasi as a weekly between 1871 and 1872, and then in Bucharest, as a daily, between 1888 and 1951, with interruptions.], which came out in the afternoon. He would read 'Dimineata' in the morning and 'Adevarul' in the afternoon.

Here's something that I remember. My father had bought me a lamb, a black lamb which I used to play with. One day, while my father and I were having a walk in the large courtyard, I noticed my lamb was missing. 'Where's the lamb, father?' And my father, who, like I told you, was a gentle man, but sometimes lacked tact, told me 'You want to know where the lamb is? Come with me and I'll show you!' And he took me to the back of the courtyard, where we found a wooden panel with a black skin nailed upon it. 'There's the lamb!' he said. When I saw that, I understood what had happened, despite my being very young, and I started kicking and screaming. Yes, I had realized my father had slaughtered it. To make things worse, my father added – and I still remember his words, decades later – 'Oh, enough with the screaming, my boy, you already ate some of it!' On hearing I had ate a part of my friend, my screaming became even louder.

My father was an accountant and a tradesman. He wasn't a religious man. He had his own business – he sold welding devices and carbide –, but didn't actually owned a company. He worked with his brother-in-law, Filip Weisselberg, for a while, and, after he and my mother divorced [before World War II, in the 1930's], he bought a house in another neighborhood and continued his welding devices business. My father died in Bucharest, in the 1960's.

I believe my maternal grandfather, Isac Weisselberg, was born in 1855, in Targu Neamt, but I'm not sure. He lived in the places where his children were born: Husi, then Bucharest. He was a tradesman, a wine wholesaler. My maternal grandparents were deist, and they were religious people. My parents were deist too, but they weren't religious. I remember that my maternal grandmother, Frederica Weisselberg, had black hair even in her old age – it hadn't turned gray. She loved me and my brother, Octav, and she talked to us. She didn't go out and she dressed modestly.

I grew up in the house of my maternal grandparents – this is where I spent my childhood. My earliest memories come from the time of World War I, when I was 3 or 4. I remember that our house was among the many places where the German army was quartered. I distinctly remember how the German soldiers came in with their helmets and all and they yelled 'Ruhe, ruhe!' And I asked my mother what 'ruhe' meant. My mother, who could speak a little German, told me it meant 'silence'. They hit my grandfather in the head with the butt of the rifle. I didn't witness this scene, but I remember seeing my grandfather right after – his head was bleeding and blood was flowing down his bald skull. Then, in the following days, a nurse came by every day to bandage up

his wound. My father wasn't home. I don't know where he had gone, to Iasi maybe. Only my mother, a sister of hers, my grandfather and myself were home. We got along well with the German soldiers who had occupied our place. I remember them leaning against the wall with their helmets on and singing out loud. I remember those songs, they were German folk songs, naïve and childish. I learnt my first German words from them. The soldiers had nicknamed me 'Zigeunerkind', which meant Gypsy child, because I was small and dark. I remember when our army entered the city and my grandfather told me 'Go to the gate and shout: long live the Romanian Army!' And I did that every time they passed. I remember the Romanian troops marching downtown on Viilor Dr. My maternal grandparents were buried at the Filantropia [Jewish cemetery]. I don't know when they died [some time after World War II].

My maternal grandfather had 16 children. Only 7 of them lived to be adults - three boys and four girls: Sabina, Filip, Rasela, Evelina (my mother), Victor, Neuman, and Lucia. I knew them pretty well, because they lived in Bucharest. Rasela was the only one who lived in Botosani, but I met her too.

The elder of the siblings, Sabina Michell [nee Weisselberg], lived in Bucharest. She was a housewife. Her husband's name was Iosef Michell. They had a daughter who died when she was 16, Laureta [diminutive form for Laura]. FilipWeisselberg was a tradesman, a businessman, and his wife, Rebeca Weisselberg, was a pharmacist. They didn't have children. Filip owned a company that sold ploughs and was called 'Plugul' ['The Plough']. He also sold welding devices, carbide, which was used for the autogenous welding, and so on and so forth. Rasela Goldschlager [nee Weisselberg] was a housewife and lived in Botosani. She didn't have children. Victor Weisselberg was a lawyer, and his wife, Adela Weisselberg, was a typist with some company. They didn't have children. Neuman Weisselberg was a chemical engineer at the Zurich University; his wife, Stephanie Weisselberg is still alive - she is to turn 100 this April [2005]. They have two sons, my cousins: Mircea Weisselberg and Isac Weisselberg. Both of them are engineers and live in Haifa. Their mother lives in Tel Aviv, in an old age home. The last of the girls is Lucia Isersohn [nee Weisselberg]. Her husband, Herman Isersohn, was a physician. They had a daughter whom they named Lauretta, after the one who had died in our family. Lauretta is now a physician in Canada.

My mother, Eveline Marcussohn [nee Weisselberg], was born in Husi, in 1892. Her education consisted of some years of high school. She wasn't a religious person. She was a rather simple woman, and she spoke some French. My grandfather only sent the boys to college. One of them became a chemist, another one became a lawyer, and another one became an accountant; but the girls never got to college. Girls were despised. Men are the ones who lead. Even at the synagogue, women have to stay separated from the men. My mother was a housewife. She loved us as much as she could, looked after us, and fed us - we weren't picky when it came to food. She was a gentle woman. She got upset once in a while, but didn't beat us. Neither my brother nor I ever got beat by our parents.

My brother, Octav Marcussohn, is nine years younger than I am. He was born in 1922, in Bucharest. I used to teach him, kid with him, take him walking in the streets. I would tell him in Dealul Spirii, where we lived: 'Octavica, today I'm going to take you to some streets where you've never been before! You're going to love it!' And I would take him and we would go down the streets leading to Antim Monastery. He loved it indeed. I would show him the houses, and, when we passed by a pretzel shop, I would buy him a pretzel, like the elder brother that I was. I remember Cazarmii St.,

which turned into a snow sleigh slope in winter; I used to play there.

We were close, although we didn't think alike. I was a left-winger, while he was a right-winger, but we didn't fight each other over this. He didn't think like I did, he was anti-Soviet and a Zionist. He went to the Mathematics Faculty in Bucharest. He was a very good student. He and a fellow-student of his, Halanai, a Spanish [Sephardic] Jew, were the best in their graduation class. The Ministry of Education wanted to send him to Moscow for a PhD. This prospect scared him so much, that he fled to Israel, in the 1950's. He is now a retiree in Tel Aviv. He didn't work while in Romania. In Israel, he was a math school teacher. He has been a retiree for a long time now. He doesn't have children and he was never married. He writes me extraordinary letters, but he never forgave me for supporting the left. Yet he loves me. I keep his letters, they are brilliant. He is so cultivated! Math is not the only thing he knows. The fact that I had a brother in Israel – I never kept it secret. The people I worked with were understanding enough.

Growing up

My name is Gavril Marcuson [the initial name, Marcussohn, was shortened to Marcuson in 1968]. I was born in Bucharest, on 28th October 1913, in the house of my maternal grandfather, an old house on Viilor Dr. Back then, the place was at the outskirts of the city. Today, it's in a semi-central neighborhood, because the city developed so much.

We changed our house for a statelier one located on Uranus St., which had belonged to the richest man in the Dealul Spirii quarter, Nita Stere. It was a very nice house, with brick stoves and gas light. Inside there were large rooms with high ceilings. My maternal grandparents lived there with most of their grandchildren. Like I said, my maternal grandfather had no less than 16 children, of whom only 7 lived to be adults. Most of these seven sons and daughters lived with us, with my parents and me [in the same house], but they had their own apartments. My grandfather hired Italian bricklayers – most of the bricklayers in Bucharest were Italian at that time –, and they added an extra floor to the house; the following people moved there: the families of two brothers of my mother's, Filip [Weisselberg] and Victor [Weisselberg], my mother's sister, Sabina [Michell], and my parents and me. Filip, who was a businessman, lived upstairs with his wife, and he also had an apartment at the ground floor, where his offices were.

There were a lot of rooms. Mine had been obtained by dividing a larger room in half by building a wall across. This division was made so that my brother and I may have separate rooms. So a half of the former room was mine, and the other half was Octavica's. We had one of the first telephones in Bucharest. It was non-automatic and the number had four digits. What's funny is that I even remember that number: 3851. Whenever we wanted to reach someone, we would pick up the receiver and hit the cradle, and a lady operator would go 'Hello?' Then we would say 'Please put me through this or that number', and wait... It wasn't automatic. We had gas lamps, and used wood and charcoal – brown coal or mineral coal – for heating. We had a large courtyard and a beautiful garden, with beds of strawberries and flowers, and a metal pavilion which had the year of its erection carved on it: 1886. This is the house where I grew up, playing courtyard games with my friends from the blind alley opposite the house.

My parents weren't religious, but they weren't atheist either. They were indifferent when it came to religion. My father observed some of the holidays and, for instance, didn't eat meat and cheese. I observed that too and I had got used to it – even today, I find it difficult to eat cheese after I had

eaten stake. On Passover, my father would buy matzah and we would eat it, but we would also sin by eating ordinary bread. We didn't live a traditional life.

In my childhood, I went to the synagogue on special occasions, for the New Year [Rosh Hashanah], maybe for Purim, but I don't remember going on Friday evening. We went to a synagogue on Antim St. This street was only a few hundred meters away from our house. [Ed. note: This was probably the Resit Daath synagogue at 13 Antim St., dating from 1897. It was demolished in 1987, in the process of urban systematization.] The synagogue was modest. It was located in a house, towards the Antim neighborhood. Not far away, there was a Jewish elementary school – I forgot how it was called.

Bucharest

Dealul Spirii, the neighborhood where I grew up, was typical for Bucharest. We were neighbors with the Dragos family. Their son became an undersecretary of state during the war [World War II]. Further away lived the family of a Frenchman, Legat, who was a photographer and owned a photo cabinet, the Legat Photo Cabinet. On the opposite side of the street lived an Italian bricklayer whose name was Perisotti. There was also a Romanian shoemaker, Vasile Anagnoste, a veteran social democratic militant; he was a very intelligent and cultivated man, and I enjoyed talking to him. He had a bordei [Ed. note: very modest house, usually made of clay; a shanty.] on the Uranus blind alley, which he referred to as 'his quarters'. He worked at the Schull footwear factory. There was also a French driver who lived on that blind alley. His son was my schoolmate. His father used to beat him up for nothing with the car crank. Back then, automobiles weren't automatic, so the driver had to insert a crank in front and rotate it until the engine started. Well, the men beat his son with the crank, and I still remember, more than 80 years later, how the boy once told me: 'You've got such a great father!' 'Why do you say that?' I asked him. 'Because he never beats you and he buys you boots!' He was impressed because my father didn't beat me and I was never barefoot. Another schoolmate of mine lived on the blind alley too – his name was Marius Condrea. I remember all our other neighbors: the pretzel maker at the corner, the grocer at another corner. The grocer's daughters were renowned ballerinas at the variety show theater. When I grew up, I would go from time to time to eat mici [grilled minced meat rolls] at the Florescu restaurant on 13 Septembrie Ave. I also remember the druggist lady on another corner and the male druggist who succeeded her.

People from Oltenia came to our courtyard. They were real Oltenians, from Gorj [County]. [Ed. note: These were people who had come to Bucharest from a distance of over 100 kilometers, and had settled at the outskirts, where they gardened and grew animals, thus supplying the city with food.]. Each of them carried two large baskets with fruit, vegetables, flowers, and big jars of yogurt which they poured with a spoon. We would buy all sorts of things – fruit, vegetables, eggs, cheese. Of course, there was also the marketplace. My mother went there with a lady cook who worked for us and looked after the house. However, they didn't go to the marketplace too often, because it was the marketplace that came to us. Charcoal was carried using a yoke too. It was because of the charcoal that I got lost when I was 4 or 5. We lived near Viilor Dr. and I started to follow a charcoal tradesman. I thought it was interesting, the way they used to walk around with their yokes and cry 'Get your charcoal!' I had never heard anything like that, so I followed him until I got to another neighborhood, and my grandfather showed up and took my by the hand. The poor Oltenians were barefoot and lived in very poor conditions. Nowadays, there aren't any barefoot people in

Bucharest, but, back then, this was a common sight. Many walked barefoot in summer. This is why my neighbor's son, whom I played with, was impressed to see me with boots on. He walked barefoot, and so did other friends of mine. We don't have this anymore nowadays, and we owe it to the communist regime. Before the time of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej 1, it was common to see barefoot men and women. Wearing boots in summer was considered luxury. I remember there were people who walked barefoot while carrying their boots in their hands, so that the soles wouldn't wear down. They must have gone to a place where they had to have footwear.

Back in those days, Bucharest was full of charm, poetry and picturesqueness. Streets and houses used gaslight. There were street lamps. When it got dark, a lamplighter passed by, opened the little window to get to the lamp, and used a lighter to light the gas. In the morning, the same man came back to extinguish the lamp. [Ed. note: Street gas lighting was replaced by electric lighting after World War I.]

In the 1920's, public transportation used horse-powered streetcars. There were two horses pulling each car. When the vehicle reached the lower area at Izvor and had to climb the Arsenalului hill, there was a boy who harnessed two extra horses, so the conductor drove four horses to go up the hill. I had a streetcar card. The horse streetcar came down 13 Septembrie Ave., took Uranus St., passed by the Arsenal, got to Victoriei Ave. – where the Zlatari church lies today –, and then continued its way on Carol St. – which is called Franceza St. today –, on Serban Voda Ave., and got to the Bellu Cemetery. This was one of the lines [Ed. note: approximately 3 kilometers long, going from west to south]. The electric streetcar went from Cotroceni to Obor. [For a while, horse streetcars were operated concurrently with the first electric streetcar.] The inhabitants of Bucharest used to call it 'Electricul' ['The Electric'], because it was the only electric streetcar in the city. Streetcars were small. There were also summer streetcars – they were open cars with benches. Streetcars had a collector, who sold the tickets, and a conductor. They were widely used, just like today's streetcars are. But the city had far less inhabitants than it has today. When I was born, there were between 200,000 and 300,000 people. Today, there are two million. There were very few motorcars in Bucharest. Most of them were Fords and, when they rode, all the tin they were made of jingled. These were the cheapest cars. There were also some luxury cars – Buicks and Chevrolets. Gradually, the electric streetcars became widespread. Much later, after World War II, trolley-buses were introduced – I was already old by then.

We had our photo taken once in a while – it was a real event. Technology was very different from what it is today. A light was turned on, you were supposed to stay still, and they photographed you. There was a trendy photo cabinet called 'Julietta', located on the corner of Victoriei Ave. with the boulevard, on the spot where an apartment house lies today – one of those geometrical buildings, with nothing but right angles and lines. 'Julietta' was owned by a Jew. I can't remember his name. A second photographer who was in vogue was Mandy, on Campineanu St. He was Jewish too. These two photographers called themselves suppliers of the Royal Court, and were allowed to photograph the members of the royal family. They turned photography into an art. I have some pictures that were taken at 'Julietta'. Next to Mandy's was a famous tailor's shop owned by the Cohen brothers, suppliers of the Royal Court. They were Jews too, of course. After the war, they emigrated to Israel. It was a men's tailoring shop. I don't know if they also made women's clothes, but I believe they didn't. The Cohen brothers made you look like they wanted to – thinner, stouter; they were artists of their trade.

There were some extraordinary stores on Victoriei Ave. There was the ‘Giaburov’ carpet store, owned by some Armenians, and Dragomir Niculescu’s grocery, where ‘Romarta’ is today. The rich people of the time – Parliament members, bankers – would come and buy ladlefuls of caviar. They would tell the owner: ‘Dragomire, make it one kilo, two kilos!’ I remember the Otetelesanu terrace, where the Telephone Company Palace lies today. The writers used to come there. I went there too, and I heard Florica Florescu [Ed. note: lyric artist renowned at that time] sing. I went to the Gambrinus terrace. When going to the old National Theater, I would sit in the circle. I paid 10 lei for a seat. There were actors who claimed they only performed for the gallery, for it is the gallery alone that confirms a great actor. The National Theater had special acoustics, it was very pleasant and had a curtain that had been painted by Traian Cornescu; behind it was the velvet curtain. I remember the Lyric Theater – this is how the Opera was called back then. It was bombed by the Germans [during World War II], and was demolished. It was located in Valter Maracineanu Sq., next to Cismigiu [Park]. This is where I saw my first opera and ballet performances. I remember the Athenaeum fresco painted by Traian Petrescu, if I’m not mistaken. Extraordinary! The entire Romanian history around the Athenaeum’s hall.

People went for a walk on Victoriei Ave. every day, but especially on Sunday morning. The promenade place was between the Military Circle and the Royal Palace Sq., opposite the University Library. This is where people walked back and forth, and there were so many of them, that the sidewalk became too narrow and there were people who walked on the street. Victoriei Ave. was divided into three lanes: the left and right lanes were for motorcars riding to and from the Palace; the middle lane was for carriages. At the time, there were numerous carriages in Bucharest – perhaps there were more carriages than cars. One of the city prefects, Gavrila Marinescu, had the sidewalks bordered with chains, so people could no longer walk on the street [around the 1920’s]. No man would go out without wearing a hat – this was out of the question. I remember I once went out without my hat, and my mother came running after me with a hat in her hand, and told me: ‘How can you go out like this? People will think you’re crazy! Take the hat!’

On 10th May 2, I used to go to the military parade – I never missed one. The band would play, and then the various arms would defile: artillery, infantry, military engineers. In the end, the royal family would show up. When King Carol [I] 3 was buried, I was a year or two and I attended the funeral with my nanny. I remember King Ferdinand 4 and King Carol II 5, who was the most intelligent of the kings. I remember Prince Michael [King Michael I] 6. I didn’t love the members of the royal family, but their pictures were all over the press. All you had to do was open a newspaper and come across the pictures of the king and of the princes. I remember Prince Nicholas [Ed. note: (1903-1977), prince; son of King Ferdinand I and of Queen Maria, younger brother of King Carol II], who drove a speed car that was unusual for Bucharest.

Every year, the king inaugurated Mosilor Fair. This fair opened in May, on the Thursday of the Mosi [Ed. note: The fair began after the celebration of the Christian-Orthodox Easter and lasted a month.]. I would go there every year. There were people who made a living out of all sorts of lotteries and circus displays – the bearded woman, the fishtail woman, the strong man who could break chains and things like that. It was a rather common amusement. There was a restaurant that served millet beer and mici. I used to go to the fair with my parents. When I got older, I would go there on my own and stare at various sights. One could shoot at targets and win something if one had a hit. The prizes usually consisted of handcrafted objects – dolls and trifles like that.

Going to school

I used to go to the Golescu School, the School for Boys no.3. Back then, boys and girls went to separate schools – there were schools for boys and schools for girls, and high schools for boys and high schools for girls. Let me tell you a story from my first day of school [in 1919]. My mother dressed me up nicely, put the newly-bought schoolbag on my back, with the language textbook and the arithmetic textbook (we, the kids, all called it arithmetic) in it, and sent me to school. I had been to school on another occasion, long before that, when my grandfather had taken me to register me, but I had forgotten where the place was. [The school was close from home.] So I took Cazarmii St. to get to school, but I didn't find it. Time was running out, because I had to be there at 8 a.m. I tried another street, and yet another, but the school was nowhere to be found. I was very shy and didn't have the guts to stop a pedestrian and ask about the location of the Golescu Elementary School no.3. I just stood like a fool by the sidewalk and was about to cry because I didn't know where the school was. As I was standing there, now knowing what to do, I saw a man approaching – he was a middle-aged gentleman elegantly dressed and I felt confident about him. It had seemed to me that all the other pedestrians were in a hurry, so I hadn't dared stop them. So I went to him and timidly asked him whether he knew where the Golescu School was. 'Come with me, I'll show you', he said. So he took me by his side and asked me, along the way, what my name was, what my parents did, what grade I was in. And so, he kept asking questions and I kept giving answers until the school appeared before me. Happy to have found it, I rushed to the gate, but the man stopped me and said 'Let me go in first, because I'm older, and you'll enter after me' So he went through the school's gate into a courtyard that was full of pupils who were playing. They all gather around me and ask me the same question: 'Hey, are you Mr. Movila's son?' 'No', I said, 'I'm not Mr. Movila's son!' A pedagogue soon showed up among us and he got us to our classroom and arranged us in the desks. And guess who enterer the classroom after that? The very gentleman whom I had met earlier. He was the master, Mr. Movila! Even more than 80 years later, it feels like yesterday. I remember him, with the class register under his arm. He came in, got to his desk and told us: 'Children, I will now call out your names in order. When each of you hears his name, stand up and say «Here». Have you understood?' We all went 'Yes!' So he began to read out our names, and every boy stood up and said 'Here'; suddenly, I heard him say Marcuson Gavril. I stood up and said 'Here! But, you know, my name is not Gavril!' 'What is it then', he asked me. 'My name is Gutu [diminutive form of Gavril], this is how they call me at home!' To which the master replied: 'They may call you Gutu at home, but, in the official records, your name is Gavril. And we shall call you Marcuson Gavril. Now sit down!' And then he addressed the entire class: 'Children, do you know what Marcuson did? He was supposed to get to school, but he was such an idiot that he missed it!' There was a terrible laughter. They all laughed at me, and I didn't know what to do. The master told them the story of me standing by the sidewalk, looking desperate because I couldn't find the school. From that moment on, my classmates nicknamed me 'Idiot of the class'. Even in 4th grade, they still referred to me as 'the one who was such an idiot that he missed the school'.

Mr. Movila, the master, was a composer who was renowned at that time. A while ago, I heard some of his songs played on the radio. His name was Juarez Movila – he had a Spanish first name, a revolutionary's name. He edited a magazine named 'Curierul Artelor' ['The Arts' Courier'], and the pupils' parents – at least the well-to-do ones – had to buy subscriptions. Only 3 issues or so were published – we were subscribers too. How did the classes go? The master would enter the classroom, and we would stand up and remain standing. There was an icon on the wall. We would

turn our faces to the icon and one of the boys would recite ‘Our Father’; then everybody crossed themselves and sat down, and the class would start. Seeing all my classmates cross themselves every day, I began to imitate them – you know how little kids are, they’re like monkeys –, without being aware of the meaning of this gesture. This went on until one day, when the master came to me while the prayer was being recited; he put his hand on my shoulder and he gently told me: ‘You will not cross yourself’ I didn’t understand that, because I was an ignorant when it came to those things. I hadn’t turned 6 yet, because my parents had sent me to school following the German system. I was the youngest in my class. So I didn’t know what my master meant and didn’t say anything. When I got home for lunch, my father used to ask me everyday: ‘So, did he examine you?’ If the answer was yes, two other questions would come: ‘Did you know the answers?’ and ‘What grade did you get?’ That day, he asked me, as usual, whether the master had examined me. ‘No, he hasn’t’, I replied, ‘but there’s something else: the master came to me during the prayer, put his hand on my shoulder and told me not to cross myself’. My father was so amazed, that he became speechless. After a while, he asked me: ‘Did he also say this to any of the other boys?’ And I said ‘No, only to me’. My father asked me this question because he knew there were two other Jewish boys in my class – but they must have been better trained than I was, so they didn’t cross themselves. My father didn’t add anything. After we ate, he took me aside and began to brief me – like they would later call it. He spoke to me about God and about religion; he told me there are several religions and that our family had a different religion than that of my classmates, that crossing ourselves was something we didn’t do and so on and so forth. That was the first time I heard someone speak about God and religion.

I went to middle school at the Mihai Viteazul High School and to secondary school at the Spiru Haret High School. My teacher of Romanian was Petre V. Hanes, a PhD in Letters, author of textbooks and numerous literary history books, and founder of the ‘Prietenii Istoriei Literare’ [‘Friends of Literary History’] Society, which edited the ‘Prietenii Istoriei Literare’ Magazine. He is the one who made an important discovery from the literary history’s perspective, revealing that the ‘Cantarea Romaniei’ [‘The Song of Romania’] poem hadn’t been written by Balcescu, like everyone thought, but by Alecu Russo. [Ed. note: ‘Cantarea Romaniei’, the best known work of poet and prose writer Alecu Russo, is a poem in prose written in French and published in 1850, translated by Nicolae Balcescu.] Another teacher of Romanian was Scarlat Struteanu, PhD in Romanian Philology, author of a well-known doctoral thesis about the humor of Caragiale 7. French was taught by Benedict Kanner, PhD in Letters from the Sorbonne. Another French teacher, Alexandru Claudian, later became a professor of ancient philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Iasi. German was taught by Bruno Colbert, PhD in Letters from Vienna, later a lecturer in German language and literature at the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest, and Stefan Motas Zeletin, PhD in Philosophy from the University of Erlangen, Germany, author of the then-famous work ‘Burghezia romana’ [‘The Romanian Bourgeoisie’] and later a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Iasi, just like Claudian. English was taught by Ioan Olimp Stefanovici-Svensk, PhD in Letters from London, former student of the famous English linguist Daniel Jones, who created the system of transliteration named Jones. Stefanovici-Svensk is the one who introduced the system of transliteration of the English language in Romania, and the first one who translated works by Eminescu 8 into English, in cooperation with the English poet Sylvia Pankhurst.

It is with particular pleasure that I remember Stefanovici, who didn’t only teach me English, but also phonetics. Thanks to this, I can speak any language better – not just English, I can speak

Romanian better too. He educated my hearing. Stefanovici was a great teacher, but he is sadly forgotten today – who else remembers him? I remember my first class with him. He came in without saying a word, grabbed a piece of chalk and drew the quadrangle of English vocalism on the blackboard. When I later became an English phonetics professor myself, I showed my students the quadrangle that I had learnt in 5th grade. How could I forget Benedict Kanner, who taught me French and was the first one to slap me. I was in the 1st grade of high school, which corresponds to today's 1st year of middle school, the 5th grade. He had me read from the textbook. It said there 'Leve-toi!' ['Get up!']. I read it as it was spelled and he slapped me. He had no idea that he was slapping a future colleague. How could I forget Colbert's German classes, or the Romanian classes of Petre Hanes, who was so close to his pupils, or the philosophy classes of Ioanitescu, who had been a student of Maiorescu? [Titu Maiorescu (1840-1917): esthetician, literary critic and professor, co-founder of the 'Junimea' ['Youth'] literary society in Iasi, where some of the most important Romanian writers of the time made their apprenticeship: M. Eminescu, I.L. Caragiale, I. Slavici etc. He elaborated the theory of 'forms without essence' which favored the use of local values over the import of Western literary patterns.] Ioanitescu would only teach logics by Maiorescu's textbook, which had been unavailable for decades. In order to help me, my father wrote to a brother of his who lived in Iasi. My uncle found the textbook in some used books store and sent it to me. I was one of the few pupils in my class who had that textbook.

Even the teachers who taught arts and crafts were gifted people. There was sculptor Aristide Iliescu, and composer Ioan Croitoru, who taught music. Opera singer Grigore Magiari, who taught music too, brought a gramophone to class, played records and gave us musical education. The physical education teacher had studied in Sweden. The principal had sent him to Sweden to purchase apparatus for the gym that was built. This is how high schools were back then. History teacher Iuliu Moisil later became an Academy member and the founder of Romanian numismatics. This is the kind of teachers I had. Being a high school teacher was considered to be a great thing back then. When a high school teacher joined a party, the entire press announced that the honorable teacher X joined the Y party. Some of them were the heads of county party organizations, which was not an insignificant thing.

I made friends in high school, and I made friends in college. One of my friends from college was Mircea Stoe, who is dead now. He first became an attaché, then a legation secretary in London. When King Michael abdicated, he resigned. He settled in Sutton, a little town near London. When my wife had a convention in Paris, I went with her, crossed the Channel to England, and stayed at my friend's until the convention was over. Mircea died of lung cancer, because of the tobacco. His wife still lives and we write to each other. A very good friend of mine, Alfred Reiner, a Jew, died at the earthquake [in 1977] with his entire family. Reiner was the manager of a printing house located close to Sfantul Gheorghe Sq. There was a time when I lived with him on Poenaru Bordea St., near the Court House – it was in the 1950's, before I got married. I didn't stay for long, but it was more than a year. At the earthquake, all those who lived in that apartment house died. The building had grown rather ramshackle [because it was old] and, when a truck passed by, you could feel the windows vibrate. Another apartment house was built on that spot. Another friend of mine was Idel Segal [a Jew], who was assassinated. He was an editor at the Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House and he carried around sacks full of manuscripts. Some thugs thought he was carrying something valuable. He wouldn't let go, he was stubborn, and so they killed him in the street. This happened in the 1970's. There was a very nice article about him published in 'Romania libera'

[‘The Free Romania’] [Ed. note: Romanian information newspaper which was published during the communist period and continued to be published, in a renewed edition, after 1989]: ‘Death of a bookman’. I don’t have that issue anymore, I don’t know how I lost it, and I’m sorry about it. I had photocopies and gave them to everyone. They’re all dead! I haven’t seen my colleagues for years. The few who are still alive never leave their homes.

In the 1950’s, I had this initiative, that the graduating class of 1931 from the Spiru Haret High School meet al least once a month, so that we may keep in touch. I got the phone numbers of everyone, and I called them. It worked. In the years that followed, we would meet in the last Thursday of every month at the restaurant of the House of the University Staff. There were still many of us who came when we celebrated 50 years from our graduation. On that occasion, we met at the ‘Cina’ [restaurant] and we joined together several tables. That was a hell of a party. When we celebrated 60 years from our graduation, there were still some of us left. But when we had to celebrate 70 years, there was no one. You should know we were two classes with 40 pupils each, which gives a total of 80. Only 4 of them are still alive today, and 2 of them are Jewish. Back the, there were 3 Jews or so in one class, and another 3 in the other. All the former Jewish pupils lived long. Even those who are no longer among us, died in their eighties. The only remaining ones are a classmate of mine and me. And out of the 74 Romanians, only two are still alive. So you see, Jews live really long!

I had teachers of Hebrew and I studied it at home until the time of my bar mitzvah. This took place [approximately in 1926] in my parents’ home, in the presence of a Hebrew teacher that was well-known at the time – his name was Schreiber. He was also a poet and had written a volume of poems, ‘Randunelele Palestinei’ [‘The Swallows of Palestine’]. I remember that the ceremony was attended by some members of the family: my parents and my uncles – my mother’s brothers, but not all of them. I held a short, a very short speech in Hebrew, and then they gave me some presents. I later forgot Hebrew, since I didn’t have any books. I vaguely remember its words and letters today.

I was busy reading, exercising, biking – I was member of a biking club. There was a well-known, top quality printing house on Uranus St. It was called ‘Marvan’, and all its workers were biking enthusiasts. They had founded the ‘Marvan’ Biking Club, which I joined. Our rival was the ‘Prince Nicholas’ Biking Club. At the end of the week I used to go biking on Kiseleff Dr., where I would meet other bikers from ‘Marvan’ or from ‘Prince Nicholas’. We would bike together to Ploiesti, or in the direction of Oltenita or Giurgiu. We would cover several scores of kilometers on the highway in one day.

I usually stayed in Bucharest during my vacations as a child. I remember I once went to Sinaia, which I enjoyed a lot. My father once took me to the seaside [at the Black Sea] for a few days. Back then, Mamaia [one of today’s major Romanian seaside resorts] was a totally primitive place and the beach only had some wooden shacks. Another time I went to visit a sister of my mother’s who lived in Botosani, and I spent my entire vacation there. In Bucharest, I would go to the stadium of the National Academy of Physical Education, which wasn’t far from our home. I would run or jump, but, most of the time, I sat and looked at the athletes who were training. I had a very introverted temperament. My vacation was a sort of mixture of biking or athletic trials and very intense readings, which were rich for a boy my age. I was also interested in language issues, not just in literature. I could read French well – actually, very well, if I’m allowed to brag. I could read German

and English. I could speak refined French, not just read it. I used to read mainly French literature, but I also read Romanian literature. These last years, I've been reading almost exclusively Romanian classic writers – from the chroniclers, the Vacaresti brothers, the pre-Eminescu poets and prose writers. I rarely open a French book. I have, of course, my favorites among the French poets too.

I used to go to silent movies. Movies were divided into acts – some had eight acts, some had nine, some had ten. The longest ones had 12 acts and there was a break after each act. If the projectionist was in a hurry, he would run two acts with no stop. The audience would protest, claiming it was tiresome; today they sit in front of the silver screen for two straight hours. There was a pianist who played while the movie was showing. I remember the actors of that time, especially the comic actors – Zigotto, the most popular comedian, an American Jew, Laurel and Hardy, and Harold Lloyd, the comedian with glasses. I remember Francesca Bettini, Douglas Fairbanks senior, because there was also a Douglas junior. I liked Douglas Fairbanks because he was an adventurer, he was sturdy, he was clever, and he could beat them all. I remember Fatty, who bore this name because he was obese. Whatever Fatty said appeared written on the screen. They were all very nice, these silent comedians. I remember the first talking movie, in 1930-something.

Before the war, in the 1930's, I would go to the Hasefer Bookstore [Ed. note: It means 'The Book'; today there is The Hasefer Publishing House.], where they sold books written by Jews or about Jews that couldn't be found in the other bookstores. The place also hosted fine arts exhibitions. I spent pleasant moments in that bookstore. I seldom actually purchased something, because I didn't have money, but I would go in and skim through the books – there was an intimate environment. I believe the manager's name was Steinberg, he was a cultivated man. The bookstore was at the entrance of the Villacrosse Passage [Ed. note: in the historic center of the capital]. There is an apartment house on that spot now.

My father was a subscriber to all the Jewish periodicals, which he received by mail. I used to read all the Jewish newspapers, from the first page to the last. There was 'Curierul Israelit' ['The Israelite Courier'] [Ed. note: 'Weekly organ for the defense of the Jewish interests' published in Bucharest in 1906-1916, 1920-1941, 1944-1945. It included editorials, debates, pieces of information, reports on foreign affairs and internal affairs, and advertisements.], a large paper, the best and most important, edited by Horia Carp. There was 'Egalitatea' ['The Equality'] [Ed. note: Jewish magazine published between 1890 and 1940, interrupted during World War I and suppressed in 1940. It reflected: the fight for emancipation and cultural progress, the political fight for civil rights, the Zionist ideology. It also reported family events: balls, engagements, weddings, anniversaries and funerals.], edited by [Moses] Schwartzfeld. There was 'Mantuirea' ['The Redemption'] [Ed. note: Jewish daily newspaper published in Bucharest between 1919 and 1922; a biweekly between 1944 and 1948. Zionist periodical promoting the Judaic culture, it included editorials, literary translations and commentaries on laws and decrees.] I remember a magazine called 'Copilul evreu' ['The Jewish Child'] [Ed. note: Bimonthly youth magazine published in Bucharest between 1922 and 1940. It included biblical history, games, prose, letters in Yiddish and Ivrit.] As a child, I remember I read 'Dimineata' and 'Adevarul'. The latter had a column that I particularly enjoyed – it was called 'Frolics'. Schwartzfeld's 'Egalitatea' had a column that I enjoyed a lot too – it was called 'Ruffians in action'. I remember all the 'Dimineata' contributors of the time: Blumenfeld, Teodorescu-Braniste,

Ion Teodorescu, Constantin Graur, D. Faur, Liviu P. Nasta, who wrote the foreign reports. I remember the caricaturists and drawers from 'Adevarul'. Even today, I would take great pleasure in rereading the 'Adevarul' and 'Dimineata' of the 1920's and 1930's.

Only one classmate of mine [from the Spiru Haret High School], Vasilescu, became a Legionary 9. After we finished high school, I remember seeing him in the street, wearing the green shirt, and I didn't dare approach him. You should know that the Legionaries not only didn't talk to the Jews, but they didn't even look at them. If, for instance, I was in the street, and I came across a classmate who was a Legionary, not only would he not return my greeting or stop, but he wouldn't even look at me – he just looked the other way. They had been ordered not to look at us. This Vasilescu fellow may have joined the Legionaries, but he soon became very friendly with me. He had changed his convictions, realizing the absurdity and criminal nature of the Legion 10. He was just a naïve young man who had been fooled by a very skillful and clever demagogy. I never reminded him of those days and never reproached him for anything. So he was the only one who became a Legionary. Leaving him aside, there was never any discrimination in my high school. The teachers treated us, the Jewish boys, just like they treated all the others. There was a legionary teacher, the French teacher, Frolo. But he talked to the others about me and called me his favorite. He was an Italian-born Catholic. He was an Iron Guard 11 candidate in Roman County, where there was a Catholic population, but didn't get elected. He was the only legionary teacher, but he was unbiased when it came to me; in fact, he was more than that – he loved me, because he could see I enjoyed French. I once even contradicted him, for it had seemed to me that he had made a mistake. His French classes were better than the ones at the University. While the literature courses at the University were held in Romanian, Frolo taught us literature in the most accurate French – so what I did with him was better than what I did in college. I graduated from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Bucharest in 1935.

I remember when the first victim of the Iron Guard was shot. Contrary to the common belief, the first victim of the Iron Guard was not prefect [Constantin] Manciu [Ed. note: police prefect in Iasi assassinated by the Legionaries on 25th October 1925, in front of the Iasi Court House], who was shot by Corneliu [Zelea] Codreanu 12. Manciu was actually the second victim. The first victim was the Jewish student David Falic. He was shot right on the steps of the Cernauti University by a Legionary named Nicolae Totu. Dr. Bratescu, our well-known historian of medicine, mentions Nicolae Totu in his latest book, but he misspells his name, calling him Tautu. So Totu shot student Falic on the steps of the university, I don't know why. I don't know what happened to Totu, but I believe he got away with it, because he became a magazine contributor – I used to come across his name. Can you imagine? To think you can shoot a man to death and get away with it! This is the kind of justice we had back in those days!

I remember what the political situation in Germany was before January 1933. I was already 20 and no longer a child when Hitler won the elections. The problem was that the social democrats didn't get along with the Communists – they could have form the majority, had they created the workers' joint front. Hitler's demagogy prevailed; he promised guns instead of butter – that was his slogan. I knew a Jew who lived in Germany – his name was Abeles. He came to Bucharest and we talked. 'What do you people think about Hitler?' I asked him. 'Hitler isn't serious!' he said. 'He won't be in power for long! As for his anti-Semitism, he shouldn't be taken seriously. He'll loosen up, he'll sweeten the poison! We're not afraid of Hitler!' The man I talked to fooled himself, and so did the

entire Jewish minority in Germany. They all thought like he did. They underestimated the danger, they didn't realize how colossally dangerous the situation had become. And Hitler, a man of his word, kept all his promises and did everything that was humanly possible to create a Germany free of Jews. Some left to America, England, France, but most of them stayed. I knew what went on. When I had the money, I bought the German press that was sold in Bucharest, at the downtown newsstands. I read Hitler's newspaper and the most obnoxious magazine ever printed since Gutenberg invented type. It was called 'Der Strumer' ['He Who Stirs the Storm'] and it was edited by one of the Strasser brothers. The lower part contained a slogan that was present in every issue: 'Jews are our misery.' This was the most shameful magazine I have ever come across. I bought two or three issues, but it was unreadable. The Romanian Jews were actually quicker to sense the danger than the German Jews, because they had got used to it 'thanks' to the Iron Guard and Cuza's League 13.

During the War

I remember the [Legionary] rebellion [of January 1941] 14 very well. I was walking in the streets with no fear and stared around. On Atena St., I looked from a distance, because we weren't allowed to get any closer, how the synagogue [the Iesua Tova] on that street was burning. The Legionaries had set it on fire and let no one, not even the firemen, to get near and extinguish the fire. After the war, the synagogue was built anew, and made even more beautiful than the old one. The Tables of the Law were fixed on the façade, and it is today one of the most beautiful synagogues in Bucharest. I had the fortune of not living in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood, like Vacaresti or Dudesti – I lived in Dealul Spirii, where nothing bad happened.

When the war came, the Germans kicked us out of our home [approximately in 1941], so we had to find shelter in another neighborhood. All of us moved in the Stefan cel Mare quarter, in an old house. Our place had been occupied by the Germans, who had set up an apprentice school there. We weren't allowed to own radio sets. We had a large radio set which we handed over to the precinct police station. But I clandestinely kept a small galena receiver. That kind of devices were imported from Germany – they were small and cubic, and had a headset. In the evening, I would take out my radio and listen to Radio London, and then I would hide it, so that they wouldn't catch me and send me to prison. I wouldn't believe how intensely I followed the course of the war. I rejoiced like a kid for every town the Russians liberated in their march towards Berlin. I had my atlas before me and I kept track: 'Here', I would say to myself, 'they conquered another town; they advanced for another hundred of kilometers'. I listened to all the news bulletins.

In 1941, when we entered the war against the USSR, the first thing that happened to me was that they kicked me out of the army and sent me to forced labor, to the shooting range. My father was too old to get sent to forced labor, and my brother was too young. I remember the first bombings caught me there. The Russians were bombing Bucharest, and we were working under military supervision and couldn't take cover anywhere. We worked with our bare arms or with shovels to build the shooting range, and we got neither food, nor money. We worked like slaves – but the slaves in ancient times were fed at least. We worked from dawn till dusk. In winter, they would have us clear the snow in the streets. I remember I was once with a fellow-worker, a physician by trade, and we saw a German military approaching. He was a simple air force soldier and he began a conversation with me. I spoke German. He told me he was an antifascist, that he was a textile worker in his civilian life, and that he was from Augsburg. I talked to him, but I soon regretted it

when I got home – I was scared. I realize now that the man had been honest, that he was a genuine German antifascist, and I'm sorry I didn't keep in touch with him.

Then we got sent to Moldavia, to Onesti, where we built fortifications. I worked by the concrete mixer day and night. It was hard work, because I was supposed to carry cement sacks weighing 50 kilos on my back, and I couldn't even lift them from the ground. A sturdier fellow-worker used to help me – he put the sacks on my back, then I took them where I had to and emptied them. We were led by a military school cadet, a tyrant who cursed us and persecuted us severely. My father would send me money from home, and so I was able to buy things to eat. The Jews in Onesti sometimes called us for minyans, and invited us to table afterwards. They saw I didn't have a plate, so they gave me one, and a spoon, and they gave me soup, they fed me. The Jews in Onesti were very nice to us, very humane. Onesti was a shtetl, a small town which had relatively many Jews. But they weren't any different from the other inhabitants – they dressed in the contemporary fashion.

[Mr. Marcuson describes the war period and his involvement in the underground activity of the Communist Party in the article 'Amintiri din ilegalitate' ['Memories from my underground days'], published in 'Cadran' ['Dial'], the literary notebook of the 'George Bacovia' cenacle, Bucharest, August 1971, p.6-7.] « In 1942, I found myself drafted for 'compulsory labor' at the printing house of the Central Institute for Statistics in Bucharest. This was the perfect occasion to come across poet Stefan Popescu, who was the head of that printing house back then, a man I had first met one decade ago, while a student at the Faculty of Letters. This was also the perfect occasion for the two of us to use the cover of our official activity in order to broaden our underground work in the service of... the Romanian Communist Party. So, the printing house was turned into a nucleus of antifascist resistance. There, in a backroom, we planed our actions: multiplying in hundreds of copies (only using a typewriter at first) some propaganda brochures; some of them had a literary character and were sometimes spotted in other places than Bucharest. (A clerk from the Statistics Institute who returned from Galati presented us one of our own brochures, which he had found down there.); setting up a fund of literary and science books which we sent to the political inmates, by means of their families; monthly collecting – from a group of well-to-do supporters – relatively large amounts of money for the Red Aid 15. Comrade Stefan – my superior – had exempted me from any professional obligations, so I could focus exclusively on these actions; I used my spare time to translate Soviet prose writer M. Ilin's book 'The World Is Changing', which spread in 10,000 typewritten copies bound in cloth – immediately after 23rd August 1944 16, the book was officially published by the newly-found 'Forum' publishing house, thanks to the support Lucretiu Patrascanu 17.

There was no way we could use that printing house to print some of our own things. The fact that one of the employees lived with his family in the very building of the company was an obstacle impossible to overcome. I used to look with envy at the automatic typesetters and the printing presses and thought how much faster and better our work could have been done if we had used those machines instead of my typewriter. In the spring of 1944, my comrade told me, in an enthusiastic but worried voice, that he the Party's Central Committee had assigned him to design a plan to print brochures and leaflets that were to be distributed to the population and the army, and asked me whether I knew a place where he could print a brochure. Knowing what the situation was at the printing house, I had to think of another place. I soon remembered I had once met – about

three years ago, in a forced labor camp – one of the co-owners of the ‘Taranul’ [‘Peasant’] printing house in Bucharest. His name was Alfred Rainer, and he was one of my major contributors; thanks to him, an important share of the printing house’s income was directed to the purse of the Red Aid. I paid him a visit and I told him directly what I wanted from him. Rainer gladly accepted: he agreed to put his workshops and paper to our disposal, so that we could print whatever we liked. All we needed was a typesetter and a ‘puitoare’ [Ed. note: operator who inserted the blank paper into the printing press]. We found them in typesetter Sigol and ‘puitoarea’ Stefania Barbulescu. This is how our printing plan began, in the workshop of the ‘Taranul’ printing house, located at the heart of our country’s capital, not far away from Sfantul Gheorghe Sq.

The first manuscript that Stefan Popescu entrusted me with had twenty pages and was entitled ‘The Red Army Is Coming’. The cover bore the mention ‘The Publishing House of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party’ (and I was informed that that was the first printed material to see the light of day with that mention on it in Romania), and it had to be multiplied in 2,000 of copies. At the second floor of the workshop, where the typesetting section was, I prepared a room where the typesetter was to work at night, when the place was deserted. We had get rid of the guard – he had been allowed to take a few days off. In the evening, Sigol entered the workshop, carefully camouflaged the window and, after making sure everything was all right, he began to work. Even today, I remember what he told me when I asked him if he enjoyed the text: ‘Every word is like a bullet!’

Typesetting was done manually, using small letters and crowded lines to save paper. It lasted three of four nights. Then we moved to the printing process. This was done in a Sunday, using a ‘flat’ machine in order to avoid making noise and being heard from the street – we didn’t use the motor, but we manually operated the wheel of the machine. We crammed the copies into a large suitcase which we placed in a previously designated location, from where Stefan was supposed to pick it up. We left the workshop one by one, making sure we weren’t followed, after burning the galley proofs, and removing all the traces of our action. We left the doors unlocked – Stefan was supposed to come in, collect the suitcase with brochures, lock the door, and place the key in the mailbox. In order to avoid the detection of the printing shop by the type that had been used, we asked Rainer to sacrifice the entire set of types: all the led blocks were put in a pouch which was thrown in the Dambovita River.

The following day, Stefan took care of the distribution, and hundreds of citizens found in their mailboxes the very first work published by the Publishing House of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. ‘The Romanian Communist Party’, they could read, ‘feels it is its duty to enlighten the public opinion in this difficult time, when the nation is at a crossroads, placed between life and death… The Communist Party knows this is no easy thing. It is with difficulty that its word reaches you, for it has to sidestep the barbed wire of a terror regime and – what’s more dramatic –, struggle with an entire mentality of mistrust, suspicion, fear… But, no matter how many obstacles may lie in its way, the voice of the Communist Party shall be heard and understood, because it is the voice of the national self-preservation instinct.’ But it wasn’t until the liberation day [23rd August 1944] that I found out the name of the one who had written those inspired pages: Mihail Sebastian 18. That day, a new kind of duty awaited us, the ones at the printing house: we had to print, that very day, the first official issue of the ‘Romania Libera’ newspaper. »

I became a Party member before 1944, while the movement was underground, because this was the only party that wasn't anti-Semitic. When the Communists came to power, I was glad, because we had got rid of Hitler. Our only choices were Hitler and Stalin – there was no third option, and this is why I believe that thinking in black-and-white was not only permissible, but also unavoidable. I saw in the Soviet Union not the Good, but an evil that was lesser than Hitler's Germany. There are many things that we found out after 23rd August 1944, and some are still to be found out. Can't you see that Holocaust is being denied? I won't be surprised if some historian shows up one of these days and claims that World War II is an invention of the Jews! The way they're saying that the Holocaust is our invention. How did 6 million Jews disappear? They simply evaporated? Most of the people don't know that the Jews are the only people in the world with fewer members than before the war. They haven't managed to compensate for the 6 million victims through population growth. How did the 3 million Polish Jews disappear? There are now in Poland fewer Jews than in Romania… This was the largest murder in history! Never have the peoples known at any other time in history such an industry of assassinations!

After the war, our house on Uranus St. was returned to us, and we moved back.

After the War

I nurtured Zionist feelings, was a fan of the Zionist idea, had read Herzl, but I never thought it could actually happen. I thought it was a utopia, for I knew there wasn't one single islet or one single piece of land on this Planet that didn't belong to someone. How could I have foreseen someone would give the Jews 20,000 square kilometers? How did I find out about the creation of the State of Israel? I was at the State Central Library, in the Periodicals hall. I was reading 'L'Humanite', the daily newspaper of the French communist party, the only French paper that was available in Romania [in 1948]. So I was reading it, and I suddenly came across the map of Israel. I was utterly amazed. I spent hours and hours looking at the map of the new Israel and I couldn't believe my eyes; we finally had our own country. I felt as if a miracle had happened – something that I never thought it would be possible. Think about it: from 70 A.D. until 1948, Jews from all around the world yearned for, hankered after and dreamt at night of Jerusalem. When two Jews parted, they didn't say 'Good-bye', they said 'Next year in Jerusalem!'

My mother made aliyah in the 1960's. My brother and other relatives were already living in Israel. She stayed in an old age home in Tel Aviv. I visited her there and, when I returned, I got the news of her death. She died after I had visited her. She was 89 when she passed away [in 1981].

I thought of going to Israel, but I couldn't speak the language. I would have found it difficult to live there. Imagine someone living in Romania and not knowing Romanian – how hard would things be for that person? I couldn't practice an intellectual profession there either. I couldn't do what I did in Romania, where I worked as an editor for a publishing house. I thought of leaving for Paris in high school. Had I done it after I graduated, it would have been a mistake. In 1940, the Germans entered France – they would have caught me and gassed me. At least I'm alive now. I should have left after 23rd August 1944, and the fact that I didn't was another mistake.

In 1949 or so, I went to Poland and [East] Germany. We were four Romanians sent [Ed. note: by the Romanian State, in an official exchange with Poland and East Germany] to spend our vacations. Poles and Germans came in our place, to spend their vacations in Romania. On that occasion, I traveled across Poland, from one end to the other, and I visited a lot of towns and villages; and this

is what I did in East Germany too. Warsaw was all in ruins as far as the eye could see. One couldn't tell where the streets used to be. They couldn't find a single house that was standing in order to accommodate us. Do you know where we stayed? Warsaw is crossed by the Vistula River. There was a small ship lying at anchor – it was probably destined for short cruises. Well, we slept in the cabins of that ship. They couldn't find a room in all Warsaw. And when I say ruins, I mean that there was hardly a wall standing here and there. Things looked the same in Berlin. We were accommodated in a suburban commune, 10-12 kilometers away from the city. It had a few houses intact, and we also got a car. I didn't see one single man my age in Poland and Germany – I was in my thirties. There were only women, children and elderly people. There weren't any men. Hitler made the Germans who were my age disappear more than he had done with the Jews. I lived in Poland for a month, but I never saw a man my age. I saw one in Germany, but he was legless – he had lost his legs on the front. Let me tell you about the women's attitude towards us, the men. The eyes of the Polish and German women begged for a little attention. Their behavior was decorous though. Few of them were aggressive and put their arms around our neck. Most of them were happy if we looked at them and said something to them.

I only held a job after 23rd August 1944. Before that, I lived from tutoring in English and French. I didn't tutor as much as I could have, because I wanted to have time to read and go for a walk. I used to think and I still think that man's greatest fortune is what the Romans called 'otium', that is spare time intelligently used. After the war, I became a regular employee. I first worked for the Communist Party – they called us instructors, but I actually did documenting for the propaganda section. I was a reference professional. I worked there for a long time, from 1945 until the 1950's, when they fired me because of a trial in my family [which made Mr. Marcuson's personnel file look bad]. Then I worked at the 'Univers' Publishing House, still in the 1950's. I also taught French at the Foreign Languages Institute, but only for a few years. The institute was dissolved, but I don't remember when – in the 1950's or 1960's. I was a researcher at the Party History Institute. I had some books and articles published. I retired while I was working for the Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, in 1973. Things were fine for me when I worked there.

My wife, Cornelia Paunescu, was the daughter of some veteran social democratic militants. I wanted to talk to her parents, to ask them about their memories of the old, pre-World War I social democratic movement, the way I'm telling you things from my past right now. Her parents were well-known people; both her mother and her father had their picture in Atanasiu's 'Istoria socialismului' ['History of Socialism']. Her father, Paunescu-Paltin, was already dead. There's a street in Bucharest named after him – a small, pretty street, in the neighborhood where we used to live. They almost gave this name to the very street we lived on, but, eventually, another street, parallel to ours, got to be called Paunescu-Paltin. Her mother was a militant of the socialist women's group. I went to talk to her, and it was on that occasion that I met her daughter. She told me, in her turn, some of her memories of the social democratic movement. It was 'love at first sight'. And we got married. We were both middle-aged by then, in our forties.

My wife, Cornelia Paunescu, was born in 1911, in Bucharest. She wasn't Jewish. She had two sisters: the late Blanche Nicolau [nee Paunescu], and Agatha Paunescu, who's still alive and is a retiree. They spent all their lives in Bucharest. We got married in Bucharest, in 1957. There was only an official ceremony at the 3rd District Town hall – neither her, nor I was religious. Both my family and hers agreed to this marriage. I wasn't a child anymore, I was confident I could choose

what was right for me, and it turned out I made the best choice. Cornelia went to the Medical School in Bucharest. She was a scientist and she lectured at over thirty international conventions. She was the only Romanian docent with a PhD in pediatric otolaryngology – that was her specialty. As a physician, she attended the Korean War [Ed. note: 25th June 1950-27th July 1953] against the Americans and was the personal physician of Kim Il Sung [Ed. note: (1912-1994), president of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from 1948]. There were doctors from all the other socialist countries there – East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, China. One day Kim Il Sung got sick and he asked who the best doctor was. So my wife treated him, and Kim Il Sung invited us to North Korea twice. Each time, we stayed there for a month, and we lived where Ceausescu 19 had been accommodated before us. North Korea is a very beautiful country. Pyongyang had been bombed by the Americans and the South-Koreans, so they had had to rebuild it and everything looked new. They made theaters, conference halls. All that was left of the old city was an entrance gate. We walked the streets of Pyongyang, with an interpreter with us, of course. We made the way from Bucharest to North Korea in the Transsiberian [special train]. We saw the entire Siberia, and all the cities North Korea and China. Siberia is huge and confines fabulous riches that are yet to be discovered. It's splendid – from Moscow to the Chinese border, all you can see is birch trees. The first time we went, we took the Transsiberian to and from North Korea. [Ed. note: A one-way trip lasted for about eight days.] The second time, we took the Transsiberian to get there, but we took the plane from Beijing to get back. Today, China looks different from what it looked like when we went there, because they started building. We went many places [together]: England, East Germany, Italy, Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Turkey.

Cornelia never told a lie in her entire life. She was very gentle and kind and she only had one flaw: she trusted people too much. She didn't know what evil meant. She fluently spoke French, English and Italian. She had a nice humanistic culture [Mr. Marcuson points in different directions of the room, to several bookshelves] – that's her English and American library, that's the French library, that's the Latin library, that's the Romanian library, and that over there is the German library. She used to go to the hospital or to the Medical School, to lecture, while I used to go to the publishing house or the institute. We both retired on the same day, in 1973. Daily life wasn't great from a political point of view; economically speaking, we had our problems too – there was a lot of queuing to do and all sorts of shortages. Stores didn't look like they do now: they were shabby, and the shop assistants weren't trained; it wasn't easy to shop for things. We spent our spare time reading, going for a walk, going to see performances. I didn't keep any Jewish traditions. One morning [in 2000], we had had lunch in the kitchen, 'closer to the production site', like we used to say. She was breathing rather difficultly, but I didn't get nervous. I took her by the hand and helped her sit in an armchair, so she could carry on reading her novel. She fell. I thought she had stumbled against the carpet. But she was dead. I never knew one could die so easily.

We now live in a country which guarantees the freedom of opinion, so I'm going to exercise this right. The Communists built the largest palace in Europe and second largest in the world. [Ed. note: The Palace of Parliament, or 'The People's House', the second largest building in the world, after the Pentagon, was erected on Ceausescu's order. It currently houses the Romanian Parliament, an international conference center, and numerous museums.] The current regime would be unable to build such a thing or to furnish a palace that is singular in Europe. It's emblematic of Bucharest, just like the Eiffel Tower is emblematic of Paris, the Kremlin of Moscow, and the Coliseum of Rome. A huge number of things were built. They don't build anymore nowadays, and they're not capable

of finishing what was started and is almost done. Had Ceausescu lived another year, we would now have a new National Library, and some hundreds of extra apartment houses, nice apartment houses, with balconies and carefully designed curves. I ride in the bus 104 for kilometers and kilometers, and I see what was built by Ceausescu's regime; and I also see the cranes from the deserted construction site of the National Library-to-be. They want to turn it into something else – apparently, these people don't need a library, they don't need books. However, I am moderately optimistic. We are, undoubtedly, on the right track. Of course, we may stumble from time to time, but it is on the right way that we stumble. I'll vote for the social democrats [PSD – The Social Democratic Party] in the presidential elections; and I'll vote for the Menorah [the sign of the candidate of the Jewish Community] in the legislative elections!

I used to listen to the BBC and the Voice of America on a regular basis. After I retired, I even used to listen to the same show twice – the first time in the evening, and the second time in the morning, when it was rerun. I couldn't refrain from listening – I was too curious, and I needed those radios like I needed air. I remember Noel Bernard and his wife; I used to know other names too, but I forgot them.

I welcomed the Revolution of 1989 20, because I had become fed up with Ceausescu. I was in Bucharest when it happened. I walked in the streets, but I wasn't in that crowd whom Ceausescu addressed – I kept away from crowds. What happened was inevitable. We simply had to enter Europe. I later realized that this wouldn't have been possible with Ceausescu in power. Being part of Europe is a matter of life and death for us – our peace and prosperity are at stake. I feel frustrated because we are still so far behind, and our integration may be put off. But I hoe we'll make it [in 2007]. My life improved after 1989. I was able to read the foreign press and a series of authors that had been unavailable before, and I could travel abroad – which I did almost every year, to the East and to the West.

Before 1989 (I forgot the exact year), someone from the [Jewish] Community came to me and asked me if I wanted to be a member. I said yes on the spot, paid my first fee, and I can say I'm an old member of the community. One Sunday morning, while I was at a conference held at the cultural center on Popa Soare St., we were all given some applications to fill. This is how we became members of the Association of the Romanian Zionists, which was recreated after it had been banned for several decades. When the winter holidays came, I received a greeting card from the Zionists, who have their headquarters close from here, on Kogalniceanu Blvd., where the Sohnut located is too. Despite there's so few of us left, the community has an active life. The 'Realitatea evreiasca' ['Jewish Reality'] Magazine is very good. [Ed. note: The magazine of the Jewish minority in Romania was known as 'Revista Cultului Mozaic' ['The Magazine of the Mosaic Cult'] between 1956 and 1995, and changed its name to 'Realitatea evreiasca' in 1995. It includes articles about the cultic and cultural life of the community and contains a page in English and one in Ivrit.] It has some extraordinary articles, especially those by Eveline Fonea, Iulia Deleanu, Luciana Friedmann. I regularly attend the community conference center on Popa Soare St. on Sunday. I sometimes eat at their canteen.

I was always interested in religion, although I wasn't a religious person. One may deny the existence of God, but one cannot deny the existence of religion. I'm a reader of the Bible and of religious literature. I only go to the synagogue on special occasions. Unfortunately, religious services only began after sunset, when the first star appears – this is when the Sabbath starts.

Well, when the first star appears, I'm always at my place, because I don't like to walk the streets at night. I only attend the synagogue when I can do it during the day. I was there for Sukkot and for the high holidays, but only to the gatherings that took place in the morning or early in the afternoon. The synagogue is not a church. A church is usually only a place for believers. A synagogue can be also a place for non-believers. The synagogue is Beit Ha Knesset, the house of the assembly – this is where the Jews assemble. There used to be concerts before the war. There was a singer, Silvia Feller. There are electoral meetings and conferences held at the synagogue nowadays too. I now go to the Choral Temple. I only went to the synagogue on Atena St. a few times [Ed. note: the Iesua Tova Synagogue built in 1827, still functional. The street is currently called Tache Ionescu St.]. Most of the synagogues disappeared. I used to go to the Malbim Synagogue [Ed. note: built in 1864, demolished in 1985; on its spot lies today the construction site of the National Library, near Unirii Blvd.]; I liked it a lot. I would also go to the Great Synagogue [Ed. note: built in 1846; since 1991, it has been sheltering the Memorial Museum of the Jewish Martyrs in Romania.] on Vasile Adamache St. I still go there to see the Holocaust exhibition.

I never denied my identity. Against people's advice, I never changed my name of got baptized. There's no point in denying one's identity. If a Jew denies being a Jew, there will always be someone who will remind him! I have come to the conviction that Jews represent not only a religion, but also an ethnic group. Leaving aside the Mosaic faith, there is also a Jewish ethnic group, just like there's a Hungarian, or a German, or a Bulgarian ethnic group. A Jewish baby is a rich being from the very moment it's conceived in its mother's womb. Being a Jew is a lucky thing. Jews cannot be compared to anyone. Of course, any nation could claim it cannot be compared to any other, but the Jewish history is really unique. The Jewish history begins 14 centuries before Christ and it is extraordinary. Jews survived thanks to their rabbis and their religion – it's religion that prevented them from becoming extinct. Hebrew is the only classic language that could be reborn. Attempts were made in Europe to revive Latin – the French founded the 'Le latin vivant' ['Living Latin'] Society, published magazines, but failed. The Greeks tried to resurrect the old Attic language, but failed. The Greeks of today still speak Demotic, the colloquial Greek language. The only ancient language that managed to survive and is now spoken by millions of Jews from Israel is Hebrew. Any pupil in Israel can now read the Old Testament in original, in Hebrew. And this is something extraordinary!

Glossary:

1 Gheorghiu-Dej, Gheorghe (1901-1965)
Leader of the Romanian Communist Party between 1952 and 1965. Originally an electrician and railway worker, he was imprisoned in 1933 and became the underground leader of all imprisoned communists. He was prime minister between 1952 and 1955 and first secretary of the Communist Party between 1945 and 1953 and from 1955 until his death. In his later years, he led a policy that drifted away from the directives coming from Moscow, keeping the Stalinist system untouched by the Krushchevian reforms.

2 10th of May (Heroes' Day)
national holiday in the Romanian Monarchy. It was to commemorate Romania's independence from the Ottoman Empire, granted in 1878 by the Treaty of Berlin. As a result of a parliamentary

decision, Carol I of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was proclaimed King of Romania on 10th May, 1881.

3 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.

4 King Ferdinand I

1865-1927, King of Romania (1914-1927). He supported Romania's engaging in World War I on the side of the Entante, 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.

5 King Carol II (1893-1953)

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

6 King Michael (b

1921): Son of King Carol II, King of Romania from 1927-1930 under regency and from 1940-1947. When Carol II abdicated in 1940 Michael became king again but he only had a formal role in state affairs during Antonescu's dictatorial regime, which he overthrew in 1944. Michael turned Romania against fascist Germany and concluded an armistice with the Allied Powers. King Michael opposed the "sovietization" of Romania after World War II. When a communist regime was established in Romania in 1947, he was overthrown and exiled, and he was stripped from his Romanian citizenship a year later. Since the collapse of the communist rule in Romania in 1989, he has visited the country several times and his citizenship was restored in 1997.

7 Caragiale, Ion Luca (1852-1912)

Very important Romanian playwright, prose writer and journalist, representative of the classical trend. He was a contributor for the most renowned humor gazettes of liberal orientation, and for

liberal and conservative newspapers. Refusing to comply with the aesthetical and social taboos of his time, he made a deep analysis of the Romanian society in all his works, from plays and literary prose to humorous sketches, politically-biased columns and epistolary literature. In 1905, he settled in Berlin together with his family. He was the father of the prose writer and poet Mateiu I. Caragiale and of the poet Luca I. Caragiale.

8 Eminescu, Mihai (1850-1889)
considered the foremost Romanian poet of his century. His poems, lyrical, passionate, and revolutionary, were published in periodicals and had a profound influence on Romanian letters. He worked in a traveling company of actors, and also acquired a broad university education. His poetry reflected the influence of the French romantics. Eminescu suffered from periodic attacks of insanity and died shortly after his final attack.

9 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.

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11 Iron Guard
Extreme right wing political organization in Romania between 1930 and 1941, led by C. Z. Codreanu. The Iron Guard propagated nationalist, Christian-mystical and anti-Semitic views. It was banned for its terrorist activities (e.g. the murder of Romanian Prime Minister I. Gh. Duca) in 1933. In 1935 it was re-established as a party named ‘Totul pentru Tara’, (‘Everything for the

Fatherland'), but it was banned again in 1938. It was part of the government in the first period of the Antonescu regime, but it was then banned and dissolved as a result of the unsuccessful coup d'état of January 1941. Its leaders escaped abroad to the Third Reich.

12 Codreanu, Corneliu Zelea (1899-1938)
Founder and leader of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known in Romania as the Legionary Movement (1927), which pursued paramilitary activities and political terrorism. In 1930 Codreanu founded the political organization of the so-called Iron Guard movement. This extreme right-wing organization propagated exclusive nationalism, 'Orthodoxism' and anti-Semitism. By the end of the 1930s it became a mass movement and came into conflict with King Carol II of Romania. Codreanu was arrested and shot on the king's orders in 1938.

13 Liga Apararii National Crestine (National Christian Defense League) (new)
Romanian fascist organization named after Alexandru C. Cuza, one of the most fervent fascist leaders in Romania, who was known for his ruthless chauvinism and anti-Semitism. Cuza founded the National Christian Defense League, the LANC ('Liga Apararii National Crestine'), in 1923. The paramilitary troops of the league, called lancierii, wore blue uniforms. The organization published a newspaper entitled Apararea Nationala. In 1935 the LANC merged with the National Agrarian Party, and turned into the National Christian Party, which had a pronounced anti-Semitic program.

14 Legionary rebellion
failed coup intended by the legionaries in January 20-27 1941, which culminated with the pogrom of the Jews in Bucharest; after its defeat, Ion Antonescu established military dictatorship.

15 Red Assistance (new) – started in 1922 at the IV
Communist International. The aim of the communist aid organization was the material and moral support of the communist movement, their families as well as victims of fascism. The organization worked illegally in Transylvania and the rest of Romania, and was able to enlist the help of numbers of young people in it's work. Financial support for the assistance program was procured through donations.

16 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.

17 Patrascanu, Lucretiu (1900-1954)
Veteran Communist and respected 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.

18 Sebastian, Mihail (Hechter, I
) (1907-1945) (new): novelist, literary critic, playwright, essayist, PhD in Economic Sciences and Law from Paris. His most important works were published in the 1930's; they had a semiautobiographical character and aroused vivid literary and doctrine-related debates. He was an editor for 'Revista Fundatiilor Regale' ('The Magazine of the Royal Foundations') from 1936 until 1940, when he was fired because he was a Jew. In 1941, he became a teacher at the Jewish High School 'Cultura' ('The Culture'), then at the Onescu College, a Jewish improvised university, where he held a class of comparative literature. He died as a result of an accident.

19 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.

20 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 legislative body.