

THE FEDERATION OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES
OF ROMANIA

HOLOCAUST

1940–1945

**SUFFERING,
COMPASSION,
SOLIDARITY**

The Scrib Publishing House,
2009

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October 9, a Day Not to Forget¹

Beginning with the fall of 2004, Romania's Parliament decided that the Holocaust of the Jewish and Roma population from Romania would be commemorated on October 9, every year. It was on that day of 1941 that the deportation



of the Jews from Bassarabia and Bucovina started on the right side of the Prut River, to Transnistria. For many of the deportees, that piece of land would mean the end of

¹ It is on October 9 that the Holocaust is commemorated in Romania every year, as a result of the Government's Order 672 issued on May 5, 2004.

Due to the Jewish autumn holidays, the Holocaust Memorial Day was set on October 8 in 2009. It included three memorable events:

- Inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial, under the patronage of the Romanian President, Mr. Traian Băsescu, in the square in front of the Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs HQ - Bucharest
- Solemn session at the Chamber of Deputies – dedicated to the Commemoration of the Holocaust
- Ceremonies at the Cotroceni Palace.

This volume includes texts and photos taken at the events mentioned above.

The editing team accurately displayed the pictures and speeches.

The texts and images of this volume were obtained courtesy of the Presidency, the Chamber of Deputies, the Ministry of Culture and Religion, the National Radio Society and TVR (the National TV Station).



their lives, because of exhaustion, starvation, illness or shooting. Since 2004, every October 9 commemorates (sometimes 24 hours sooner or later, depending on the Jewish calendar) the beginning of this unforgettable tragedy. Historians are right to say that the Holocaust of the Jews from Romania cannot be separated from the European events caused by Hitler's Germany, as well as by Romania's fascist leadership in the context of the Second World War. Thus, Marshall Antonescu was Germany's ally. Also, it is necessary to mention that this tragedy was not perpetrated by the whole Romanian people, but only by its extremist forces. There are still enough forces today which are trying to find explanations for the killing of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, included in the six millions who were killed all over Europe. Those human beings were annihilated for the only blame of being Jewish. A "Foreword" can never be a historical detour, excluding blame and generalization, from the very beginning. This is most often subject to the fashion of time and to the merciless analysis of history. We just want to take note of the fact that today's official authorities of the Romanian State, which were not involved in those events, do assume the historical responsibility for the Holocaust, as it is incriminated all over the world. They do this in order to honor the memory of the martyrs that unfairly lost their lives. In time, the great lessons of history should be an urge to have reason and for a better cohabitation between peoples, between ethnic groups of the same nation, between opinion leaders. They need to find the power and wisdom to live peacefully, in the spirit of the new Europe that we joined.

One cannot end these lines without mentioning that all those years of sad memory in our history included examples of dignified people and high-quality personalities who refused to give in and to bow in front of fascism, in front of that outburst of barbarism in the 20th century.



On the occasion of the Holocaust Memorial Day, we shall also list those who remained “righteous among the nations”, even in those tragic times. They are human beings of the highest human nobility, who are yet unknown abroad, today.

Thus, we express our gratitude and honor those courageous and generous people who understood what human suffering is and intervened even during those terrible times.

The topical structure and content of this work's chapters were composed in such a way so as to provide the proper meaningful scale of this commemoration, of this Memorial Not to Forget and of human dignity in times of sadness, at this time, when we reassert the highest human ideals in reunited Europe.

Of course, given this context, we have the opportunity to recall the efforts made by the Jewish Community of Romania for the revival of our spiritual life and to aid those who suffered during the war and the Holocaust. Our special care refers to education and to the training of new generations of Jews, by a reassertion of the Jewish spirit and by cultivating our cultural traditions.

DR. AUREL VAINER, MP
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION OF JEWISH
COMMUNITIES OF ROMANIA





**THE FEDERATION
OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES
OF ROMANIA**



**AUREL VAINER'S PARLIAMENTARY
OFFICE – MEMBER OF
THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES**

THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY IN ROMANIA



November 2009



Partea I

Inauguration Ceremony of the Holocaust Memorial

1. The joy of return: 12 Torah (Bible) Scrolls return to Romania



*Leaders of the Jewish Community from Romania
at the parade of the Torah Scrolls*



Presentation – by Actress Maia Morgenstern



*Homage to the victims of the Holocaust – a show of
synagogue music performed by cantor Zeev Shulman
and Hebrew and Yiddish songs performed by the
Choir of the Lauder–Reut School from Bucharest*

Es Brent (It's Burning)
It's burning, brothers, it's burning!
Oy, our poor shtetl is burning,
Raging winds are fanning the wild flames
And furiously tearing,
Destroying and scattering everything.
All around, all is burning
And you stand and look just so, you
With folded hands...
And you stand and look just so,
While our shtetl burns.
It's burning, brothers, it's burning!
Oy, our poor shtetl is burning,
The moment is at hand when, God forbid,
Our town, along with all of us,
Will be turned to ashes by the flames,
And only bare, black walls will remain
As after a battle.
Our town is burning,
And only you can save it!
Extinguish the fire with your very blood,
If you must!
Don't just stand there, brothers,
With folded hands.
Don't stand there, put out the fire!
Our shtetl is burning!

THE TREE OF LIFE

A tree of life to those who hold fast to it,



and all who cling to it find happiness.
Its ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all its paths are peace.
Help us and guide us, inspire us and provide us
With the wisdom Your Torah can show.
Cause us to learn, renew and return,
Just as in days of old.

*Speech held by
Great Rabbi Menachem Hacohen,
translated by Prime Rabbi Shlomo Sorin Rosen*



Your Excellency, President Traian Băsescu, FEDROM President, Dr. Aurel Vainer, honored audience,

This event here, today, is full of symbols. On one hand, we are inaugurating the Monument that commemorates the hundreds of thousands of Jews, faithful Romanian citizens who contributed to the culture, economy, fortune and prosperity of the country, as well as the thousands of Roma citizens, who were all killed during the Holocaust. On the other hand,

we are celebrating the return to Romania of the 12 Torah Scrolls, to be used in synagogues from this country.

In compliance with the Jewish tradition, we are reminding of the ones who are no longer with us – for their memory – by writing Torah Scrolls that we dedicate and bring to the synagogue in times of joy.

Following the peoples' tradition, we keep on mentioning our heroes, martyrs and righteous ones by



erecting monuments for their memory, in various parks, squares and central areas.

We are doing this today as if it was only one thing: the Inauguration Ceremony for the monument of the Holocaust and the return ceremony for the 12 Torah Scrolls, which used to belong to synagogues from Romania. They were severely damaged and the members of the community were killed in the Holocaust.

Parts of the 12 Torah Scrolls were gathered and brought to Jerusalem, where they were put together, renewed and repaired. They were brought back to Romania to be used in the synagogues of the Jewish communities, today.

Today's double ceremony refers, on one hand, to the Holocaust of the Jewish people, when one third of its sons was killed. On the other hand, the return of these Torah Scrolls in the synagogues from Romania symbolizes a rebirth and reconstruction, for, despite all that happened 60 years ago, the people of Israel lives. The people of Israel lives and it is present!

Mr. President, dear guests.

In the following Shabbat, the Jewish people recommences the reading of the Torah from the *Bereshit Portion* of the Genesis, in which we are told of the creation of the world in six days and of the creation of man, of Adam and Eve, made of dust, in God's image.

The Torah tells us: "And Adam knew Eve his wife: who conceived and brought forth Cain [...] *Later, she gave birth to his brother, Abel* [...] And it came about when they were in the field, that *Cain rose up against his brother and killed him.*"

The story does not tell us why and what for did Cain kill his brother Abel, but we are learning an important matter: the first child born into this world, Cain, killed his brother, Abel, without a reason. After this terrible murder, God asks Cain, the murderer: "Where is your brother, Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?!"



According to God's words from the Book of Genesis, we learn that "Whoever *sheds man's blood*, by *man* shall his blood be *shed*: for in the *image of God* made he *man*. " And still, God did not punish Cain by the capital punishment for his crime, as He had established. Why did He only make a sign on Cain's forehead and destined him to wander all over the Earth?

Why did God not apply the death punishment to Cain? He did so in order to show mankind that the world which he created includes both what is good and what is bad. And it is everyone's duty to discover what is bad in man's instinct, to uncover the sign from Cain's forehead and to fight it before it turns the balance in its favor, so as to do evil.

This is what we need to remember and learn: that evil has many faces. Sometimes, it looks like Amalek, other times it is nationalism. Sometimes, it is disguised as the defender of the weak, other times it is racism, xenophobia, fascism, communism, totalitarian regimes or, these days, the threat of religious fanatics and terrorists. But it is always hiding behind an innocent-looking face, a face that denies the murder and the Holocaust, using the apparently innocent words of Cain: "I don't know! Am I my brother's keeper?!"

This is the urge of today's ceremony, so full of symbols: let us assume, in our generation, as well as over the generation, the obligation of not closing our eyes and of not allowing extremism, anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance against the other, against the one who is different, to develop.

May this ceremony, which takes place during the holiday of Sukkoth, a time of joy, continue to symbolize for the Jewish people, as well as for the whole world, the fact that the people of Israel lives! **The people of Israel lives! The people of Israel lives and is present!**



2. Inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial

*Short speech held by the Romanian President,
Mr. Traian Băsescu*

Ladies and gentlemen,

This year, on the occasion of the Holocaust Memorial Day in Romania, we are inaugurating the Memorial of the Victims who perished during the Holocaust: an expression of our memory for the members of the Jewish and Roma communities, victims of systematic persecution and of the ideology of hatred during the Second World War.

Reminding of the tragedy of the Holocaust is always terrible! There is nothing more absurd, more inhumane, more irrational, than the suffering and death of those who were persecuted, deported and killed because they were Jews or Roma. Our respect, the respect of those who live in a free, democratic country, today, will never be high enough, by comparison to the intensity of their suffering and their innocence.

Between 1940 and 1944, the responsibility for what happened is held by the leadership of the Romanian State of the time, by Ion Antonescu personally, as well as by all those who were silent and did not stand against the abuse and murders suffered by the members of the Jewish and Roma communities. This crime can never be forgotten or minimized, because the memory of the victims, as well as of the Holocaust survivors brings, in front of our conscience, the responsibility of knowing, of acknowledging and of spreading the historical truth.

When reminding of the deportees, of the ones who were forced to leave their country, of the people who were stripped of their goods and of their fundamental



rights, we are performing a necessary scrutiny of our own conscience. Today, at the inauguration of the Memorial of the Victims of the Holocaust from Romania, the Romanian State and the Romanian society restates its determination to assume the past, to recover the historical memory in the spirit of truth, in full compliance with the values of liberty and democracy.

The Memorial of the Victims of the Holocaust, erected in our Capital City by sculptor Peter Jacobi, is the mature answer of the Romanian society to the urgent need to recover our memory and to perform a critical, lucid scrutiny of the past. It is our duty to honor the memory of the dead, who were killed in such a horrific way, during the pogroms from Dorohoi and Galați, in June 1940, from Bucharest, in January 1941, and from Iași, in June 1941. We have to keep the memory of the Jews from Bassarabia and Bukovina, of the Roma who were deported to Transnistria, as well as of the Jews who lived in North-West Romania and who were deported to Auschwitz in 1944 by the Hungarian authorities which occupied the area at the time. It is our duty to keep their living memory and we have the responsibility to act against any xenophobic or anti-Semitic display.

A Jewish prayer says: "Let us remember", just like the column of the Memorial suggests. Let us remember in order to honor the innocent who were killed. Let us remember, in order to tell our children and grandchildren about the tragedy of the Holocaust. Let us remember so that this may never happen again.

Let us remember so that mankind will never again give up its humanity, so that it may never fall through violence, persecutions and murders. On behalf of the Romanian State, let me bring homage to the victims of the Holocaust, Jews and Roma, as well as to the survivors of the Holocaust. I am grateful to all those who made it possible for the Memorial to exist, as was recommended by the International Committee for the Study of the Holocaust



from Romania, presided by Mr. Elie Wiesel.

I am sure that, in compliance with the recommendation of the Committee, Romania will keep on developing training and research programs about the history of the Holocaust, as in the past, when we inaugurated the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the study of the Holocaust from Romania or when we launched a manual of the history of the Jews for high-school students. Due to the contribution of all those who are part of this process, can Romania express with dignity the conscience of its own responsibility in front of history, today. Thank you!"

*Elie Wiesel's message,
winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace*

Passer-by, stop in front of this monument and remember. More than anything else, it is an appeal to the dignity of memory. If it vanishes, the enemy, in spite of its military defeat, would already have won the war against its victims. Even if you were born later, open the memory that you have inherited from your ancestors. You will feel pain, but you will not be ashamed. Shame will belong to the past, only.

Because in those times, those times of darkness, when Nazi Germany dominated many countries, yours also, a whole people, the Jewish people, was condemned to humiliation, to torment, to torture, desperation and death.

Yes, six million human beings, men, women and children, future Nobel Prize winners who could have cured the world of some of its incurable ills, disappeared due to the will of the murderers. Most of the victims perished in gas chambers, others in mass graves or because of hunger or diseases in the ghettos. Was this because of ancestral anti-Semitism?

Other factors interfered for sure. But, without anti-Semitism, there would have been no Auschwitz. Here,



in this wonderful country and in Transnistria, under the murderous regime of Antonescu, an ally of Berlin, hundreds of thousands of Jews suffered from persecution and killings in bloody pogroms. They could not hope for the protection of the police and the army, for they were the incarnation of danger. Everywhere, with few exceptions, humanity itself was constantly trampled. And your political leaders had the courage to acknowledge this, by having accepted the conclusions of the international committee of historians. And this monument is one of the concrete expressions of this acknowledgement. This brings honor to your nation.

So, remember, passer-by: during those years, for the first time in History, to exist became a capital crime. In the eyes of the enemy, if the Jew was born, he had to die.

This monument will help you, just like all of us, to make it possible for the past of the elders not to become the future of the young.

*Short speech held by Mr. Liviu Beris,
President of the Association of
the Romanian Jews – Victims of the Holocaust*

Dear Mr. President, Your Excellencies, survivors of the Holocaust, from here and from abroad, honored listeners,

Let me start by thanking all those who initiated and contributed to the existence of this Memorial.

It was my destiny to have lived the best years of a person's life during a dramatic turning point of history. It was a time when the commandment "Thou shall not kill!" was reversed. A time when the spiral of evil was expanding in Europe and all over the world, when anti-Semitism, hatred and discrimination were dominant and lawlessness became a state of the law.

Its initiators conceived the Holocaust in such a way that it was supposed to have no witnesses or history. As



you know, the fate of the war turned against them and there remained many witnesses. Thus, the Holocaust has a history. Facts, no matter how regrettable and blamable, are facts. The Holocaust does not concern only the Jews. The Holocaust is part of Romania's history, just like it is part of Europe's history in the first half of the 20th century.

Sixty-eight years have passed since the freight trains, filled with the Jews who were deported from Southern Bukovina and the former county of Dorohoi (territories which had not fallen under foreign rule), were running to the Dniester River. They "unloaded" the merchandise at the bank of the river for them to cross to "the other side". At the same time, after the mass executions of the Jews, which took place in July-August 1941, when the troops entered Bassarabia and Northern Bukovina, the survivors were forced to walk, in convoys, to the same place. Whoever stayed behind was shot. I was part of those convoys when I was about to turn 14.

Having been stripped of their goods, of their rights and especially of the right to live, the Jews were going to an unknown place, which also got a new name: Transnistria.

The extermination policy was set into motion. Tens and hundreds of thousands of people were sentenced to death. Their only fault was that they were born and their parents were Jewish. It is true: no gas chambers were used in the Holocaust perpetrated by Antonescu's government. People died from bullets, cold, hunger, insanitary conditions and disease (and they made "all the proper conditions" for it to appear). People also suffocated in tightly closed freight trains (the death trains from Iași). They were set on fire and blown up while crowded in warehouses. They were hanged (Odessa) and they died because the people around were bad.

In this bleak picture, where the scene is mainly occupied by the victims, perpetrators and indifferent spectators, there were good people as well. They were not many, among



those who believed in light, despite the general darkness. They risked their own life so as to save others.

The Holocaust is still here, in the memory of the few survivors. It is here with us in its whole horror. It was a cruel reality, a denial of any sense of morality, a denial of humanity. This memorial that we inaugurate now and here was made in honor of the victims of this cruel reality. As a tombstone for the ones who have no grave, the memorial will be a token for all those who want to know what happened. For, if we speak about learning from the Holocaust, it means we should not only tell the truth about the past, but also show how the same mechanisms act today in various societies and in people as well.

The fear of unknown finds its release in the fear and hatred for the "stranger". Intolerance, fundamentalism, fanaticism, they all get their nutrients and new energy precisely from this "fear". This is why it is necessary to spread the knowledge about the Holocaust.

By knowing our past, they will be able to act efficiently so that it does not become their future. It is possible that many will start thinking about what life and death is, and especially about what the world is. Even today, there are enough signs that warn about the always active potentiality of evil.

People forget too often that whatever starts with the hatred against the Jews continues with the loathing of all that is different. Mankind, who created tyrannical utopias and suffered from their disasters, can now better understand the consequences of one's deeds.

This Memorial about people who existed at one time was erected for the people of today and of tomorrow. It is meant to remove the indifference, the lack of knowledge about this matter and it should have an important contribution in this sense.

Let me tell you that, despite of all that happened, I still believe that MAN should be the purpose of man, in life.



*Short speech held by Mr. Dumitru Trancă,
a Roma man who was deported to Transnistria*

"Each of us was there with his family, near the fire. There was no glass in the windows; all poor and sad. No doctor came to see us, nobody saw us. There was no food or anything to drink: ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! Except what we could find: some grains baked on the hearth. It was from '42 until '44 that we lived a hell on earth; all the children, for most were children. Our family had six members. Out of the six, only I and one of my sisters were left; the rest died of typhus. They died of disease, starvation and misery. They died. In '44, when Hitler's army and his allies retreated, soldiers from the Red Army came and sent us home. "Go, for you were born there, in ROMANIA!". Each of the Romanian gendarmes knew about us: "Come on, boys, come home, for we are going home, too". And we started to walk. We walked for six weeks. Whoever stopped, was left to die, there on the road. Starving, going through hell, sad.

They should have taken it into consideration, but they did not. Our family had sent someone on the front as well, to defend Romania. But they also took the ones who had family on the front; they took everybody. We walked and walked. From there, back to Romania. The truth is that, had we not belonged to Romania, when the people saw us, they would not have said, the Romanians: "Bravo, it's good to see you again, boys"... But they did not see all of us. Less than ten percent of the deportees came back.



3. The Memorial of the Holocaust in images and inscriptions



General view of the Holocaust Memorial



The Holocaust Memorial - View from behind





Left-side view of the Holocaust Memorial



Left-side view, lower level of the Holocaust Memorial





Left-side view of the entrance into the Holocaust Memorial



Main entrance into the Holocaust Memorial





Pattern of light and shadows in the central part of the first level



Tombstones from the Jewish cemetery of Odessa





*Tombstones from the Jewish Cemetery of Bucharest –
Sevastopol St.*



The memorial column of the Holocaust Memorial





The memorial column of the Holocaust Memorial





Sculpture with the Star of David

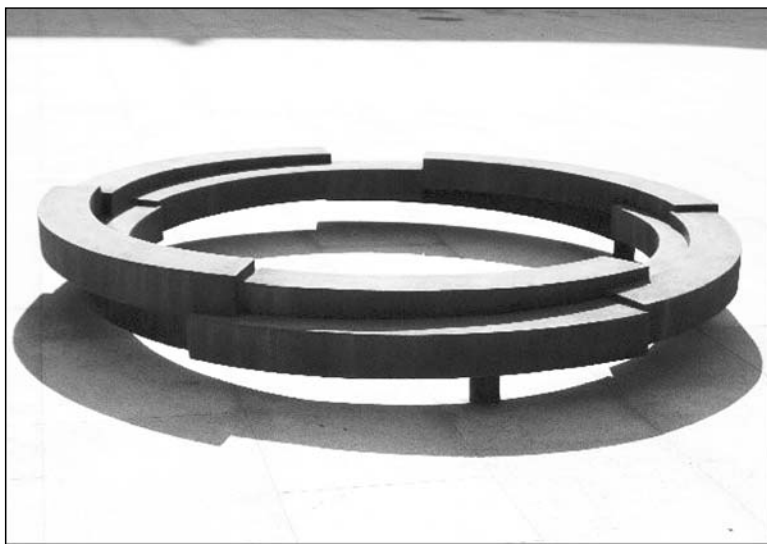


Sculpture with the Star of David



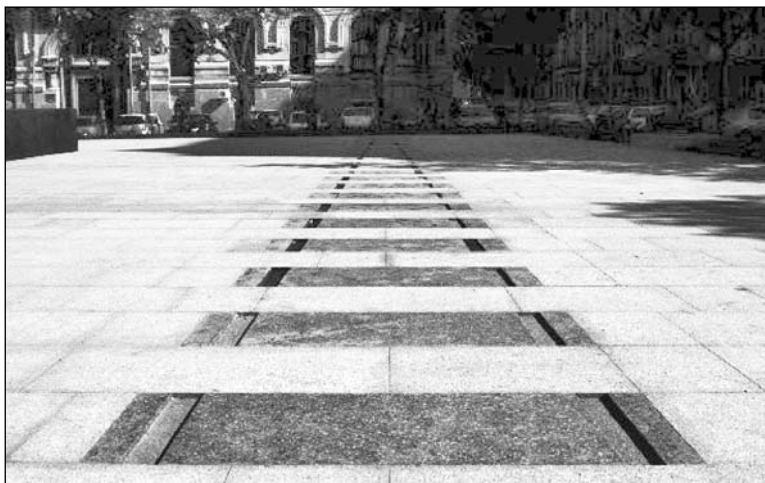


Epitaph, steel and cut rocks



Two interrupted, intersecting rings





Via Dolorosa, Ballmoral granite

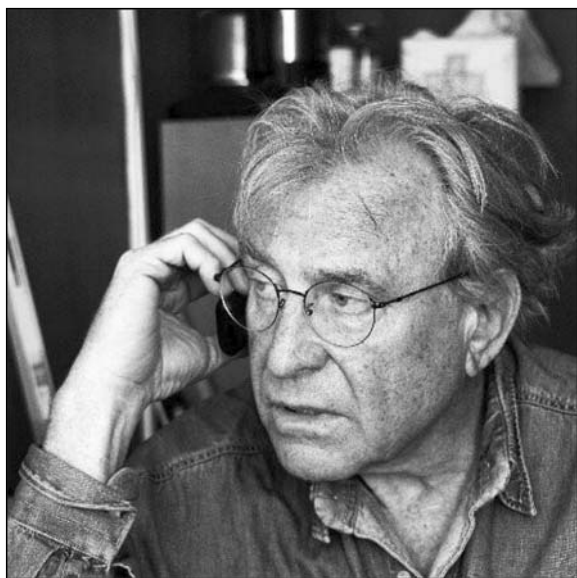


From left to right, in the first row, Andrew Baker, Liviu Beris, Dumitru Tranca, the Romanian President - Traian Băsescu, Great Rabbi Menahem Hacohen, the Minister of Culture - Theodor Paleologu, the Director of the Holocaust Museum from the United States - Sarah Bloomfield, Emil Constantinescu, the Mayor of Bucharest, Sorin Oprescu





From left to right, the Romanian President - Traian Băsescu, the author of the Holocaust Memorial – sculptor Peter Jacobi, the President of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania - Dr. Aurel Vainer



Sculptor Peter Jacobi, Author of the Holocaust Memorial Monument in Romania



Part II

The Chamber of Deputies Solemn Session dedicated to the Memory of the Holocaust. Short speeches

*Mrs. Roberta Alma Anastase -
President of the Chamber of Deputies*



Ladies and gentlemen,

It is today, during this solemn session at the Chamber of Deputies, that we are commemorating a tragic moment in Romania's and Europe's history.

According to the most entitled opinions, the Romanian authorities of the World War are responsible for the death of 280.000 to 380.000 Romanian and Ukrainian citizens, most of them Jews and Roma ethnics.

Also, another 135.000 Jews were killed in the Romanian territories temporary annexed by the Hungarian authorities of the time. In such cases, the numbers are always inexact and they simply cannot express the real dimension, the human dimension of the tragedy.

The fact that these events took place in a dark period of European history, at the order of a national, authoritarian regime, maybe also instigated by the Nazi Reich, is irrelevant and does not lessen the moral seriousness of the deeds.

Also, the fact that they were followed by another large-scale tragedy, the communist dictatorship, does not



change at all the unique feature of the Holocaust. The particular distinction between this episode and other atrocities committed in the 20th century, and, unfortunately, there are a lot of examples that we can compare it to, is the fact that the only fault of the victims was that they were born. They were not guilty for having breached a real or imaginary law or for having opposed an authority, a legitimate or dictatorial regime.

In those years, Romanian citizens died because their parents were Roma or Jewish, and the Romanian state is the main holder of real, as well as of historical responsibilities.

On other occasions, it was said that a generation cannot choose its inherited problems, but it can choose its answer to them. During the 45 years of dictatorship we did not have the right to freely talk about this moment of our history.

In the first years after the Revolution of 1989, the fact that we were still a nation which was looking for a meaning, made it harder for some Romanians to find truth, good-faith and compassion. Still, I am satisfied to see that lately, especially since the International Committee for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania published its report, there begun a national process of acknowledgement, of assuming the Holocaust. Today, we do have the needed responsibility and democratic maturity so as to continue this process to the end.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's solemn session is important, first of all, because it allows us to commemorate the victims of this tragedy. But we have to use this opportunity to outline, once again, the roots and historic causes of the Holocaust: racism, xenophobia, intolerance, anti-Semitism. We need to acknowledge once again our commitment to combat its means of display today, in the Romanian society.

I said this before, but I will repeat: there still is discrimination, there still are xenophobic attitudes and



racism. At least when focusing on the Roma minority, the experience of Romania's latest years, as well as of other EU member states, shows us that they continue to face systematic discrimination and they lack equal opportunities. This is even worse, since this is not only the responsibility of a single Government, of a single legislative system or a single country. This is the responsibility of a mentality that spread all over the continent and it had the same manifestations in almost all European countries.

This is why I consider that any commemoration of past atrocities, the homage paid to the victims should be supplemented by a constant effort to eliminate the similar acts of injustice from the present time.

Memory is a permanent exercise and events such as the one that took place today are meant to remind us of something that we should never forget. Just as much, almost 70 years after the Holocaust, as keepers and continuators of their memory, it is our duty to fight against the causes of this tragedy, as they are still manifest today.

Thank you. (*Applause.*)

***Dr. Aurel Vainer - MP, President of the Federation
of Jewish Communities of Romania***



Dear Mrs. President,

Dear colleagues, Members of
the Parliament,

Honored audience,

Distinguished members of the
diplomatic corps from Bucharest
participating in this Solemn
Session,

I would like to thank you all
for having attended this extremely important moment for



the history of the Romanians, of the Jews and practically of the humanity, on my behalf and on the behalf of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania. Let me mention, first of all, that we are commemorating those who died during the Holocaust, but, in fact, we are remembering very painful pages of the European and Romanian history, that obviously meant tragedy and death for many people.

We have to say that the term “Holocaust” is also proper in the case of Romania. Despite the fact that Holocaust means a complete burning, in the case of the Jews from Romania, a large part of the Jews survived that period, fortunately.

I am one of the survivors. I was ten years old when the Nazi, legionary¹ terror started and when Jews suffered from all kinds of restrictions. This is why I am saying: the Holocaust happened in Romania. Unfortunately, there were certain Romanians who killed, who perpetrated the most horrible crimes. At the same time, I have to say that this sad period of tragedy witnessed certain dignified Romanians who helped us and acted in favor of the Jews. They belonged to very different groups. Perhaps you remember, it was last year that I gave a book to the audience in this hall. It was called “Dignity in times of sadness”. This way, we wanted to show, first of all, the existence of the Holocaust in Romania, as well as to honor, to provide pieces of information, to give numbers, names of simple people and of personalities who tried to ease the fate of the Jews, despite the fact that this entailed great risks for themselves and for their families.

It is my honor to thank all those Romanians who stood by us at the time, as well as to thank the present-time Romanian authorities. Since 2004, they assessed and assumed the conclusions of the report made by the “Elie Wiesel” Committee for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania.

The Romanian State acknowledges the existence of numerous Jewish and Roma victims, who suffered the

¹ The Legionary Movement – Far-right Romanian organization.



tragedy of the time in many ways. Of course, the ones who are guilty for this no longer live; I am referring to the ones who developed the legionary movement, Antonescu's regime and so on.

Still, I have to say that, in order to better understand our tragedy, we should not limit ourselves to the dead, to the ones who were killed, who starved to death, died of misery, of disease, lack of hygiene, etc, mainly in Transnistria. Let us remember that, since 1938 Romania adopted a discriminatory legislation against the Jews. Step by step, its intensity increased. There are many such measures and I don't want to take your time with them. I would only like to mention that, in that period, for a Jew, for a Jewish child as myself, the bread voucher allowed me to get only one third of the portion available for a non-Jewish child; this meant something. There are many others: our exclusion from schools, from the group of free-lance entrepreneurs, from the economic circuit and many, many other restrictions.

Still, what should we all remember? Our fate was sealed. There were programs, plans drafted with the precision of the Nazis, for all Romanian Jews to be deported to concentration camps, to be killed in gas chambers and so on.

Our historical fortune changed in 1942, when the fate of the war turned, and the deportation measures halted. But you should not forget that there were a series of pogroms. In 1940, there was the pogrom from Dorohoi. In January 1941, there was the pogrom from Bucharest. In June 1941, there was the pogrom from Iași, as well as two small-scale pogroms in Galați and Ploiești. People died because of them. Let me remind you that 13.000 Jews died in Iași. Some of them were shot in the courtyard of the police station, others suffocated in the death trains. Very few of the ones who were loaded in the death trains survived back then.

I would like to end and to explain this: the Holocaust from Romania developed in stages, crescendo, but,



fortunately, the state policy changed in 1942, despite the fact that the anti-Jewish restrictions were not abolished¹.

Let me get to more recent times. I would like to thank the Romanian authorities, to the three Romanian Presidents who started the process for acknowledging the Holocaust in Romania: President Ion Iliescu, President Emil Constantinescu and President Traian Băsescu.

The Jews from Romania and, I hope, the Roma population as well, has lived an exceptional moment today: we inaugurated the Memorial of the Holocaust in Romania, in Bucharest. I am recommending you to come and see it when you have some spare time. Learn about this not so nice page of history of the Romanian people, such a tragic page for the Jewish people. Thus, you will see, feel responsible and most of all learn from this lesson of history. Again, the lesson of history is simple: the Holocaust is not something that happened only to the Jews, as it was. It could happen anytime, anyplace, to others. History teaches us to never allow such tragedies to repeat.

This is my message to you. I am urging you, as Romanians, as colleagues in the Parliament: act for the correction of these faults of society, such as xenophobia, anti-Semitism, racism and the spread of anti-Semitic, legionary trends and ideas. Let me remind you that, unfortunately, today's Romania still witnesses anti-Semitic incidents. As recently as one year ago, the Giurgiului Jewish cemetery from Bucharest was desecrated. At the time, 131 tombs were destroyed, so that 131 people died once more.

Unfortunately, the reaction of the authorities is not proper. But let me positively appreciate the Romanian Parliament. It is here that the acknowledgement process started, by admitting what happened, in several ways and by providing compensations to the Holocaust survivors, as it happened for the families of the Romanian political prisoners who died in communist prisons. I am urging

¹ The anti-Jewish restrictions were not abolished until 1944.



you to agree to a legislative project which I elaborated together with two colleagues from the Group of National Minorities: we need to increase the compensation for them to no longer be discriminated. At present, the political prisoners are discriminated.

I did not wish to reach this topic, but this is very emotional. I apologize! There is one more thing I would like to mention: let us continue being a favorable legislative factor for the combat of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. Important measures were adopted in time. The Romanian education system includes lessons about the Holocaust. This is extraordinary: children are starting to understand what happened and we hope that such horrible things will never happen again – due to the democratic education of the young generation.

So, this is how my final message sounds like: thank you for having come, thank you for being here, with us. I hope that you will really be active supporters of the idea that the tragedy of the Holocaust, as it was in Europe and Romania should never happen again or in any place.

Thank you very much for your attention!

*Mr. Nicolae Păun - MP,
President of the Roma Organization*



Thank you, Mrs. President.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Members of the Parliament,

Dear guests,

This is an important day. Let me say, on behalf of the Roma community from Romania, that we fully respect you for being present here during this solemn session. Had the subject matter



referred to something else, such as a motion of censorship, perhaps the hall would have hosted more people. But life is like a soccer game and we keep on playing just the same.

First of all, I have to thank the Romanian Parliament for having succeeded to understand that such solemn sessions are part of the character of any high-level institution. Last, but not least, let me thank the authorities of the Romanian state, on behalf of the Roma communities, for having agreed upon the necessity for a monument dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust from Romania to exist.

I would also like to thank the Presidency for the solemn session to be organized today, at the Cotroceni Palace, at 19h. For the second time during his term, President Traian Băsescu will decorate a series of Roma survivors. This can only make them happy, and they are here in the room. It also makes us happy, the representatives of the Roma communities.

Let me get to other matters, now. We all know that October 9, 1941 was the beginning of the great persecution of the Jews. The Holocaust started then and, later on, more precisely on June 1, 1942, the persecution and Holocaust of the Roma minority began as well.

We also know about the Roma minority – I do not have precise knowledge about the data referring to the Jewish community – that, about 38.000 persons, Romanian citizens of Roma origin, were deported from the Romanian territories. In 1945, after the end of the war and after the treaties were signed, the Romanian state admits, by the Archive of the Gendarmerie, that 25.000 persons of Roma origin were deported to Transnistria, as well that only 14.000 returned home. The logical deduction is that 11.000 of them died in the circumstances that we all know. It is worth mentioning that, of the 11.000 people, about half were innocent children.

Allow me, unless this is boring for you, to think about what led to this unfortunate decision of the fascist



and Nazi regime. I do not think that Hitler gathered his war commanders on October 8, 1941, and said: "That's it! Tomorrow starts the persecution of the Jewish minority, of the ethnic Jews!" And I don't think that he met his war commanders in May and said: "That's it, now we shall persecute the others as well!"

These matters were more or less premeditated. We all know that the crisis of 1931-1933 was a pretext for German personalities of the time, very active in the far-right groups, to intensify the xenophobic, racist and anti-Semitic propaganda; this situation continued easily until 1937-1938. I will not underline the fact that very many persecutions of the Jews took place in the period of 1937-1941. Again, I will not underline the fact that very many professors, doctors, politicians, engineers and prestigious journalists fuelled the idea of exterminating the Jewish and Roma minorities, considering them two "shames" of modern Europe.

Why did I make this small parallel and used quotation marks? Because, unfortunately, as a minority, we are connected by certain years of history and attitude, to the Jewish minority; until 1945.

But, with all due respect that I feel for the Jewish ethnic group, let me tell you that our roads separated since 1945. The Jews were rightfully aided, and they have to be aided still, in order to reborn, to raise their children in a quiet and safe society. But for us, there was only this remark: "So what?" This "so what" was always used when referring to us. "We deported you! So what? You'll manage!", "So what?" After that, the Communist regime followed. It tried to assimilate the Roma minority by force, so that they might lose their culture, traditions, language, to be stripped of their gold, fortune and so on. "So what?"

"Well, you have been slaves in Romania 500 years ago. So what? That's it! Be more tolerant now, why do you have to..."



Such things happen in history.

If we thought with maximum lucidity, we would say that things happened the way they happened, that a bad period went by. It's a good thing it went by and may it never happen again. Correct. The Jewish minority did not suffer again the discrimination that kept on happening to us. Europe was outraged when something bad happened to any Jew after 1947-1950. But we faced the same "So what?"

Immediately after 1989, we hoped that we might enjoy some liberty, we hoped that we would be taken into consideration, even a bit. But we all know what happened: we were marked like cattle, our fingerprints were taken and we were not allowed to travel from one area to the other. Our houses were set on fire and we were forced to move from place to place.

What happened in Romanian territories?! In Hădăreni: houses were set on fire, our children burnt alive, as well as in Bolintin-Deal, Bolintin-Vale, where we had ghettos and all the rest.

So what!

We ask all these questions as Romanian and European citizens, in a context of modernity. We like to make loud political statements, we like to invent institutions, to go and say that the sun is finally shining for the Roma minority.

Have you ever asked us, gentlemen, if we are content? Have we ever been together, at a table, to discuss what's good and bad? Because the following proverb might be applicable here: "Not all the good that you want to do to us is the good that we want for ourselves".

But, I will go on, thinking: isn't it possible for this far-right attitude to be the perfect copy of the period 1931 – 1937? There was an economic crisis. Who was to blame? The gypsies. This situation repeats now. It's an economic crisis. We are thinking: we need to find who's guilty for it. And it's bad for the ambiance of the EU member states, I



know. The gypsy. Let's isolate him, let's do something to him! Let's get rid of him!

Yes, my colleague and friend, Mr. Aurel Vainer said it well. I think we did not learn much from history. We don't know how to behave and we are not trying to find radical measures against racism and xenophobia. We don't know how to really forbid the far-right attitudes, because we had and we still have a "distinguished" politician in Romania, I don't even want to mention his name. He marched on a scene as a high-ranking Nazi officer and nobody was offended. At a certain point, he even defied us: Well, what's the matter, huh? Well, so what?!

Gentlemen, I will end by saying that we are also happy for having such a monument in Romania. We may go there, year after year, and place a wreath in memory of those who were unjustly taken away. But I am wondering: when will we build a monument for those who are being taken away every day, just as unjustly?

I think that it is not enough to make statements, to invent institutions and to elaborate documents, unless we implement categorical measures in order to help a minority that has no means to influence the majority, in any way whatsoever, have no fear. We should help this minority to enjoy social security, to be able to develop, so that we may show that things are different and we are neither the black sheep of the European Union, nor of Romania. We too have our doctors, engineers, important politicians and we have representatives in the Romanian Parliament, in the lower positions. This way, and I am not referring to the position of MP, we have people in the lower positions and it is good. We know and greet each other, and it is enough.

Gentlemen, help us, if you really want to feel that you do something for a minority to whom a lot of wrongs were done.

Thank you.



*HIS EXCELLENCY Oren David - Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the State of Israel in
Bucharest*



Your Excellency,

Honored members of the
Parliament,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We gathered here in order
to commemorate the victims of
the Holocaust from Romania
and to fulfill our promise
of never forgetting. It is our
obligation, both to the victims
and to the next generations.

The inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial and this special meeting are a tribute, an act of gratitude, of respect and solidarity performed by the Romanian state for the hundreds of thousands of Romanian Jews and members of the Roma community, children, women, men, young and old alike, who perished in the Holocaust.

The saga of the Romanian Jews during the Holocaust is connected to the fate of the six million European Jews from Europe, whose lives ended suddenly in the Second World War, as a result of the most violent and mortal form of hatred: anti-Semitism.

Distinguished guests,

Unfortunately, this hatred is still present: libel against the Jews and against the State of Israel, attempts to destroy the State of Israel, all these are reality today.

Still, history proved that we should not ignore the evil and threats. If we closed our eyes in front of these things, it would only encourage the attackers and this would victimize those who ignore the victims.



For the sake of the victims' memory, whom we are commemorating today, and for the sake of our future, we are determined to continue our fight against anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia.

On behalf of the State of Israel, I would like to thank all who are involved in the project of the Memorial, in this event. Thank you for having offered me the chance to talk to you during this special session at the Romanian Parliament.

Here too, as well as during the inauguration ceremony this morning, I felt that all those who perished during the Holocaust were with us: youngsters, elders, women, men and children.

As the representative of the State of Israel, let me reiterate our commitment to them: those horrors will never happen again.

*HIS EXCELLENCY Mark Gitenstein,
Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador
of the United States of America in Bucharest*



Mrs. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,
members of the Parliament,

I have a personal message this afternoon. I never knew my great grandfather, Louis Bralower. I've seen photos. An elegant man with a white beard, he immigrated to America, I believe from Brăila, in the 1880's. I did know my grandfather, Israel Gitenstein. A short, self assured, balding man, he came to America with his parents, his brother and sister, as a 12 year-old in 1891. They came to America to



enjoy the blessings of liberty and to escape the beginnings of what would clearly become the Holocaust.

Abraham Gitenstein, my distant relative, was not nearly so lucky or prescient. I have only learned of him since becoming Ambassador. He survived the Holocaust in Chişinău and lost countless relatives. He immigrated to Israel after the war and, according to his son, he was so traumatized that he could not even talk about it.

I speak for all those in my family who came before me and for myself. As Elie Wiesel has said, "not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims." And I would add even we Jews who enjoyed the blessings of liberty in America. It is the same here, in Romania, both for Jews and non-Jews who were the victims of a totalitarian state.

We say we, "didn't know," but I cannot say that any longer. It is a particular privilege for me to participate in this dedication, as an American, as an American Jew and as a Romanian-American Jew. It is a moment of profound self-discovery. My journey of self-discovery is only a shadow of what you, the people of Romania, are engaged in. It takes courage and determination to face your past. In the words of the great South African, Nelson Mandela, as he initiated the truth and reconciliation commission: "The choice of a nation is not whether the past should be revealed, but rather to ensure it comes to be known in a way which promotes reconciliation and peace."

When Elie Wiesel received the Nobel Prize, he reminded us of our common ancestor, Job. In Romania, Jew and gentile alike, have suffered. Like Job, the trauma has seemed unremitting and endless. The path from that kind of despair is now paved with hope and, as Wiesel said, the "source of that hope is memory".

We, in America, admire what you are trying to do here in Romania. And for this Romanian American Jew in particular, it warms my soul.

Recall, that as painful as was Job's journey of self



discovery God blessed him with wealth, bountiful offspring, and a long life. You and I are now partners.

Variety of opportunities for growth. I believe God will bless you for building the memorial that declares we are all witnesses of what has happened.

We pray for you and for all of us, past and present, in whose name you act.

Thank you!

*Mr. Mihail Ionescu, General Manager
of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for
the Study of the Holocaust in Romania*



Dear Mrs. President of the Chamber of Deputies,

Ladies and gentlemen members of the Parliament,

Ladies and gentlemen,

For me, it is a great privilege to talk to you, the elected representatives of the Romanian nation in the decisional Chamber of the Legislative, on such a special occasion.

Today's inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial from Romania is an important stage of a complex process of re-evaluation of Romania's recent past, as it took place in these latest years.

The past, as you know, is not linear, it is not predetermined. It has lights and shadows, white spots, "places" where we like to stay a lot, because we consider them our real historical landmarks, but there are also places obscured to our offspring, be it from negligence, lack of knowledge or on purpose.

One of such places that that is so often avoided



refers to the Holocaust within our national history. This phenomenon was spread at European level during the Second World War, and it meant a state-organized genocide against the Jews, first of all, as well as against other ethnic groups, such as the Roma or those who had different political views and sexual orientations that did not comply to the policy of the fascist or Nazi regimes, such as Antonescu's regime in Romania. Having been initiated and developed, with the efficiency of the industrial era, by Nazi Germany and by its allies, this monstrous historical phenomenon led to millions of victims and left deep traces in the European continent.

Unfortunately, the map of the Holocaust includes Romania of that time, as Mr. Vainer mentioned here.

Since 2004, when the International Committee for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, led by Elie Wiesel, presented its final report, which was later assumed by the highest representatives of the Romanian state, the authorities made a constant effort to efficiently answer their recommendations and to make the recent national past a better known field. From it, the Romanian nation should extract resources and should strengthen its identity, so as to guide itself to a future where the mistakes of the past will not be repeated.

The Romanian people did not start this process of evaluation of its past and did not erect this memorial that we are inaugurating today in order to accuse itself of the mistakes of the past. We do this in order to identify their causes, to establish who is guilty and to learn the lesson so that it will never repeat. This was not done as a gesture of humility at someone's command, but with full, sovereign dignity, being conscious of the fact that the assumed responsibility is the proof of one's moral force, as well as an instrument to build the future.

We needed and still need courage and wisdom in order to scrutinize our own past with responsibility, not to avoid



what we don't like and resist the temptation of forgetting what we are not glad of.

This monument erected today in the Capital is the proof of our courage and wisdom, a deep feature of our national mentality.

The National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania brings its contribution to this process, by launching a series of specific research projects. It is involved in the educational process at all levels, by a large action of cooperation with specialized institutions from the country and from abroad.

Under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture, Religion and National Patrimony, the institute is an obvious proof of our national commitment to continue the process of recovery of our recent national past, at its real dimensions.

In the end of my short speech, I would like to tell you that we received a lot of letters from Holocaust survivors, at the Institute. They wanted to express their admiration and gratitude for what the Romanian state and its leadership did today. We also received letters from well-known personalities for their expertise in the area of studies about the Holocaust.

The message sent by Rabbi Efraim Guttman, survivor of the pogrom from Bucharest, which took place on January 21 – 23, 1941, expresses, among others, I quote, “the heartily participation” in the erection of this monument in Bucharest.

The second type of messages includes a letter sent by Mr. Tuvia Friling, Vicepresident of the “Wiesel” Committee on behalf of the State of Israel. It mentions that this day “is an important moment for Romania, for the Romanian Jewish community, for us, Israelis and for any Jew and humanist from all over the world.”

Another such message was sent by the President of the Yad Vashem Institute from Jerusalem, General Avner



Shalev. As you know, Yad Vashem is the main institution which focuses on the study of the Holocaust, from all over the world, I would say. Let me read his message:

“Almost five years ago, in November 2004, an important step was taken in the process of the sincere and comprehensive self-examination by Romania of the historical period of the Holocaust.

The President of your nation received the report of the International Committee on the Holocaust from Romania. A month earlier, he had declared about the endeavor of the committee: *Reality cannot and should not be hidden. Assuming our own past, with its good and bad parts, is not just an exercise of intellectual honesty, but also a test of democratic conscience.*

Five years later, after a complex and difficult series of evolutions and events, the Romanian people is taking a significant step for continuously assuming its collective past. It includes, on one hand, the hundreds of years of coexistence with its Jewish neighbors and, on the other hand, the complicity in the killing of hundreds of thousands of Jews during the Holocaust.

This memorial so full of meaning, that you are inaugurating now, is intricately designed and built as a symbol reminding of national memory, identity and responsibility. Its erection was one of the recommendations of the report and those who did it are worth of our congratulations and gratitude.

Still, it is sure that nobody can consider this memorial or any other monument, no matter how impressive, as being the climax of the memory of the Holocaust by its mere existence.

At Yad Vashem, whose mountain of remembrance from Jerusalem is famous due to its equipment and items on display, we realize that even the most important building is not a purpose in itself. In fact, we should look for that deep learning and experience that should be evoked to the visitors by such places, as well as the changes in human



behavior resulting from them.

In order to reach such a high purpose, many good people and historians, sociologists, etc., among whom the researchers of the Yad Vashem Institute, are ready to offer their support to you. Still, as Romania goes along its sometimes winding path of remembering its past, the hard work is yours.

May your nation be blessed with courage, in order to persevere and get the reward of its sincere efforts”.

*Mr. Warren Miller, President of the
“American Jewish Heritage of Abroad” Organization*



Mrs. President,
Gentlemen members
of the Parliament,
Dear Ambassadors,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
friends,

I am honored to be here and to enjoy the special opportunity of holding a speech during this Solemn Session. Almost eight years ago, when we proposed the creation of a national Memorial Monument of the Holocaust, we knew that it would be a long, winding process, but, with the support of the “Wiesel” Committee and with the commitment of the Romanian Government, this idea came true.

The creation of this memorial, similar to other memorials from Europe, is an important step forward for this nation, a step that all the Romanians should be proud of, for it helps fixing a wrongdoing.

The Holocaust was the darkest chapter in a long series



of mistakes made by humanity along history. No less than 1.5 million Jewish children were killed of the six million Jews who were violently murdered. These victims were not a threat for the oppressors. They had committed no crime and were killed just because they were Jewish.

These murders were used against many nations, including Romania. Here, the army killed 11.000 Roma people.

Still, many decades after the war, this well-documented and controversial history was denied and hidden, and the Romanian people did not know the truth about the role of their nation in the Holocaust. This period of historical forgery has ended and your nation chose the path of truth, not of ignorance.

No nation likes to be reminded of its past wrongdoings, but the commemoration of shameful events, as well as of those events to be proud of, is a duty of any free society. It is only like this that we can face the future with hope.

Romania is doing this right now. The Memorial which we inaugurated today will acknowledge the truth about the Holocaust. This nation honors the victims and provides them with a voice that will speak in time. The Memorial will allow all visitors to find out what happened, in order to ask themselves: why did this happen, how could this happen and what can I do as a person to make sure that this will never happen again?

We would like to thank President Băsescu and the Romanian leaders for their support in the creation of this memorial and for the commemoration of the Holocaust.

Thank you for having had the courage to tell your citizens the truth about this sad episode of their history.

This memorial is the proof that the Romanian Government is not only speaking, but also acting. These acts are the basis of a strong, vibrant democracy and the international community congratulates Romania for the way in which it supports historical truth.



Still, there are many things to be done. Today, the voice of anti-Semites, of Holocaust deniers, of the xenophobes is heard loud and clear. This is a danger for the nation and for the liberties so cherished by the nation.

These forces may trample even a free, democratic society. For this reason, the defense of the memory of the Holocaust is a continuous responsibility. This can be done not only for the dead, but for the living, as well.

In order to defeat the ideologies of hatred, the leader, the strong politician, has a vital importance. But people should not simply stand-by and watch; they need to talk and combat those who promote fanaticism. All these will happen due to the necessary knowledge and determination.

The way in which the Holocaust is commemorated shows the state of health of the society. When the Holocaust is denied and the truth is hidden, freedom and humanity are jeopardized.

But, when the Holocaust is commemorated, as it happens in Romania now, the memory of the victims is dignified and the state of liberty is more obvious.

On behalf of the American Government and people, thank you, Romania, for your efforts to honor the memory of the Holocaust victims and for creating this remarkable memorial.

God bless the survivors and the Romanian people!

*Mr. Paul Shapiro, Director of the Center
for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the Holocaust
Memorial Museum of Washington*

Dear Mrs. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sixty-eight years ago, almost all the Jews from Bassarabia and most of the Jews from Bucovina were deported to



Transnistria as a result of the order given by Ion Antonescu, the leader of the Romanian state at the time.

The waves of deportation were organized by the General Staff of the Romanian Army and by the Gendarmerie which was subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The deportations took place in terrible conditions. Most of the times they were by foot. The rows of Jews included women, old men and children. They were forced to walk 30 to 40 km each day. The specific Orders given to the Romanian Gendarmerie mentioned the execution on the spot of all those who stayed behind the convoys or the rows; desperate, exhausted, ill people, thousands of them were executed without mercy.

About 150.000 Romanian Jews reached Transnistria alive. There, in that part of Ukraine which was under Romanian jurisdiction at the time, only 50.000 Romanian Jews survived. They suffered from the inhumane conditions they were subjected to by the Romanian civil and military authorities: starvation, forced labor, typhus and mass executions killed 100.000 Jews, citizens of this country. And that's not all. More than 130.000 local Jews from Transnistria were massacred in Odessa, Golta and Mostovoi and perished from epidemics and starvation.

On the Romanian territory as of this day, 13.266 Jews were massacred in the summer of 1941, in Iași, in just a few days. This number is confirmed in a report of the Special Intelligence Service dated 1943.

At least 280.000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews perished from 1941 to 1944 under the jurisdiction and responsibility of the Romanian authorities.

In 1942, about 25.000 Roma people were also deported to Transnistria, as a result of the personal order given by the same Ion Antonescu. At least 11.000 of them died there, from bullets and epidemics.

In Northern Transylvania, the Hungarian authorities,



together with Nazi Germany, are responsible for the death of 135.000 Romanian Jews, in 1944.

There was an plan, agreed upon by Romania and Nazi Germany, which provided that all the Jews from the Romanian Regions known as the "Old Kingdom" and Southern Transylvania were to be deported to the death camp of Belzec, in Poland, in 1942. Due to the circumstances, these deportations were postponed, later canceled.

The numbers referring to Jewish and Roma losses during the Holocaust from Romania are hard to grasp. The circumstances in which these Romanian citizens were exterminated are even harder to understand and acknowledge. It is even more difficult to realize that each person added to the huge numbers mentioned above was a human being. They were arbitrarily discriminated against and deliberately destroyed just because they belonged to a certain ethnic group. Those people whom the authorities and their neighbors called kikes or gypsies at the time were not enemies of the Romanian state. They were just human beings, Jews and Roma people, who were unlucky to be born in Romania of those days, where anti-Semitism and the prejudice against the Roma people were deeply rooted in the mentality of intellectuals, politicians, the Church and the rest of the population.

Numbers are cold and impersonal, but they hide not only the tragedy of the victims. It is also a terrible chapter in the history of this country named Romania. The tragedy of the Romanian Jews and Roma people during the Second World War was also Romania's tragedy. This country was governed by a criminal regime, an ally of Nazi Germany who decided that all those who belonged to the Mosaic religion were outcasts of the society; that regime was based on a policy of savage discrimination and mass murder against the Jews.

That administration allowed its secret services, more precisely the second section of the General Staff and the



Special Intelligence Service, to coordinate mass murders, as ordered by the rulers. The police, the army, the gendarmerie, together with German soldiers, did massacre their citizens of a different religion; the Government, voiced by the Prime Minister and his deputy, ordered massive deportations of the population, as well as their imprisonment in ghettos and camps. Last but not least, the civilian population from Iași, from the villages of Bassarabia and Northern Bucovina, allowed being involved in this series of killings and wrongdoings.

The Holocaust from Romania meant not only the extermination of at least 280.000 Jews and 11.000 Roma people; it was also an attempt to destroy the humanity of the Romanians.

The process of destruction of the Jews and Roma people, under Antonescu's Government, was a taboo during the communist regime. By lies and forgeries, they tried to deny the Holocaust and to hide the records of the archives that proved this tragic phenomenon.

We have to admit that Romania is still paying tribute to this old situation. It is not by chance that the most visible Holocaust deniers in today's Romania are the former court poets of the communist dictator who systematically tried to falsify history. But historical truth cannot be hidden or falsified forever, neither in Romania, nor anywhere else in the world. More and more researchers, politicians, Romanian citizens, are conscious of the fact that the denial of our own history, as it really was, is against our national interest.

The monument of the Holocaust victims that we inaugurated today, as well as the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust from Romania bring homage to the victims. The monument is also an important symbolical proof of the fact that modern Romania assumes its history, as it was. The inscription on the monument - the Romanian people and its government erected this



memorial as a permanent place of remembrance and as a warning for future generations – resumes Romania's aspiration for a future characterized by democracy, humanism and tolerance.

Thank you! (*Applause.*)

*Rabbi Andrew Baker, director for
International Relations of the American Jewish
Congress and OSCE representative for combating
Anti-Semitism and Holocaust Denial*



Thank you for this opportunity, Mrs. President!

This solemn day of commemoration for the victims of the Holocaust in Romania falls during the week of *Sukkot* on the Hebrew calendar. *Sukkot* or the Feast of Booths as it is also known is celebrated with the building of a booth or *Sukkah*, a temporary dwelling that is fragile and open to the elements and

where Jews during this week share their meals.

This *Sukkah*, according to Jewish tradition, is to remind us of the fragile and temporary dwellings that the Israelites built during their arduous, forty year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Escape from slavery in Egypt was only the first stage of this journey, beset as they were by all the natural hardships of a desert existence and mortal enemies besieging them. But at the end there was redemption, freedom, and a land of their own to enter.

It is a very different journey that we recall today when



we remember the story of the Holocaust in Romania. Jews who had been rooted and integrated in this region for generations found themselves barred from their professions, pulled from their homes, their possessions looted, and sent on a journey of unspeakable suffering and death.

The murder of European Jewry was planned in Nazi Germany, but in nearly all countries they had their accomplices and collaborators. Among the worst of them was Romania, where the systematic persecution of the Jews was carried out by the Romanian State in a campaign set in motion by Ion Antonescu in October 1941.

For decades the truth of this was ignored, instrumentalized, or distorted. Only when a free and democratic Romania emerged was it possible to confront and come to terms with this history.

And so another journey began—not a physical one but a quest for the truth, a genuine effort to recapture and then retell the authentic history of this dark period. As recently as six years ago there were many who denied the Romanian Holocaust altogether. But six years ago a process was set in motion. An international commission was established which included historians from Romania and abroad and which was chaired by Elie Wiesel. It was endorsed by political leaders from all major parties, and it was given the task of researching the history of the Holocaust in Romania and the freedom to work independently and critically. In slightly less than two years it completed its assignment. And in December 2005 it presented its findings.

But this was not the end but rather only a first important step on a still longer journey. The Commission saw the need to spread its results throughout Romanian society, to provide a center for continued research, to develop educational programs that would reach school children, to provide the means for public ceremony and places for commemoration. These were also part of a wide-ranging set of recommendations that the Romanian



Government accepted and began to implement.

We can look back today and see that a great deal has been accomplished. We know too that we have had our own version of the fragile, storm-buffed *Sukkah* along the way, wondering whether the research institute would be opened, whether this solemn day of remembrance would be fixed on the official Romanian calendar, and, dare I say, whether this remarkable Holocaust memorial in Bucharest would be completed in time for today's scheduled dedication. The journey is not over yet, and we may well come upon new stumbling blocks in the days and weeks ahead, but we cannot deny the progress that has been made.

As we recall that terrible tragedy of the Holocaust in Romania, which was set in motion 68 years ago, it is not enough merely to be faithful to history. Memory must also be a lesson for the present. Anti-Semitism and extremism, ethnic and racial incitement, base appeals to prejudice and nationalistic tendencies can all be found today in Romania, in Europe and in much of the world, and we must do everything we can to fight their spread. Only in this way can we truly honor those victims and give meaning to their deaths.

Zichronam l'Vrachah, we say. *May their memory be a blessing.* And may we be worthy to receive it.

*Mr. Theodor Paleologu, the Minister of Culture,
Religion and National Patrimony*

Mrs. President of the Chamber of Deputies,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen Members of the Chamber of Deputies,

Dear guests,

Of course, the commemoration of the Holocaust this year is special due to the Inauguration of the Holocaust





Memorial, this morning.

At the inauguration of this monument, Great Rabbi Menachem Hacohen spoke about Cain and Abel, and I did the same in my speech. I would like to continue this idea, about the first man who kills his brother.

In the Book of Creation, there is this lesson about the radical evil existing in man,

in human nature which deteriorated after the banishment from Paradise, after the original sin.

Still, it is even worse that the murderous brother, Cain, denies his crime. When God asks him what happened to his brother, he says: "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" this is Cain's second crime.

And this is the crime that we want to fix today. We don't want to be part of the second crime, that of denying or ignoring the committed murder. Because, when one ignores or denies, one is in fact accessory to murder.

Of course, a memorial, educational programs, museums and other such things cannot give life to the ones who were killed, but, at least, this is a measure to fix the wrongdoing of the second crime, that of denial and oblivion. I am referring to oblivion because the memorial is meant to stop us from forgetting. This is its purpose, to perpetuate memory, to keep the memory of the victims, the memory of the fallen. At the same time, it entails an attitude of gratitude. Memory continues and manifests the respect for the dead.

The memorial that we are inaugurating today, honoring both the Jewish and Roma victims, is a very important moment, in compliance with the recommendation of the



“Wiesel” Committee. I think this is a beginning, a starting point.

Thus, we should not limit ourselves to the inauguration of one single monument. This should not be limited to one festive moment. The memorial needs to spread this healing memory that I told you about.

These thoughts include the essence about today, about the importance of the inauguration of the Memorial. The other speakers referred to important matters connected to the Report of the “Wiesel” Committee, to the historical, political, philosophical dimension of the events. I just wanted to underline this metaphysical, religious dimension, the importance of memory as a first measure of moral, spiritual hygiene.

Thank you. (*Applause.*)

*Mrs. Sonia Drăghici,
MP, the PSD + PC Political Alliance*



Dear Mrs. President,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues,
Members of the
Parliament,

It is a special honor for me to hold a speech as we are commemorating the victims of the Holocaust and we are inaugurating the Holocaust Memorial.

I am talking to you on behalf of those who sent me to the Parliament, the community of Oradea, the great Oradea. I would also like to refer to my family. My father was Romanian, but he was



adopted and brought up by a Jewish man, from whom he received his education and culture that was very necessary for his development as an appreciated economist between the two world wars.

Honored audience, the Holocaust was not only a drama of humanity. More than that, it was a cancer of history. I am a doctor and I can tell you that there are periods when mankind or humans suffer from cancer.

The evolution of humanity has ups and downs, but still, they led to a progress in a spiral and to a final progress. Perhaps it is due to the basis set by the martyrs of the Holocaust that the following generations were able to see what dictatorship leads to. It leads to the death of reason, to an exacerbation of racial hatred, to abuse of power by paranoid personalities, filled with xenophobia and contempt for their neighbors.

It is the duty of the post-Holocaust generations to commemorate it and to keep alive the reason of mankind, the love for life and for our neighbors, the respect for cultural and racial differences, the wish for harmony and good faith, for proper cohabitation in our country and all over the world.

Dear guests,

Dear colleagues,

Let me remind you that the towns of Ardeal, especially those of western Ardeal, were also built and developed due to the efforts of the Jewish community. They introduced the special architectonic style of the town - Secession, late Baroque, monumental styles – as well as a part of the culture of our towns. They developed trade and finance, public circulation. It is due to them that local administration strengthened, communities thrived and respect for family and society was cultivated.

It is my duty of honor, on behalf of the 18.000 Jews who were deported in the camps from Auschwitz, Birkenau,



Buchenwald, of whom no more than 2.000 returned, on behalf of the other minorities who suffered because of those dramatic events, as well as on behalf of the 600 Jews still living in Oradea, in great Oradea, nowadays, to keep the memory of the lost ones, to launch a message of solidarity, friendship, proper cohabitation and common endeavors.

Dear members of minority groups, we, the majority, do respect you for only this way can we respect ourselves. Romania and the whole world have a lot to gain from multiculturalism and harmony.

May God protect Romania, our country, belonging to all of us, the majority and minority, a modern, united and unitary Romania.

Thank you! (*Applause.*)

***Mr. Raul Victor Surdu Soreanu,
MP, the PSD + PC Political Alliance***



Mrs. President,
Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues,
Dear colleague, Mr. Aurel
Vainer,

I actually wanted to add, apart from all that the other speakers mentioned before me – when reminding of history – unfortunately history is filled with misfortunes, not only in the case of our nation, such as the phenomenon that we are commemorating today – that in history, it is especially the simple people who are examples of humanism, of Christianity, of love for our neighbors.



Despite the fact that I do not boast with this, I belong to a family which, just like hundreds of other Romanian families during those hard times, risked their situation, their social position and did help, to put it straight, they hid Jews in their homes so that they did not join the convoys which were crossing the Prut River.

My parents did this. For the memory of the dead - and my parents passed away - I wanted to mention this fact.

As a Romanian, I assume the past - it is the history of our nation - with the good and bad things that we did. Let me continue by saying that my childhood was marked by the fact that - being "designed" during the monarchy, I was born during the communist era - I grew up together with other children, the children of my parent's friends. Some of them were scholars, others were producing wine, etc. At the prestigious "Costache Negruzzi" High School, in just one of the four parallel classes, there were no less than nine Jewish children. We grew up together and we are friends to this day. I met some of them in Israel, when I paid official visits to the country or I simply went there to pray.

But what is going on today is very positive and significant. It was in the Electoral College no. 6, which is called "Stephen the Great", from Neamț County, where I was elected as a Member of Parliament, that our colleague, Mr. Aurel Vainer received the greatest number of votes, in compliance with our Electoral Law. I am very proud of this, despite the fact that we too, as Members of the Parliament, sometimes do not say the right things.

There are 19 rural localities in Electoral College no. 6 "Stephen the Great". Only three Jews still live in these localities. Mr. Vainer received the largest number of votes in College no. 6 "Stephen the Great" from Neamț. As we all know, in Iași, Botoșani, Dorohoi, Dărbani and Vaslui, there used to be great Jewish communities - scholars, philosophers, tradesmen.



I looked for an explanation and I found it: in the list of MPs to be voted within this college, there are many pensioners from Iași who once befriended Jews or were their colleagues. Unfortunately, just like in the case of the German minority in a similar period, maybe not as difficult, but difficult for the Romanian people, they left their places of birth. It is out of sympathy for their lost friends that they voted for Mr. Vainer.

I would like to mention once again our regret, as well as the fact that we assume history with the hope that this dark period, this disaster, this incomprehensible act of cruelty that took place in European and, unfortunately, in Romanian history, will never repeat.

Thank you! (*Applause.*)

*Mr. Călin Constantin Anton Popescu Tăriceanu,
MP, PNL*



Mrs. President,

Ladies and gentlemen
Members of the Parliament,
Honored guests and
Your Excellencies, members
of the Diplomatic Corps,

Allow me to say a
few words about this
commemoration that marks
one of the darkest and
saddest episodes of the
Romanian and European

history.

Since 2004, when the Romanian State instituted the Memorial Day of the Holocaust, we have the occasion, every year on October 9, to meditate on the greatest failure of European civilization during the 20th century.



The totalitarian experiences that Europe went through during the past century made it possible for racial, social class or religious hatred to be the main doctrine for governing. They all ended in the most painful political experiment that the peoples of Europe ever went through, the industrialization of murder.

For the sake of certain political and social ideas that were deeply wrong, people were led to the path of absolute evil by the leaders of those totalitarian political systems. They based their power on the weakness of those who were subject to prejudice, hatred of any kind, envy, greed or xenophobia.

The totalitarian regimes legitimated and supported their existence by fueling conflicts between peoples, between social forces, between people having different religious beliefs. Murder was an important part of their way of governing in all states that were plagued by totalitarian darkness.

Ladies and gentlemen,

No doubt, the Holocaust is the worst episode to face our collective memory, of all the European peoples.

Unfortunately, history and people made it possible for Romania to play a tragic role as well, at that moment of collective madness, during the Second World War.

Romanian citizens were urged to fight against each other and many families suffered. Before being Jews, those people were first of all Romanian citizens. Many of them were the offspring of families that had come to Romania many generations before.

We shall not forget the fact that the Roma population went through terrible times as well, during the Second World War, despite the fact that we all know that they have been a part of Romanian history for hundreds of years. They have always been close to us and participated in our history, no matter if the times were good or bad.

It is good for such moments to never be forgotten. This



is why I consider that an open account of the painful events that took place during the Second World War should be a permanent process.

The decision to commemorate the Holocaust in Romania, since 2004, as well as the activity of the International Committee for the Study of the Holocaust from Romania, led by Elie Wiesel, represented a significant step in this direction. At present, the Holocaust is well-defined in Romanian schools, being commemorated by public monuments. Even if this is just a beginning, we started on a solid path that represents, first of all, a guarantee against oblivion.

Unfortunately, the wounds suffered by Romania as a result of the totalitarian experiences of the 20th century are many and painful. Hundreds of thousands of Romanian citizens fell victim to various far-right or far-left political ideologies. We need to say that the guilty ones were, in most of the cases, also Romanian citizens, victims of their own weaknesses, of wrong political doctrines, who became a part of the infernal machine of the totalitarian state.

Our country had to face 60 years of various totalitarian regimes, from the ultranationalist policies at the end of the 1930's to the horrible communist regime which ended in a bloodshed, in 1989.

Twenty years ago, we got back our freedom, but we also got back the responsibility of talking about all that happened during the 60 years of totalitarian darkness, including the hundreds of thousands of people who fell victim to the forces of evil, manipulated by people who lacked reason and responsibility.

Our whole society should fight against oblivion. Twenty years after the revolution, it is our duty to talk and do as much as possible to eliminate all that remains of totalitarian ideas and ideologies, to fight for an open society, for justice and to differentiate ourselves from those who preach hatred, conflicts and violence.



European Union is a political system that helps the peoples of our continent, so divided at a time, because of extremist or totalitarian ideas, find a common path to liberty and prosperity.

But, just because we left the evil times behind, it does not mean we should forget what happened. On the contrary, we need to make sure that totalitarian regimes such as the ones that plagued a series of European peoples during the 20th century will never develop again.

This is why oblivion is not an option. History should offer us a place of meditation and introspection. Each of the peoples should have the courage to scrutinize its past, to fight evil anytime it appears from the cover of the past, because the excess of totalitarian regimes should never happen again.

Thank you! (*Applause.*)

*Mr. Cristian Mihai Adomniței, MP,
the National Liberal Party*

Thank you, Mrs. President,
Excellencies,

Let me use the precedent created by Deputy Surdu. I am going to talk here, in front of you, from three stances.

The first stance is connected to the fact that I am a Romanian man born in Bucovina. I am also a Member of the Parliament representing the Iași County, more precisely, the Electoral College from the town of Podu Iloaiei. This was the final destination for the repeated itineraries of certain trains some 60 - 70 years ago.

It was from Iași that those trains left. For Romania, Iași is a town of light, of culture and civilization. But it has a black spot in its history, precisely at those times. This town hosted the pogrom against the Jews. I cannot say that those moments are part of my lived memories,



but they deeply impressed me in the books that I read, not simply heard, about what those people went through – almost 300 of them. They were exterminated on those trains, apart from the few thousands who were shot and buried in cemeteries and in common graves in the town of Iași.

My second stance is that of a young man, a young Orthodox Christian Romanian politician. My third stance is that of a former Minister of Education. It was during my term that the text book about the Holocaust was created and studied for the first time in Romanian schools, under the coordination and with the approval of PM Tăriceanu.

I will end by repeating the message that I am conveying to you from these three stances: when we are born, as people on Earth, we do not have values, for we simply appear in this world. Values are acquired and fulfilled by education. As Mr. Surdu recalled a personal memory, a retrospective of his past, I can only make a promise of friendship, of humanity and cooperation in the future. By using education as a tool for the knowledge of our children and grandchildren, so that they remember the Holocaust, we express our wish for those terrible crimes never to happen again.

Thank you and let me wish our guests from abroad a pleasant stay in Romania! (*Applause*)



Part III

Ceremonies at the Cotroceni Palace

Visit of a delegation of the Jewish Community from Romania and of the guests from the USA. Short speech of the Romanian President, Mr. Traian Băsescu

The Romanian President, Mr. Traian Băsescu, received a delegation of the Jewish Community from Romania and of the guests from the United States of America, at the Cotroceni Palace, on October 8, 2009. On this occasion, the head of the Romanian State thanked the representatives of the community for the support that they provided in order to finally clarify an important moment of modern history, the Holocaust of the Roma people and of the Jews from Romania.

The head of the state underlined once again that the efforts for finding the truth should continue, so that history might be known: **"I want you to know that this is not the end of the road. Following another report on the crimes of communism, we have to clarify, to finalize the objectives established by this report. As a politician, I strongly believe in the values of real history. In perspective, hidden historical errors can only repeat themselves"**.

President Traian Băsescu also expressed his hope that the study of the Holocaust will be part of the compulsory classes of history in Romania, as a proof of assuming responsibility for our national history. The head of the state underlined the fact that the Inauguration of the Memorial dedicated to the Victims of the Holocaust from Romania is an important stage to educate future generations about the mistakes of the past. From this point of view, Romania has passed a very important landmark on the





Short speech held by the Romanian President, Mr. Traian Băsescu

path of assuming its own history. The Romanian President officially condemned the crimes of the communist regime.

President Traian Băsescu expressed his conviction that Romanians need to clarify their own history: **“We need patience for the Romanians to change what they had been learning for 50 years. There are numerous generations educated in a different way when referring to historical realities. I am one of those who believe that sudden changes can only bring about different effects, not the wished results, that is, to learn everything about ourselves”.**



*Decoration ceremony of certain members of
the Jewish Community. Short speech of
the Romanian President, Mr. Traian Băsescu*

The Romanian President, Mr. Traian Băsescu, decorated the Romanian members of the "Elie Wiesel" International Committee for the Study of the Holocaust, on Thursday, October 8, during a ceremony that took place at the Cotroceni Palace, as a sign of appreciation for the special merits in the area of scientific research performed by the Committee. President Traian Băsescu granted the National Order "For Merit" in rank of Commander to Rabbi Andrew Baker, to Dr. Radu Ioanid, to Mr. Daniel S. Mariaschin, Mr. Paul Shapiro and to Rabbi Menachem Hacohen.

The head of the state also granted the "Cultural Merit" Order in rank of Commander to Univ. Prof. Dr. Randolph L. Braham, as well as the "Cultural Merit" Order in rank of Officer to Mrs. Hildrun Glass and Mr. William Totok.

During the ceremony, President Traian Băsescu granted the Order of the "Cultural Merit" in rank of Knight to Dr. Viorel Achim, Dr. Lya Benjamin, Mr. Adrian Mihai Cioflâncă, Univ. Prof. Dr. Ioan Ciupercă, Lt. Col. (r) Dr. Alexandru Elias, Univ. Lect. Dr. Alexandru Florian, Dr. Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, Major General (r) Univ. Prof. Dr. Mihail E. Ionescu, Mr. Vasile Ionescu, Univ. Prof. Dr. Corneliu Mihail Lungu, Mrs. Irina Sanda Marin-Cajal, Mr. Victor Opaschi, Univ. Prof. Dr. Ioan Scurtu and Univ. Prof. Dr. George Voicu.

On the occasion of the inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial Monument from Bucharest, as a token of appreciation for his professional activity, as well as for his efforts in order to keep the living memory of the victims of the Holocaust during the Second World War, the Romanian President granted the "Romania's Star" National Order in rank of Knight to Dr. Aurel Vainer; the "Agricultural Merit" Order in rank of Knight was granted to Mr. Nilu Aronovici





*Decoration of
Rabbi Andrew Baker*



*Decoration of
Mr. Radu Ioanid*



*Decoration of Great Rabbi
Menahem Hacohen*



*Decoration of
Dr. Aurel Vainer*





*Decoration of
Dr. Eng. José Blum*



*Decoration of
Adv. Iulian Sorin*



*Decoration of
Eng. Albert Kupferberg*



*Decoration of
Eng. Paul Schwartz*



and to Dr. Eng. Jose Blum, as well as the "Cultural Merit" Order in rank of High Officer to Adv. Iulian H. Sorin. The head of the state also awarded the "Cultural Merit" Order in rank of Knight to Dr. Zvi Feine, Mr. Sharli Israel Sabag, Dr. Culer Haim (Kuller Hary) and Univ. Prof. Dr. Arch. Tiberiu Benedek. President Traian Băsescu also awarded the "Industrial and Commercial Merrit" Order in rank of Knight to: Mr. Alexandru Ausch, Eng. Jose Iacobescu, Eng. Pincu Kaiserman, Eng. Felix Koppelman, Eng. Albert Kupferberg, Eng. Tiberiu Roth, Eng. Ionel Schlesinger, Eng. Paul Schwartz and Eng. Heinrich Solomon; the "Educational Merit" Order in rank of Knight was granted to Prof. Isidor Iancu; the "Sanitary Merit" Order in rank of Knight was awarded to Dr. Paul-Sandu Costin; the "Sports Merit" Order, Third Class, was granted to Mr. David Iosef and the "Military Virtue" Order in rank of Knight, with civilian markings was awarded to Mr. Iancu Segal David.

In order to honor the memory of the victims and as a sign of deep respect for the Roma survivors of the Holocaust, President Traian Băsescu awarded the "Faithful Service" National Cross, Third class, to: Mr. Justinian Badea, Mr. Marchidan Berescu, Mr. Mihai Bratu, Mrs. Maria Dumitru, Mr. Ion Hangalet, Mr. Ion Iancu, Mr. Mihai Iorga, Mrs. Melania Marian, Mr. Marin Porogeanu, Mrs. Alexandrina Radu, Mr. Ion Stoica and Mrs. Paulina Vasile.

In the end, the head of the state mentioned that the ceremony is a commemoration, expressing his gratitude for the people who attended it: **"What we all wanted to mark today refers to the capability of a democratic state to acknowledge its past mistakes. I wish to underline an essential matter and I am grateful for this: thank you for being able to forgive".**



*Reception offered by the Romanian President,
Mr. Traian Băsescu. Short speech of
the Romanian President, Mr. Traian Băsescu*

The Romanian President, Mr. Traian Băsescu, attended the reception offered at the Cotroceni Palace on the occasion of the Holocaust Memorial Day in Romania, on Thursday, October 8, 2009. Here is the short speech held by the head of the state:

“Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

After 50 years of successive dictatorships, Romania started a long process of recovering its historical memory, together with the gain of freedom in December 1989. This is done in compliance with the defining moral and political values of democracy, as well as within the landmark of a continuous exercise of honesty. For a very long time Romanian citizens knew only a part of their recent past, without the necessary critical view. Today, in our free and democratic society, we have the duty of knowing history.

The tragedy of the Holocaust in Romania is a terrible chapter of our recent history, which takes us all in front of the urgent need to recover our memory and acknowledge the past. Members of the Jewish and Roma communities were victims of systematic persecutions, of deportations, of hatred as state policy between 1940 and 1944, during Ion Antonescu’s regime. It is our duty to always remember their suffering and to honor their memory.

The commemoration of the Holocaust in Romania is a clear proof of the fact that Romania fulfills this duty and has respect for diversity. All the initiatives of the Romanian authorities during these years, focusing on the commemoration the study and research of the Holocaust, are the expression of the responsibility and maturity of the Romanian society.



The “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust from Romania, the high school text book about the history of the Jews, the research and training programs on the history of the Holocaust and today’s inauguration of the Memorial Monument of the Victims of the Holocaust from Romania, all these are important steps taken in the spirit of historical truth.

I am sure that the Inauguration Ceremony of the Memorial was, for all those who attended directly, as well as for all those who watched on by media outlets, a moment of deep emotion, of profound homage to the victims of the Holocaust; it was a moment of conscious responsibility.

The future of a nation is the young generation. It is our duty to tell them the truth about the past and to make them responsible for the future.

It was my honor, this evening, to grant, on behalf of the Romanian State, important distinctions to those who suffered during anti-Semitic, xenophobic persecutions. By paying the price of their suffering and especially with their courage, they succeeded to show us the value of human dignity.

I wish to use this opportunity to express my respect for the members of the Jewish and Roma communities living in Romania, as well as my full appreciation for the research activity developed by the International Committee for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania. Thank you!”



Part IV

TVR 1: Special Edition – “The Memorial day of the Holocaust”

*TVR 1 (October 8, h. 21:12:22) - Special edition –
Producers: Luca Niculescu (1) and Oana Popescu (2)*

Producer 2: It is on October 9 that Romania commemorates the “Day of the Holocaust”, in memory of the Jews and Roma people killed during the Second World War. The Memorial Monument of the Holocaust from Romania was inaugurated today in Bucharest. Here is a “Special Edition” of the National Romanian Television – TVR – that will focus on a dramatic episode of our history, as well as on survival and responsibility.

Producer 1: Tonight’s guests are Mr. Liviu Beris, President of the Association of Romanian Jews – Survivors of the Holocaust, dr. Radu Ioanid, Director of the International Archives’ Program within the Memorial Holocaust Museum from Washington and Univ. Lect. Dr. Alexandru Florian, Executive Manager of the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust.

Producer 2: Let’s follow the series of events today and we’ll get back to the studio.

Producer 1: Very emotional moments at this morning’s ceremony. Mr. Beris, you are one of the survivors of the Holocaust. What did it mean to you, the inauguration of this memorial?

Liviu Beris: For me and not only for me, I hope, the meaning of this event refers to the message that this memorial can send: the destruction of a person or of a group of persons influences all those around them. Any group can be the victim of such a situation. This refers to the fact that one no longer has the responsibility of his or



her own deeds. It is transposed in a collective responsibility, based on principles of collective guilt. A memorial that reminds of such a situation can induce a need to assess the way in which we behave to one another and what could lead to such a behavior.

Producer 2: Mr. Radu Ioanid, let us talk a bit about the meaning of the Holocaust. It is time we did it today.

Radu Ioanid: It was a great tragedy, one of the greatest tragedies, if not the greatest tragedy of the 20th century. Unfortunately, we got used too easily to clichés in this area, also for historical reasons. It was not only about Germany, it was about a whole continent. Jews were hunted down and destroyed at the scale of the whole continent, only because they were Jews. Of course, Nazi Germany had the largest role in this action, but it is not only about this country. This was a continental action. Even neutral countries, such as Sweden or Switzerland, had their share of responsibility, since they did not act. Even a country like the United States had its responsibility in not helping the Jews and gentiles who were persecuted by Nazi Germany. So, this was a global phenomenon.

Producer 2: Let's try to find out, Mr. Alexandru Florian. The past century, as well as our century, unfortunately witnessed examples of mass extermination. What is the uniqueness of the Holocaust?

Alexandru Florian: The uniqueness of the Holocaust resides in a few elements that made it possible for the genocide against the Jewish community of Europa to show features that were never met in the genocides which took place before or, on other continents, after 1945. Its most important element or aspect was that this policy, this action of extermination, was run by a state. It was premeditated and organized. This was the state policy of a totalitarian power, of Nazi Germany or their collaborators and allies. They conceived and developed a plan meant to exterminate a segment of the population, no matter if they were men,



women or children. They wanted to eliminate a group of civilians which was not involved in politics, which had no political battle with the respective state and which was exterminated on the simple criterion that they represented something else. These criteria were arbitrary, based on race and ethnicity. On the other hand, another important aspect is the fact that this extermination encompassed the feature of the modern society of the time, of the industrialized and technical society – for the first time in history, technique was used for mass murder, in very fast circumstances and rhythms. Practically, in no more than two years, six million Jews lost their lives in Europe.

Producer 1: Are there European countries which are not responsible for the Holocaust? Are there countries which escaped it?

Alexandru Florian: There are, first of all, the neutral countries of the Second World War. Also, there are the countries that were part of the other camp, the powers of the Allies. The rest, in one way or another, directly or not, the allies or collaborators of Nazi Germany, the respective states or governments, were involved in the Holocaust of the European Jews. Romania collaborated with Nazi Germany, despite the fact that there was no treaty of alliance. Based on the research performed most of all after 1990, upon archive documents, we can provide arguments for this assertion. There are very solid documents which prove the direct responsibility of the Romanian Government at the time. I am referring to the Government led by Marshall Antonescu and to its role in the tragedy of the Jews from Romania and from the territories managed by Romania, beginning with the summer of 1941.

Producer 2: Why, Mr. Radu Ioanid, do we commemorate the Holocaust from Romania on October 9, but it is commemorated at different dates in other countries. Can you explain the reason?

Radu Ioanid: Of course. First of all, each country



chooses when to commemorate the Holocaust depending on the specific situation that took place during the Second World War. Some countries choose the day that Auschwitz was liberated, if the majority of the population from the respective country was exterminated in that camp. But one of the major tragedies of the Holocaust from Romania took place since this date, October 9. It was around October 9, 1941, that almost 150.000 Jews from Bassarabia and Bucovina were deported to Transnistria. So, this was the largest deportation process of Romanian citizens of Jewish origin during the Second World War.

Producer 2: Practically, what happened then?

Radu Ioanid: As you know, from the Romanian point of view, the Second World War started on June 22. Very soon, tens of thousands of Jews, especially from Bassarabia and Bucovina, but not only - and from Northern Moldova, especially from Iași - were killed by the German and Romanian troops which acted together or separately in the respective areas. I am referring to about 50.000 Jews. The rest, about 150.000, were interned in transit camps and ghettos. In the beginning of October 1941, Mr. Beris was one of those affected by this wave of deportations. It continued at a much slower rhythm in 1942 - they were deported by foot or by train, in Transnistria. Two years later, only 50.000 were still alive. I am saying this for you to realize; of the 150.000, we lost 66%.

Producer 1: Before talking about deportations - and we have a whole chapter that Mr. Beris will tell us about - I would like us to clarify the words that we are using. The term of Holocaust, is it applicable only for the Jews, or for other ethnic groups, such as the Roma, for example. Were there other persecuted minorities?

Alexandru Florian: Before answering, let me add that Romania established October 9 as the Memorial Day of the Holocaust victims from Romania, not so long ago, in 2004. Apart from it, the United Nations Organization



established the International Memorial Day for the victims of the Holocaust on January 27. It was then that Auschwitz was liberated. As far as the definition of the Holocaust is concerned, or what is meant by the term, what historians and researchers of the respective period understand, let me mention two aspects. On one hand, the Holocaust refers to that period of European history when racism or ethnic and racial discrimination became state policy and culminated with extermination in concentration camps or with extermination as Mr. Beris mentioned this morning, at the inauguration of the memorial. Their living conditions were so tough, the authorities so careless, that very many people died of starvation, cold and illness. But, before this extremely serious drama, the Holocaust began when states elaborated and approved the first laws which banished the Jews from society. Practically, Jews were second-class citizens. Referring to the content of the term, if only the Jews and their suffering defines and illustrates this concept, let me mention that there is a larger sense of the term *Holocaust*. In French, it is replaced by the term Shoah. First of all, it refers to the Jewish victims and population, because it represented the main target of this extermination process. At the same time, together with the Jews, there were other victims, such as the Roma or Sinti people, the persons with disabilities or different sexual orientations, as well as the opponents of the Nazi or fascist regimes. Most of all, I am referring to activists belonging to left-wing parties: communists and social-democrats. In the Nazi ideology, the Slavs were an inferior race that Hitler, had he strengthened his power in Europe, would have liked to get rid of.

Producer 2: We have some testimonies about those dramatic times, taken from a series kept in the archive of the Romanian Television. It is called "Minorities under three dictatorships", First Series, directed by Cristian Hagiculea. Let's watch them.



(feature story)

Iancu Țukerman: Those were freight cars, for transporting cattle. They pushed us one by one, two, and they counted us. Another one hit us with a club from behind and loaded us: "Up you go, you stinking kikes!" They used lots of such words that offended us. When I got in, I don't remember exactly my number, but I keep in mind the moment when the soldiers said: "137, close".

Leonard Zăicescu: This was the itinerary: Iași – Podu Iloaiei, Târgu Frumos. Normally, it takes half an hour by train, maybe less. But for us, it lasted hours on end.

Andrei Călărașu: Please, excuse me, but after 15 minutes, people started to shout: "Water, water, I'm dying, I'm dying!" They started to drink their urine. They were dying. The first died, then the second and the pile of bodies started to stink all over the railway car. It was heartbreaking.

Iancu Țukerman: At first, we stood up, for we had no place to sit. We were 137 people and we could not, we simply did not have enough room to sit. After that, we were comfortable: people had died and we were sitting on them.

Leizer Finkelstein: I saw people dying just like flies, literally. We, the ones who were still alive, took the bodies at the end of the car, to make some room. Thus, we made some kind of a bench, for those who could stand no more to sit down; because, if you fell, it meant you were dead. Another one fell over you and you didn't have the power to get up, anymore.

Marcel Fischer: My brother, who was a child as well, used to slap me to make sure I stayed alive. This was the method. You had to fight someone so as not to get to sleep. If you went to sleep, they could think you were dead and they covered you with bodies.

Producer 1: Mr. Beris, you are one of those who went through those terrible experiences, how did you survive,



how did you succeed?

Liviu Beris: Yes, sometimes I wonder as well. I was not 14 years old yet, when they deported me. Of course, this mattered as well.

Producer 2: Where did you live?

Liviu Beris: We, my family, lived in a place called Herța. It was occupied by the Soviets. When the Soviet troops entered the locality, we spent a year under their rule. Normally, that place was not a part of Bucovina, but, because of Molotov's thicker pencil, it went under Soviet jurisdiction. At that point, all those who had more goods – considered to be “burjui”, bourgeois, rich, etc. – had a number, 39, on their ID; It was called “passport”. After that, we found out that it was the sign of deportation to Siberia.

Producer 1: So, if your number was 39, they would deport you to Siberia.

Liviu Beris: There was a plan to deport us.

Producer 1: Then, the Romanian Army came. It was supposed to save all of you.

Liviu Beris: Let me tell you that my parents had this number as well.

Producer 2: This was the distinctive sign for the social class.

Liviu Beris: Yes. Because of this, there was a system in school due to which the children used to call me son of the “burjui”, etc. Well, everything was nationalized – and not very fast. It was done step by step, but, within a year, everything was ready for the collectivization. The first deportations took place on June 13 or 15. We escaped the first deportation. The war started on June 22.

Producer 1: So, the first deportation was to Siberia.

Liviu Beris: To Siberia.

Producer 1: By the Soviets.

Liviu Beris: Let me tell you that 39 families were deported from Herța. No less than 38 of those families



were Jewish. Only one family was Romanian. We escaped. I will not give details about how this deportation was performed. After a week, on June 22, the war started. We were at the border. On July 5, the Romanian troops were at the entrance of Herța. My father took me by the hand and said: "Let's welcome our boys; we escaped deportation to Siberia". And we went. On the way there, some 10 Jews and 20 Romanians gathered. We reached the troops. It was very hot on July 5, 1941 and I saw a frowning captain. Instead of "Good day", he said: "All kikes, step aside". And he showed us a ditch. After we went there, at the edge of the ditch – I don't know, I don't remember exactly how it happened. But I do remember their guns pointed at us. Then, one of the Romanian locals, realizing what it was all about, threw himself in front of the guns, made the sign of the cross and shouted: "Captain, what are you doing? These people suffered along with us!" Another Romanian came, then another, so that the captain could not order our execution. This was the first contact, if you want, the first moment when, in fact, our lives were spared. You asked me how. This was one of them. Two days after the entrance of the Romanian troops, all the Jews from our locality were locked in synagogues and in two cellars. After that, I don't know, there were two men who acted as a temporary authority, together with the Romanian gendarmes. They made some lists and certain people were taken out of the buildings without any criterion. I am telling you, even a family with their children were taken out and executed just like that, without a trial...

Producer 1: Did you know why they were executed?

Liviu Beris: There was no reason at all. It was simply because perhaps the Jewish pub owner did not give a free drink to the local singer, Popescu Constantin, who was one of those who came to point them out on the list.

Producer 1: And then, you were deported together with the whole family, right?



Liviu Beris: Yes, after that, we were deported. After about 132 people were executed when we were freed from the synagogues. We remained for about three more weeks in Herța, and it was very interesting for me to see the psychological changes of the people around us. You know, when we got out, after that, from the synagogues, our neighbors were no longer like neighbors to us. It was very interesting, this psychological change of the masses.

Producer 2: We shall get back to your story. We saw earlier, Mr. **Alexandru Florian**, testimonies about the death train. We listened to Mr. **Liviu Beris** with his story, a part of it. But the question is, were there non-Jewish witnesses? You are a researcher. Could they still come to testify?

Alexandru Florian: There have always been witnesses.

Producer 2: But do they come and say what happened?

Alexandru Florian: Mr. Beris referred to some of them now, when he mentioned what happened with the relations between neighbors, between Jews and Romanians, after the Jews were freed from the synagogue. Now, let me tell you that the historical research of the Holocaust in Romania started very late. Practically, we did not succeed, at the “Elie Wiesel” Institute, to find witnesses, that is people who saw what happened and are willing to come and tell.

Radu Ioanid: If you allow me. . .

Producer 2: Please! The next part, and this is what I wanted to say, we found a testimony in Cristian Hadgiculea’s film. We shall watch it. But, before that, please...

Radu Ioanid: I wanted to say that our museum developed a program of witness interviewing, but not only our museum. There is a French priest whose name is Pere Dubois. He takes interviews to the witnesses in Ukraine. As you know, a part of Ukraine, Transnistria, was occupied by Romania. Well, especially the people of



the young generation, at the time – children, teenagers, who were 11 to 13 years old, more women, because the men were on the front – there are witnesses who saw the executions of the civilians, Romanian or Ukrainian Jews. So, there are witnesses and testimonies.

Producer 2: Maybe it is a little late. Of course, all those who had a certain age at the time, are old now. Let us watch Petre Butucea, from Kishinev, one of the witnesses.

Petre Butucea: I remember, there was a camp in Kishinev, Camp no. 1, full of kikes. There were wooden huts there and my mother used to sell them milk. We, the children, went there together with the women who sold them milk. They could not give them milk over the fence, but they asked us to do it. Thus, I could see with my eyes how it was possible for living people to be buried. I used to take our cattle in the woods, some half kilometer up. There is a hill there. We, the children, used to remove the bark of the lime-trees, made skis and played in the grass. During this time, it was in the afternoon, I saw two German-speaking soldiers. “Gut, gut”, I understood and they chased us away. But we wouldn’t go and we climbed a tree, further away. During this time, there appeared a cart full of shovels. Behind it, there were some 20 lads. They must have been 20 to 25 years old. They were civilians, not soldiers. The same soldiers, that I told you about before, measured the place and showed them where to dig. They dug a trench of 200, maybe 250 meters. It was not deeper than 60 centimeters. After that, I heard dogs barking. I did not understand what was going on. I went to the edge of the wood and I looked in that direction. In the field, a row of people was coming; there were two men on horses, on each side, one in front and another behind, with German dogs on leashes. A lot of women and children... The children, seven, eight years old, were tied to each other. Infants were carried or were held by the hand. At a certain time, I heard the sound of a machine gun. The women and



children fell. As soon as they fell, they were hit. Half of the children were still alive. After they all fell, they were pushed with the shovels, the children as well, still alive, one on top of the other. And that ditch was narrow, it was not large.

Gheorghe Butucea: They were soldiers, army men, Romanians. They came there at the time.

Petru Butucea: The Germans brought them. But we did not see them when the shooting began. We ran from there.

Producer 2: One of the two brothers said that they were brought by Romanians. The other said they were Germans. What was the attitude of the Romanian population in the area at the time? You said before that the neighbors were no longer behaving like neighbors. Were the people there different or just the same?

Liviu Beris: Yes, I am telling you. When we got out of the synagogues, we simply could not recognize our neighbors. It is true. Our houses were looted. I don't know what they looked for, what they were told, how they were manipulated, but it is a fact. The way in which they behaved was completely different. Let me tell you, my father approached one of his friends, but he simply turned his back. I still remember that. I wish to say that, if we are to assess this situation, one can realize how easy it is to manipulate people. I saw the results in just a few days, as a child and I remember the facts. I was glad, in a way, when you broadcast that document from the archive of the Romanian Television. You should know that in Hadgiculea's series, there are several documents of this type in which gentiles testify about what happened to the Jews.

Producer 2: The time of our show is limited and I wanted to best use your presence here.

Liviu Beris: What can I tell you in my answer? First of all: in general, I endured an indifference that I cannot



forget. Second of all, let me tell you about the convoys, shortly. We were in a convoy, on our way to the Dniester River. By now, it was the end of October, beginning of November. There was a lot of mud. Whoever stayed behind, was shot. At a certain point, a looked back and I saw a gendarme shooting an old man who stayed behind. I still have nightmares because of what I saw later. From the two sides of the path, there was no road proper, peasants appeared from behind the corn and they started to undress the body. This happened countless times. This nightmare is still following me, after 68 years.

Producer 1: Mr. Ioanid, how was it possible to have the premises for this to happen? You said that, from the very beginning of the war, Romania was one of the countries that participated in the events that we are talking about now. Were the Romanians more anti-Semitic than other peoples or was this part of the general context of the era?

Radu Ioanid: Of course there is a traditional anti-Semitism, but it was not as strong as the Polish one. It was stronger than the Bulgarian anti-Semitism, but this was not the only factor. The main responsibility belongs to the state authorities. I will not challenge what Mr. Beris is saying about the indifference of the civilians, but the actions of the civilians against the Jews took place immediately after the beginning of the military hostilities. They were performed because of the order given by the General Staff, First Section, which dealt with the so-called counter-intelligence. They ordered their agents from the respective villages, in Northern Moldova, to prepare the land for anti-Semitic actions.

Producer 1: What was the reason?

Radu Ioanid: The pretext was the so-called “hostile action towards Romania of the Jews from Northern Bucovina and Bassarabia against the retreating Romanian troops”. But there is a problem here, because the Jews were massively accused of being communists, and everybody



knows that the Communist Party from Romania had one thousand members.

Producer 1: Among whom, 20% were Jews.

Radu Ioanid: There were even 33%. So, there were 33% Jews, 33 % Romanians, 33% Hungarians..., but I leave it to you and your audience to solve this equation. Either the Communist Party had hundreds of thousands of Jewish members, or just a handful of people. It is not necessary that we solve this equation now.

Producer 2: Still, how do you explain this attitude?

Radu Ioanid: I repeat, in general, these were actions performed by the secret services, who worked together with members of the far-right legionary movement. They were urged to act against the Jewish population. After the first weeks of the war, the actions of the civilians against the Jews stopped. The responsibility is held by the Gendarmerie, be it the Military Gendarmerie, subordinated to the army, or the regular Gendarmerie, subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, plus the army units and the police. So, like Mr. Florian said, these were the authorities of the state. Much later, in 1943, the same authorities stopped the brutal persecution of the Jews. This is a later stage, of survival.

Producer 1: Here is another question: for what reason? Because, while the persecution of the Jews living in nearby countries started in 1943 - 1944, it is then that Romania stopped deporting Jews.

Radu Ioanid: Correct. This is a very, very interesting phenomenon. There are several factors here. First of all, there were exterior pressures. There was a pressure of the Vatican, the pressures of the Anglo-Americans and Antonescu also realized that it was possible for Romania to lose the war. Little by little, the military situation changed, and then, the Jews started to matter. From certain victims, they became a potential trade merchandize. This is not only the case of Romania, there were other countries



where this situation existed.

Producer 2: Mr. Alexandru Florian, go ahead!

Alexandru Florian: Allow me to get back to the issue of witnesses. From the point of view of the research, it is especially important. We consider that, if we had as many testimonies as possible from gentile witnesses, this whole tragedy of the Holocaust during the Second World War would be much more credible, one way or another, for those who continue, for various reasons, to deny its real scale and meaning. In theory, any person who is about 80 years-old today and lived in the areas where the Jews were practically mass-murdered, could be a witness. But it is very difficult to perform a massive research. On one hand, it is difficult to find them; on the other hand, I am thinking of this vision of many people that Mr. Beris mentioned here. They either stood-by and watched with indifference or simply took part in the actions of the Romanian state of persecuting, torturing and killing the Jewish population. On one hand, there is this reticence, probably of many, to confess today, to tell what they saw and, on the other hand, there is another aspect. Once we get a testimony from a gentile witness, in order to prove it, I think we must correlate it to historical documents and with a whole series of other elements or testimonies, so that the respective testimony might have the guarantee of credibility.

Producer 2: But there was the International Committee for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, under the patronage of the Romanian Presidency. What means of research did the Committee use? We know that, in November 2004, it issued a public report, certain conclusions and measures to be taken. Part of them, if not all, were already implemented, isn't it? What research methods were there used by this committee?

Alexandru Florian: Mainly, they were the methods used in academic research, since the work period for the "Wiesel" Committee was relatively short. The "Wiesel"



Committee was established in October 2003. In November 2004 it provided the Presidential Administration with the two volumes that practically represent the Final Report, today. I am referring to a first volume of 500-600 pages that presents, in certain chapters, quite in detail, the events that took place in Romania from 1938 to 1944. The second volume includes a few hundreds historical documents that the committee found in Romanian public archives during the research. Practically, to be very short on this topic, the research focused mainly on the archives and on the interpretation of the documents we were able to obtain at the time.

Producer 1: I wanted to say that we shall discuss about this Committee, but, before that, since we are talking about testimonies, we should also mention that there were Romanians who saved Jews, "Righteous among the Nations". For example, these was the manager of the Dacia Mill from Iași, Grigore Profir. There was also Traian Popovici, the Mayor of Cernăuți, as well as others. . .

Producer 2: I could add something to that: a press release from today mentions that an 82 years-old man from Șimleul Transilvaniei will be awarded by the State of Israel, on October 14, the distinction of "Righteous among the Nations". So, the list is open. Tell us, Mr. Radu Ioanid, was the attitude of the Romanians also that of aiding friends, families or persons that they saw for the first time in their life?

Radu Ioanid: Of course! We need to be very careful! I personally don't like the formula of the "Romanians' attitude". I prefer to talk about the attitude of the Romanian authorities. A man, no matter if he lived under a communist or a fascist regime, has a limited capability to react when the authorities outlaw a certain group of people. So, to say "the Romanians did this or did that" is somehow dangerous, when, in fact, the Romanian Police did it, the Romanian Gendarmerie did it, the Romanian



Army did it. They had very precise orders and this is one thing that should be clearly mentioned. When we are talking about individual persons, perhaps you will be surprised, but among the saviors – not too many – and here, again, the communist regime has its negative responsibility, I will explain why very soon – among the few saviors from Romania, there was a man called Traian Popovici, the Mayor of Cernăuți, who saved at least 17.000, maybe 20.000 people. He also directly protested to Antonescu, against the way the Jews were treated. But, if you look at the lists of saviors from Romania, you will see that their number is much higher in Northern Transylvania than those from Moldova, or from the south of the country. Are the people from Transylvania – and my mother was born there – nicer than the people from Moldova or from the south? This would be a stupid thing to say. Why? Because the communist regime from Romania denied the existence of the Holocaust in the country, but said there was Holocaust only in Northern Transylvania, which was temporarily occupied by the Hungarians.

Producer 2: So, what did we know about the Holocaust during the communist period?

Radu Ioanid: In the beginning of the communist period, some things were known, until the 1950's, because there appeared some important books that were later forbidden, such as Matatias Carp's "Black Book". After that, the issue disappeared. Some things were known, in general, about Auschwitz, about Poland. Later, under Ceaușescu's regime, the state encouraged the studies about the Holocaust in Northern Transylvania. At the time, it was OK to attack socialist Hungary. Still, they spoke nothing about what happened in Romania, under Romanian jurisdiction, because there was no access to the Archives.

Producer 1: You, Mr. Beris, were deported to Transnistria. After that, you returned and lived all your life in Romania. How is it that you are living here? How is



it that you never thought about leaving?

Liviu Beris: You should know that, first of all, I would like to mention something, before answering your question. Here is a tendency of generalization. When one talks about the Romanians, the Germans or about X or Y, in fact, this is a means to get rid of individual responsibility and to present a collective blame. I think this is a classical lie. This is why I am against these expressions – the Romanians, the Germans or the Hungarians, etc. Each group includes various people, good and bad, or less good. So, we should never use stereotypes and label individuals.

Producer 2: So, were there passive people, who just stood-by and watched?

Liviu Beris: Yes. But we are not allowed to generalize. I, for example, later succeeded to have a higher education and to work in a field of research. I wanted to leave the country but I was not allowed. I was clearly told that I was in possession of scientific secrets and I was not entitled to leave. I am an accomplished man here. I consider that it is natural to do something for the society that one is part of, where one lives and works.

Producer 2: About deeds which helped the Jewish population of the time, here is a fragment with the Chief Rabbi of the time, Dr. Alexandru Şafran, from an interview taken in 1996, by Manase Radnev.

Fragments from the interview taken by Manase Radnev

Alexandru Şafran: The situation of the Jews was hopeless, much worse than before, when I approached Bishop Bălan.

Reporter: This was in 1942?

Alexandru Şafran: 1942 was the year of the “final solution”, the year when the pressure exerted by Nazi Germany was stronger than ever. By then, they already prepared the railway cars for the transport of the Jews



to the extermination camps from Poland. The schedule provided that they would start with the Jews from Southern Transylvania, then continue with the ones from the Old Kingdom. As I said in writing, this desperate situation made us approach Bishop Bălan, at the last moment, when all other possible means were out of reach. He was a known adversary of the Jews and a personal friend of Marshall Antonescu. We approached him and asked if he could come to Bucharest to meet me. We had no illusions about that. Still, the miracle took place. He came to Bucharest and we met in General Văitoianu's home. The discussion was, how should I put it, electric. Knowing that we had nothing to lose, my words, what I said was very tough. It was a time when I knew that we could be dead as soon as the next day. Why wouldn't we present the situation as it was? He decided to intervene in favor of the Jews by talking to Marshall Antonescu. He did it and told me, the same day, the same afternoon, the result, the impressive positive result that, in fact, saved the lives of many Jews from Southern Transylvania. They were no longer deported.

Producer 1: Mr. Radu Ioanid, you are living and working in Wasinghton.

Alexandru Florian: I would like to add something about this interview taken to Great Rabbi Șafran. It's a good thing that you broadcast this fragment during your show.

Producer 1: Please, be very short Mr. Florian, we only have 10 minutes more.

Alexandru Florian: Since we are talking about his role as Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community of the time, it is absolutely necessary to remind of the exceptional role played by the President of the Federation of Unions of Jewish Communities of the period, Dr. Wilhelm Filderman. He was very actively involved in the attempts to decrease the dimensions of the drama by sending memos and



attending audiences with Marshall Antonescu.

Producer 1: Let us focus on what is going on today. The memorial monument of the Holocaust was inaugurated, there is the report of the “Wiesel” Committee, there are educational textbooks about the Holocaust, as well as other books. You wrote one as well, “The Holocaust in Romania”. Do you consider that the Romanian public opinion is well informed at this time, that there are no more distortions, no more anti-Semitic displays?

Radu Ioanid: First of all, it is hard to properly inform public opinion in a country that has been lied to during the whole communist period. Second of all, access to archives improved in stages and it is exceptional now. Thus, whoever wants to have access to primary, basic sources, from the Archive of the Romanian Intelligence Service or from the State Archives, may have access to the information. If we read the polls of the Government, anti-Semitism is decreasing in Romania. In 2006, about 30% of the respondents said that the Jews deserve their faith for having crucified Jesus Christ. Now, the figure amounts to 18%. So, there is an old-type anti-Semitism of religious origin that will disappear little by little. There are very few Jews in Romania now.

Producer 2: How many of them are still living now in Romania?

Radu Ioanid: In my opinion, 5000-6000, but some people say there might be 10.000. In general, they are old. Think about this: at the fall of the communist regime, there were some 30.000 Jews in Romania. After 20 years, only 6.000 are left. Let me get back to your question. There are certain so-called politicians – today is the Memorial Day of the Holocaust and I will not mention names out of respect for the memory of the victims – who deny the existence of this tragedy. There is this man who wears sunglasses for women. He is very tense, a former party leader. He made a sport, to say so, by Holocaust Denial.



There is another court poet of Nicolae Ceaușescu's – it is interesting that they were part of the extreme nationalist wing of the Communist Party, encouraged by Ceaușescu. Just like in the recent past, he is in charge of publishing scandalous articles which deny the existence of an obvious phenomenon for any person of common sense.

Producer 2: But, apart from that, since the report of the "Wiesel" Committee was assumed by the Romanian State, how could it be explained to the population? As Mr. Ioanid said before, the Romanians had no access to certain historical documents during the communist period? There is one more question: At the time, before 1989, wasn't it possible, let's say, for the Jews who left the country, to take the necessary steps so as to inform the Jews still living here?

Radu Ioanid: It is my opinion that certain colleagues of yours from the media started to do very important matters in this sense. I don't think they are necessary inspired by the report of the "Wiesel" Committee, but, for example, *Evenimentul zilei* recently published a series of testimonies of Holocaust survivors. I think media holds a great responsibility, because people are busy, aren't they? People have jobs and do not have time to specialize in the history of communism, of fascism or of the Inquisition. So, I think a TV show of this kind is very important, to simply provide a series of information to the public, and they may use it as they think it is proper.

Producer 1: If I understood well, the question referred to those who left before 1989, those who left abroad and what they could have done for people to be informed, Mr. Florian.

Alexandru Florian: In a way or another, maybe they did something to inform. Let me remind you of the late Jean Ancel, a regretted historian, one of the founders of the historical research of the Holocaust from Romania. Unless I am wrong, he edited 12 volumes before 1989,



based on documents which prove what happened in Romania. In Israel, there were and still are a number of research centers, as well as in other countries. They focus on the investigation of this phenomenon, as much as the means of knowledge and archives could offer in Romania at the time, plus the archives of the countries where the research was performed. The question was if the ordinary Romanian citizen had access to what was published, be it an academic study, a briefing or a media interview from one country or another. This is the problem, not the existence of former Holocaust studies. We did not start from scrap after 1990, but there was practically no possibility of access.

Producer 2: Mr. Ioanid, there is a law in Romania, a Government Order approved by a law, according to which anti-Semitic displays and Holocaust denial are considered crimes. Is there such legislation in other countries? This question could go further: can we give verdicts on history by a certain law?

Radu Ioanid: This is a very important question. Let me separate it in two parts and give two answers. Of course, legislation varies from one country to another. In the United States, for example, freedom of expression is absolute, so the denial of a historical phenomenon cannot be connected to a criminal offense. In other countries, such as Germany, there are such laws. But again, let me divide your question. It is a different thing to make anti-Semitic propaganda, to use derogative terms, to deny somebody's human nature or to swear, to denigrate someone because he or she is Jewish – and there are certain marginal publications, it is true, which are doing just that in Romania. This, in my opinion, is a clear violation of the law and it should be punished not only in the case of the Jews, but for any other minority or majority. So, it is one thing to discriminate, to insult, and a totally different thing to deny the Holocaust. It is here that we must be very careful. If somebody expresses his or her



doubt, saying “I don’t think it happened”, this cannot be incriminated. Everyone, despite the documents, the photos, despite the testimonies, is free to believe whatever he or she wants. But, if somebody – systematically – insults the memory of Holocaust survivors, if they keep on denying it and consider it their job, again, if there is legislation, it should be implemented. If there is no legislation about it, the matter is closed. It depends from one country to another.

Producer 1: Mr. Beris, we only have 90 seconds. I am asking you, in the end, do you believe such a tragedy could repeat or that, after 60-70 years, humanity reached such a high degree of democracy that similar tragedies will not repeat?

Liviu Beris: Unfortunately, the mechanisms that led to the Holocaust were not removed, even today. The society we are living in, these mechanisms do and can act. It is even easier to manipulate people, due to the technical means of our times. Unfortunately, I do not see that mankind improved. Human nature is the same, so that I think there is still a danger. It is necessary to remember that everything which starts with the Jew will continue, *later*, against everything which is different. As a result, I consider that we need to realize that the only way to act against such pests is knowledge. It is similar to a vaccine.

Producer 1: Thank you very much for this ending, Liviu Beris, Radu Ioanid and Alexandru Florian. This is the end of our show.

*Speech held by the H.O.R. President,
Mr. Zeev Schwartz*

Your Excellency, President Traian Băsescu,

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with a lot of emotion that I went to the microphone, despite the fact that it is not



the first time that I have to speak in front of a numerous audience.

Hello! Thank you for this honor. I am speaking to you from the tribune of the Romanian Parliament, on this special day for the Romanian Jews, in fact for all the sons of the people of Israel, and not only, since any commemoration of the Holocaust, in any part of the world, is a candle lit in memory of the innocent victims murdered by the Nazis and their allies.

I have a feeling of total fulfillment today since we are also celebrating Sukkoth, the holiday of the tents, of gratitude for last year's crop, of prayers for the blessing rain. Please, ladies and gentlemen, use your imagination and try to think that we are no longer in Bucharest, in the Parliament, but somewhere in the Holy Land, under a huge tent of understanding, peace, reconciliation and friendship. More than anything else, please, take into consideration the fact that I am the messenger of the 350.000 Jews who were killed in the Holocaust from Romania. Unfortunately, they cannot talk to you and ask you a simple question: Why? Because we were born Jewish? This is a simple question, which did not get an answer, yet. Perhaps we shall never get an answer, for the ones who should have given it disappeared as well. Isn't it ironic? They all met in the heavens with their victims. We, the survivors of the pogroms, of the killings and of the hell from Transnistria, are looking to you straight in the eyes. Our lives go on, but our souls are flooded with the blood of the dead and with dark memories. I was five years old when they threw me, together with other 180.000 Jews in the drama of the camps from Transnistria. I survived, but the tribute that I paid was huge: my father and brother were shot by the Romanians who were guarding us and thrown in a common grave, together with tens of other Jews who had been shot or died of starvation, illness and misery. The survivors are forever marked by this experience and many



of us consciously refuse to talk about that time, because our memories hurt and cut deep into an open wound.

Still, it was more painful when we were forbidden to talk about the Holocaust from Romania. This was imposed for decades by the Romanian communist leadership and, to our surprise, by the Romanian leaders after 1989. But in these last years, truth was revealed in Romania. The leadership of the Romanian state established a Holocaust Memorial Day, thus removing the cover of lies and half-truths. But there are Holocaust deniers who are trying to reinstitute a policy of lies and fakes. They did not succeed due to the Romanian leaders in power, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania, the mass media and last, but not least, to the Romanian people, which has had enough lies. The Romanian people is mature, ready and willing to know the historical truth and assume the responsibility of the past.

The Romanian Jews are not accusing the people or its current leaders. We do not try, as some are saying, to receive compensations. I am the President of the Organization of Jews who were born in Romania and I am representing all the Israeli Jews of Romanian origin. I hereby strongly declare that none of them thought, even for a second, to ask for material compensations. It is true, we are still disappointed by the lack of responsibility and the hard way in which the communal goods that were confiscated by the communists are being restituted and I am using this opportunity to make an appeal to you, distinguished Members of the Parliament, to act in order to facilitate this operation, within the legal framework. Any communal good that is restituted is a new means to support the Jewish community from Romania. Its members are old and they need help. Thank you in advance.

We, the Jews who were born in Romania, do have the satisfaction that the memory of our brothers and sisters killed during those wretched years is honored and



respected by the country which, just like us, they loved. It was its leaders that condemned us to death.

The Jews who were born in Romania and the Jews who are still living in this country are, just like the other minorities, an integral part of the Romanian people. We love Romania, we are proud of our language, culture and accomplishments of the country. We educated our children and grandchildren to love our country of birth and it hurts us when Romanians are hurt.

The inauguration of the Memorial Monument of the Holocaust, that I attended this morning, is a special moment for me. I have to admit that I shed tears of pain, as well as of joy. I am thankful to the Romanian Government for its decision to approve the erection of this Memorial, to the Ministry of Culture, Religion and National Patrimony. I am grateful to all those who worked to erect it and, of course, I am very thankful to sculptor Peter Jacobi, whom I admire a lot. He created this monument with his heart, thought, soul and a lot of talent. As it was mentioned in a press release by the Ministry of Culture, Religion and National Patrimony, it is the expression of our duty to acknowledge and assume the crimes of the Second World War against the Jewish and Roma communities.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you again for your being here. Before I finish, let us hold a moment of recollection for the innocent victims who were killed during the Holocaust and in the communist genocide.

In the end, let us say the following prayer:

"Ose Shalom bimromav u iase shalom aleinu veahl kol Israel veimru amen"

Thank you!

Holocaust

"Holocaust" is a word of Greek origin, derived from the term of holokauston. *Holon* means "complete" and *kauston*



means incinerated, burnt; originally, it referred to a special heathen sacrifice by which the sacrificed animal was completely burnt. No part of it, no matter how small, was left outside the sacrificial fire. In the Greek or Roman world, such sacrifices were performed only for infernal divinities or for the souls of the dead, while the Gods of Olympus were given the grease and bones of domestic animals. Their meat was shared in equal portions by the citizens who took part in the rituals. The sacrifice of the “complete burning” is also mentioned in the Old Testament, but the Hebrew name for the genocide that took place during the Second World War is most often the *Shoah*. This word refers to a humiliating catastrophe fallen over the people of Israel; this word was used as early as 1942 in order to designate the Nazi policy of extermination against the Jews.

The term *Holocaust* was used long before this extermination, since the 18th century, as a metaphor for genocide (for example – for the genocide against the Armenians from Turkey, during the First World War). Still, since the first years of the Second World War, because of the huge scale of the facts that were discovered every day, the term specialized and it designates the deliberate extermination of the Jewish people by the Nazi, who organized it under the pseudonym of “the final solution of the Jewish problem”, *Endlosung der Judenfrage*.

Maybe even more than the term of *Shoah*, the word *Holocaust* has religious and tragic connotations that entails an aura of violence that goes beyond human knowledge. This is also due to the specialization of the term that I mentioned before, as well as due to protests signed by Jewish historians and writers – including Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize Winner – who were irritated by the fact that the crucial event of their recent history is referred to by a word of the “other peoples”. One of the great difficulties in grasping this horror of history is the fact that, for the Jewish culture, suffering and history make sense. They



are part of a divine plan and the religious subtext of the term of Holocaust or Shoah urges for a meaning which is missing in a painful way from this tragic episode. What was called “the medusa effect” of the impossible reconciliation between the traditional vision of history as a manifestation of the eternal Divine will, and the horror of this dark abyss that we call *Holocaust* because we have no other expression for it, this interior numbness in front of a reality that’s impossible to accept is felt in the whole literature about the “final solution”, even in the way of thinking and writings of Holocaust deniers.

Of course, Holocaust denial is a perverse form of contemporary anti-Semitism. By gathering a series of fake pieces of evidence and sophisticated arguments, it is trying to deny the reality of Jewish extermination. This way, they are trying to deny the historical existence of the Holocaust as a whole. But, as Deborah Lipstadt wrote in a famous book, Holocaust denial is also an answer to the impossibility of the human mind to try to imagine and understand the Holocaust. Some of the Holocaust deniers are gullible persons from all over the world. Four to 20% of the respondents in polls that were performed in the USA or Western Europe on the topic, say that they could believe that the Holocaust is fiction, together with extremists Islamic leaders, such as Ben Laden, the Iranian President, Ahmadinejad, or petty intellectuals looking for fame, such as Frenchman Roger Garaudy (former communist, former Maoist, converted to extremist Islamism), or the American Noam Chomski, as well as far-right politicians, such as Jean Marie Le Pen.

In Romania, the specific feature of this trend to falsify recent history never publicly denies the Holocaust as an action performed by Nazi Germany, but it is vehemently denied when referring to actions of extermination and persecution done by the Romanian state: the concrete data and testimonies are either not accepted as valid or



are considered to be the exclusive responsibility of others – Germans or Horthy's regime or, in the worst case, the members of the Romanian far-right legionary movement.

The pogroms from Dorohoi and Iași, the Death Trains are either completely denied or motivated by the pro-Soviet attitude of certain Jews, as if this justified the killing without judgment of anybody, just because he was Jewish. Similarly, the camps from Transnistria or the actions of the Romanian Army in Odessa are motivated by the war or minimized. Even if a part of the Romanian citizens of Jewish origin disappeared in Ardeal while it was occupied by the Hungarians, it is undeniable that hundreds of thousands of Jews died because of the Romanian state, with the implicit or even explicit agreement of a large part of the Romanian society. No matter how many fairy tales exist about the mildness and hospitality of the ideal type of Romanian, like Weber used to say, facts cannot be denied. This would perhaps be enough to explain why not even Antonescu can be considered the only one to blame for those horrible acts. We need to read Mihail Sebastian's or Serge Moscovici's memoirs, the great French teacher of social psychology, a direct witness of the events of the period in Romania. Still, we can think on our own that the Death Train was guarded by "regular soldiers", not by Antonescu himself. It was run by the personnel of the Romanian Railroad Company and the lists of Jews to be deported were written by the clerks of the town-halls.

Despite all these facts, not only Mr. Vadim Tudor, but President Iliescu himself clearly mentioned that neither the Romanian State, nor ethnic Romanians were not responsible for the extermination of the Jews. Mr. Iliescu declared, for example, in a first stage, that the acts of persecution against the Jews did not take place on the Romanian national territory, which would have meant that the Antonescu regime was not accountable: as if Hitler would not have been responsible for Auschwitz, since the



camp was placed in occupied Poland.

These declarations, asserted by the person who held the highest position in the state, just as Romania was getting ready to join NATO, led to a huge scandal. Still, it also had a positive consequence, the creation of the Presidential Committee for the research of the Holocaust in Romania, presided by Elie Wiesel. It published a complex *Report on the Holocaust in Romania*. Also, a more severe legislation was adopted. It defined Holocaust denial as a crime. Still, these norms do not seem to be active in public life so far and we do not know of any case in which somebody was brought to justice on the basis of this law.

As the public conscience of the civil society from democratic states grasped the fact that this genocide encompassed both the extermination of the Jews as well as the complete physical destruction of other populations, such as the Roma, religious minorities (Jehova's Witnesses), political minorities (the members of the European left-wing parties) or sexual minorities (homosexuals), there appeared a difficult debate between those who proposed for the meaning of the term *Holocaust* to be extended to all extermination actions that were organized by the national-socialist state and its allies during the Second World War, while others – the majority – insist upon limiting the meaning of the term to its core definition: the extermination of about six million Jews from various European countries, from France and Germany to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria or Greece, reaching as far as Ukraine and Russia. It is obvious that the use of the term *Holocaust* cannot be denied as a suggestive synonym of the word *genocide* but, since the latter exists and is well-defined in UN documents, I don't understand why we shouldn't take into consideration the opinion expressed by those writers and historians who say that the term *Holocaust* (as well as *Shoah*, obviously) should refer to the extermination of the Jews as a unique, irreducible act.



Because the *Shoah* has a feature that singularizes it as an extreme form of persecution compared to all the others: the Jews were declared the absolute enemy. Even if, differently from the vehement orthodox nationalism of the Romanian anti-Semites, the Nazis did not care about Christianity, but perhaps about Gothic paganism, the religious connotations of anti-Semitism, inherited from the Middle Ages, had a full influence on the merciless killing of children, the destruction of synagogues and on the paroxysmal hostility with which Jews are humiliated and killed.

A sinister but telling comparison refers to the faith of the Roma who were deported in Auschwitz as well. They seem to have been left more freedom, until the day when the camp was to be evacuated. All of a sudden, 3.000 Roma people were exterminated in one action. This points out a certain superior indifference towards the Roma, in contrast with the tenacious, almost demented hatred against the Jews. On the other hand, as shown by an anthropological assessment of the *Romanes* communities assessed by Isabel Fonseca, they chose to forget the deportation because it remained as a serious trauma of culture and honor, affecting a very large number of traditional interdictions in the communities which were forced to renounce their own identity. In contrast with the culture of the *memory* of the Holocaust that was developed with an exceptional determination by the Jewish communities, the Roma groups displayed an ostentatious *oblivion*, and this does not make the work of historians any easier.

A very strong contrast divides them in two different camps. In the USA, in Western democratic states, the history of the Holocaust has been a subject matter of systematic study since the first years after the war and it has famous institutions all over the world – the Yad Vashem Memorial from Jerusalem, the Holocaust Museum from Washington, the Fortunoff Archives from the Yale



University, the Shoah Foundation from Melbourne, etc. In Eastern Europe this study hardly gets an identity and statute. One of the recent studies referring to the progress of the knowledge of the Holocaust in Romania has a very suggestive title, "Nobody Told Us about What Happened": The Current State of Holocaust Education in Romania".

Partially, it is true: for decades in a row, the official school and specialized literature simply eluded these facts. The historians paid by the communist regimes avoided as much as they could such painful problems. We may ask ourselves why the so-called Marxist historiography from the socialist countries, that were very zealous in denouncing the capital sins of their national bourgeoisie, simply renounced, after a few initial attempts, to denounce the responsibility of the bourgeoisie in the diligent execution of the Holocaust on their own territories. Neither the Polish, nor the Ukrainians seem to be more conscious than the Romanians about their historical responsibility in the Holocaust.

The basic anti-Semitism that Stalin proved so obviously during his last years would later be re-stated by Ceaușescu and his *de entourage*, despite the fact that socialist Romania had developed, out of interest and opportunism, diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, different from other countries under Soviet influence. The official personality cult of Antonescu, the fabrication of fake heroes who purportedly defended Jews during the dictatorship (the case of Raul Șorban is well-known to specialists), the anti-Semitic aggressiveness of publications guided by the most active national-communist part of the State Security Department, all these are late side effects. They do not explain why, among the many false "revelations" so often used by the petty politicians of the 1950's, the acknowledgement of the real, undeniable responsibility of the Romanian state and society as a whole for the tragic top position of Romania in the chart of states who committed



genocide, is so frail that the slightest national-communist policy supported by Ceaușescu simply broke it apart. Is it a result of the fact that the Soviets allowed the resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto to be wiped out completely? The anti-fascist mottoes were useful to Stalin and to the USSR to create a “fortunate” confusion between communism and the resistance against the Nazis, but they could never fully cover the deep complicity between Nazism and Communism.

ZOE PETRE

An answer...

As many other countries, Romania commemorates *the Memorial Day of the Holocaust Victims*, at the beginning of October. The tragedy of the more than six million Jews, victims of deportation and extermination during the Second World War, is also specific to Romania, to which adds the deportation of tens of thousands of Roma people. Their memory is kept alive in the shattered conscience of humanity as a whole. The collective memento is meant not only to prevent oblivion, but also for the need of the world to be alert so that such tragedies will not repeat.

The city of Bucharest witnessed the inauguration of the Monument of Holocaust Remembrance this year, on October 8, in the presence of the Romanian President, high officials and many representatives of the Jewish communities from all over the country, among whom there were a few survivors of extermination camps. This way, by commemorating the victims of this tragedy, the monument that was designed as early as 2006, by sculptor Peter Jacobi, took shape. It is impressive and placed downtown the Capital City. It includes five symbolical constructions: an Epitaph, David's Star, Via Dolorosa, The Wheel of the Roma and the Column (which is tallest, measuring about 20 meters). The memorial follows the



completion of a series of important actions performed by the Romanian officials, such as educational courses in schools, in which students are informed and educated about the Holocaust.

In the evening of the same day, the Romanian National TV Station, TVR1, broadcast an impressive debate attended by victims of the terrible events, history researchers, a numerous audience including many youngsters. During the show, one of the participants asked if such events could repeat and if Romania still witnesses displays of anti-Semitism. The answer was an example of moderation, common-sense and wisdom which underlined that displays of anti-Semitism and xenophobia are possible anywhere, and that the information, as well as the education of the population, especially of the youth, is precarious. This short answer to an always valid question reminded me of the confession of a Jewish colleague of mine. She is old today and she referred to a tragic experience of her life, when she was young, as well as to a second more recent experience, in one of the schools from Bucharest. When she was 14 years old, she was deported together with her 11 year old sister, her parents and grandparents from Northern Moldova to Transnistria. It was 1941. There, they found deserted villages because the local population fled towards Moscow. The Romanian authorities told them to occupy the houses, but it was not possible to use them, since they were full of insects and pests. They slept outside, on the ground, and they improvised some kind of lodging from the remains of the courtyard. Her grandparents and father died of typhus. They were taken back to Romania, the mother and the two sisters, in 1943. Again, they were deported to Auschwitz, where her mother died. In 1945, at the end of the war, the two sisters returned to the country. My colleague graduated the Faculty of Medicine from Iași and worked in Bucharest until she was 65. Together with her sister, she



decided to never leave Romania. She is 86 years old now. She forgot nothing, but she forgave. No hard feelings. Only pain in her heart.

It was in 2008 that she was asked to speak about the Holocaust to 12 year-old children, on the occasion of the memorial day. She told me that she did not know what to say and she was very tense. She tried to start a dialogue: "Children, have you ever seen a Jew?" Silence. "You don't know what a Jew is? I am Jewish!" Silence again... "How about kikes, have you heard of them? Please, raise your hand if you know about them!" A thin girl raised her hand in the back of the classroom. "What do you know?", she asked. "Grandmother told me that the kike is an evil man who eats children!"... My colleague remembered and smiled with understanding and wisdom. I realize now that, in a way, by her answer, the 12 year girl had given the answer to the questions of the recently televised debate that took place on the Memorial Day of the Holocaust.

Dr. Sebastian NICOLAU



Part V

The long way from the Holocaust to the dawn of normality

Consequences of a dark period that lasted until the fall of communism

The Second World War started on September 1, 1939. All historians agree upon this aspect, although the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the occupation of Austria took place later. The two western Great Powers, Great Britain and France, immediately replied to this groundless aggression against Poland. They declared war to Germany. Of course, the situation was infinitely more complex. The USSR replied very soon by occupying Poland's Eastern part. This was not a paradox. Many Polish men, among them many Jews, tried to take refuge from this double invasion in other parts of Europe, through Romania.

They did not foresee that the war, the new World War, would reach them there, as well...

When did the Holocaust begin? It's hard to say. For Poland, it started with the war that made it possible for the Polish State to disappear for a while. For the Polish Jews the continuously aggravating Holocaust, that led to the death of almost three million deaths, started in the autumn of 1939. There followed the drama of the Polish officers who were killed, with the involvement or approval of the Red Army. Thousands of Polish officers were killed in Katyn.

Romania's situation complicated a lot after the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was signed. It entailed two serious territorial consequences. Firstly, the (Vienna) Dictate referring to the temporary invasion of Northern



Transylvania. Secondly, the loss of Bassarabia and Northern Bukovina at the request of the Soviet Government, covered by the previously-mentioned treaty.

In September 1940, King Charles II was forced to abdicate. King Michael was declared his legal successor. Thus, Romania was led by Marshall Antonescu, by a national-legionary government. This latter far-right movement would hold half of the government's Ministries and it had serious implications for Romania's destiny. Deeply anti-Semitic, racial laws established the new state order. Jews were removed from the army, from all Romanian state-owned educational institutions. Very many professions were denied to them. The legionaries, once they came to power together with Antonescu, started a campaign of more and more violent anti-Semitism, with casualties. They eventually wanted to remove Antonescu from power. This was the beginning of the conflict between the legionaries and Antonescu, which culminated with the rebellion from January 1941, when the legionaries tried to get the whole power. The rebellion was defeated, but, before that, the legionaries performed a terrible anti-Semitic pogrom in Bucharest. The Jewish victims who were buried at the Giurgiului Cemetery fully confirm it. They also desecrated synagogues, vandalized shops from the Jewish neighborhood and were aggressive to the whole Jewish population. We shall not insist upon this terrible moment in Romania's history. The books edited by Antonescu, "On the Edge of the Abyss", fully prove it. After the legionary leaders ran to Hitler's Germany and Antonescu paid a visit to Berlin, the Marshall would be the most faithful ally to Germany. History would later confirm it. The whole Romanian political scene would see the country involved in a disastrous war together with fascist Germany against the Soviet Union. The argument provided by the leader was to get back Bassarabia and Bukovina. This happened on June 22, 1941.



After just a week, on June 29, 1941, Antonescu's Government started a terrible genocide against the Jewish population. More than 1.500 people were killed in the Police HQ. The following day, more than 10.000 Jews were killed in the Death Trains. They were locked in cattle railway cars, circa 150 people in one car. The windows were locked and barred and the trains were slowly moved for days on end on secondary railways. They lacked water. The dead and the living were all together. This was a terrible genocide. This is fully confirmed by the Jewish cemetery from Iași, by the concrete platform that covered the thousands of people buried during that period, as well as by the platform that covers thousands of dead at Podu Iloaiei and Târgu Frumos. These were the victims unloaded from the death train in Roman, at the request of Elena the Queen Mother and at Viorica Agarici's urgent request. She was the representative of the Red Cross in the town. But the Death Trains would continue their itinerary. Scores of people were buried on the way, until they reached Călărași. Some researchers consider that this genocide was a prelude to the Holocaust in Romania. But the real Holocaust, of a far more killing scale, would start after the Romanian troops reoccupied Bassarabia and Northern Bucovina. Large numbers of Jews were deported from these provinces, as well as from the right side of the Prut River, to Transnistria. It is because of these events that historians would consider that the Holocaust, as unimaginable as it is for human reason, effectively started on October 9, 1941, with the first deportations over the Dniester River. Due to this almost unanimously accepted point of view, October 9 would be established, almost 55 years later, as the Memorial Day of the Holocaust performed by Antonescu's regime.

When did the Holocaust end? The answer, which is very hard to give, entails a necessary recall of Romania's history.



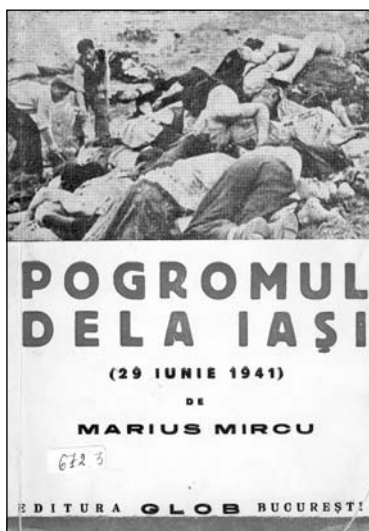
August 23, 1944 was not the end of the Holocaust

On August 23, Romania signed a truce with the allies, who were still fighting against German fascism on huge territories. When the Romanian Army changed sides, against the former German allies, and the King sent his message, on August 23, 1944, the war went on. Bucharest was liberated only in the last days of August, after terrible German bombardments. The Romanian troops, continued to fight along the Allied forces all over Ardeal. They freed Northern Transylvania. It was from this territory that the fascist Hungarian authorities sent, up to the last moment, tens of thousands of Jews to the extermination camps from Auschwitz-Birkenau, as well as in the rest of occupied Poland and even in German territories. So, the Holocaust of the Romanian Jews continued for many more months. A lot of people sacrificed their lives in the fights for the liberation of the Hungarian territory, on their way to Budapest. They would eventually liberate Czechoslovakia. The terrible fights would continue with terrible sacrifices until Germany's total capitulation, in May 1945. In Yalta, the leaders of the anti-fascist coalition had discriminately divided the territories of the liberated countries. As they plunged further and further into the territories, the Russian troops were behaving like an occupying force, and it is debatable whether they were entitled to do so. Hundreds of thousands of Romanian soldiers and officers continued to fall on the fronts during this last stage of the World War. Even the Jews, who had been excluded from the Romanian Army because Antonescu's regime decided so – officers, especially very qualified staff – had rejoined the fighting units. The Romanian soldiers who had been taken prisoner during the war in USSR's territory began to return from captivity in 1945-1946. Families still expected those who died on the front of whom nobody knew that they had died. Other thousands of representatives of the German minority



from Romania were taken over by the Soviet Army as war prisoners after the truce with Romania. They were deported to the forced labor mines from Donbas. Only after many years of imprisonment would they return. The Jews, those who were still alive after the deportations from Transnistria, returned to Bassarabia and Bukovina, to the towns from the right side of the Prut River, where they were deported from. Orphans were returning, as well as the former political prisoners who had been deported to Transnistria. But many of those who returned from Transnistria were very ill and they died in the following months. Hundreds of thousands of Romanian families were in mourning for their sons who fell in the front. They came back home dead or crippled, in crutches or with wooden legs. This new stage of the war, after Romania changed sides, the supply of the Romanian, all this meant great, new economic sacrifices, but especially new human sacrifices.

Then, between 1945 and 1947, Marius Mircu's first brochures appeared, about the deportations of the Jews from Bukovina and from the right side of the Prut River,

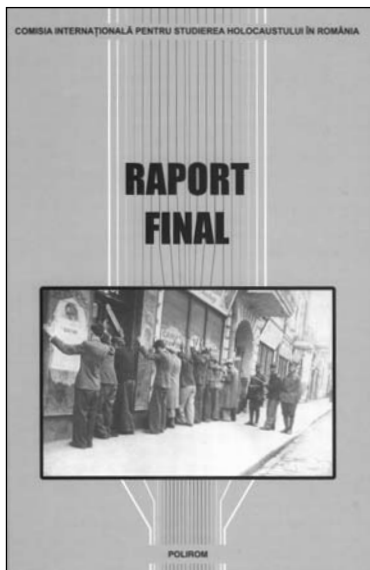
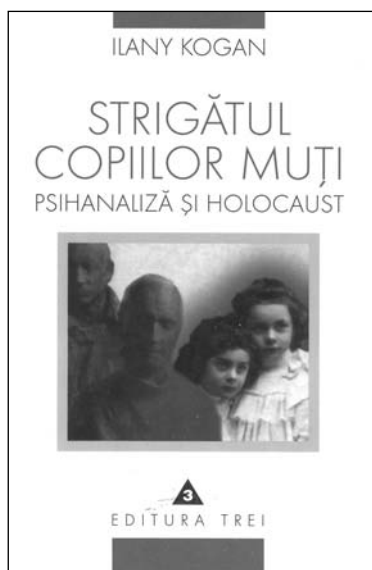




about the great pogrom from Iași, in June 1941, a week after the beginning of the anti-Soviet war. A far more detailed work would be published in those years of sadness by Matatias Carp. His three volumes include strong historical arguments. Internally, there was a merciless fight against the former representatives and groups which were considered Germany's allies. There was a real fight against those who opposed, in the mountains, the new regime which was established by the Russian armies. The new regime was anti-democratic and pro-communist. The first communist government was led by Petru Groza after the falsified elections from 1946. Times were really hard, especially after the drought of 1946. A lot of people moved from one place to another. Children lost their parents or tutors and were adopted by families living in the richer areas of the country. Only after Germany's final capitulation would the Romanian armies return from the front. It was then that the deportees were saved, when the extermination camps were liberated. A few hundreds or no more than a few



Transylvanian Jews returned to their homes which had been destroyed or temporarily occupied by other people, who were left without their homes or families. Quite a lot of the deportees, who were still alive at the end of the war, never returned to the area where their families disappeared without a trace. According to some calculations made during those years of despair, almost 300.000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews died during that period. Out of the 140.000 Jews who were deported from Northern Transylvania, 90% never returned. Jewish children who lost both their parents, as well as many of the deported Jews who would have wanted to go to Israel (Palestine at the time), were stopped from returning and were deported to Cyprus by the British forces, for a while. They were the occupiers of old Israel. Only in 1948, after the foundation of the United Nations Organization, the territory of former Palestine, ruled by the English, was divided by two newly formed states, one for the Jews, the other for the Arabs. In the beginning, the Jews from Europe reached an area that was just as unsafe



as the one they were coming from. Let us not forget that the moment when the Jewish State was created was the beginning of a new war between the Jewish population of the territory, which numbered less than one million people, and its Arab neighbors. There were thousands of victims. Young Jews from Romania and their Zionist families, when the State was still allowing Zionist organizations to exist, were training for a possible departure to Israel by learning professions which would be useful there. But they did not succeed to get to their much dreamt of country before the State of Israel proclaimed its independence, in 1948. Maybe it was then that the Holocaust really ended, as they had lived it during the war. The former Jewish fighters of the anti-fascist brigade, who had opposed Rommel in Northern Africa and later fought in Italia, were now returning to the country they wanted to build, after having suffered heavy losses.

Let us not forget that Benjamin Fundoianu (Fondane), an important Jewish writer of Romanian origin who reached France in 1923, would be killed in the camp from Auschwitz, on Yom Kippur Day, in 1944. The Jews from Northern Bukovina and from Northern Transylvania only came back in 1944. The memories of these deportees, over the years, are terrible. They are marked by the loss of their families: their parents, brothers, sisters. The ones who read their memories – and the first books were published in the 1950's and the 1960's – are terrified. Whoever reads





Matatias Carp's "Black Book" will be scared even today. It was recently republished in memory of the Holocaust victims. Whoever listens to the dramatic accounts of the suffering endured by the Jews, until the last day of the World War and of the Holocaust, signed by Oliver Lustig, by Liviu Beris or by Otto Adler, will be dismayed. How was it possible for this mad fury, for so much hatred and anti-Semitism to develop? Their books, their accounts, their meetings with the new generations, amaze by their drama.



Commemoration of the Holocaust victims

*Books and theater plays which evoke
the tragedy of their disappearance*

Annual commemoration of the victims

The annual commemoration of the war victims is a tradition, both in Moldova and in Northern Transylvania. What more could we have done? We counted our dead – at first; we did our best to help those who returned to Romania, those ill and wounded, left without any support; we thanked those who tried to help us in all the years that followed. We were aided by American Jews (the Joint Distribution Committee), the B'nei B'rith Lodge and by the Romanian State, as soon as they could do it. We erected commemorative plaques at the tragic tomb stones of the cemetery from Iași, Podu Iloaiei or Târgu Frumos. We erected tombstones for the



The Monument from Iași





The Monument from Podu Illoaiei



The Monument from Târgu Frumos

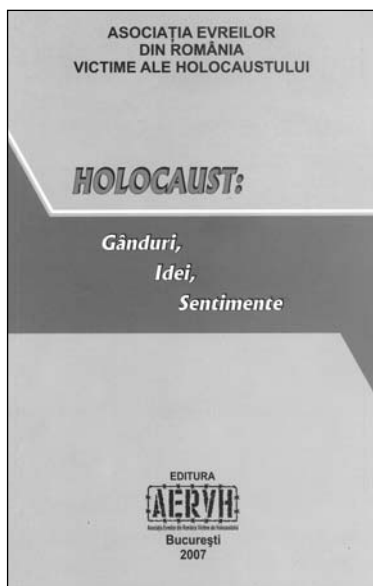


Jews who were killed during the legionary pogrom from Bucharest, in January 1941, during the legionary rebellion against Antonescu's government; still, the victims were scores of Jews. In this last period, funerary plaques were erected in memory of the Jews deported by the Hungarian fascists to the extermination camps from Poland; where no such funerary plaques were ever erected? We did this from Sfântu Gheorghe to Covasna; from Covasna to Satu Mare; from Satu Mare to Oradea and to Arad... Every year, FEDROM organizes veritable commemorative pilgrimages in the localities where large pogroms took place. But who and how could get to the ones which were mass-murdered in Babi Yar? Who will remember the Jews of Bassarabia, which, retreating from Hitler's or Antonescu's forces, his great ally from the Balkans, died in the Asian parts of the USSR? Some did come back to Romania after the war. They wrote memories, terrible accounts. Some of them are poets and they keep on publishing poems about their tragedy. After the war, we witnessed dramatic plays and accounts staged in Romanian theaters. They touched us: from Anne Frank story, played at the State Jewish Theater from Bucharest, to the "Pasacaglia", a play by Titus Popovici, staged at the Municipal Theater; there were also plays dedicated to Jewish life in Moldova, staged at the "Green Tree" old Jewish theater from Iași, as well as shows full of pathos staged by the "Barașeum" Theater during or immediately after the war. Ludovic Bruckstein's plays, as well as plays created by so many Jewish playwrights could not and would not forget the suffering of the Holocaust. We had the opportunity to attend touching commemorations, which are an opportunity for people to find each other and to unite for our humanist ideal...

I did not remind anything about the scores of books, real editorial events, issued by the "Hasefer" Publishing House or by other printing houses of a high civic and cultural prestige.



The manager of the Hasefer Publishing House, poet Ștefan Iureș, reminded us of the impressive volume, true monographs, published by Jean Ancel, an Israeli historian of Romanian origin: *"A Contribution to Romania's History, the Jewish Question in 1933-1944."* He also reminded us of the touching accounts about the years of the Holocaust, as they were depicted in universal literature, signed by Primo Levi, Vasili Grozman, by Aaron Apelfeld, an Israeli, by the teenager Anne Frank. This last author inspired the publication of the dramatic work which I mentioned earlier. Ștefan Iureș also reminded of Edi Fried's works, a Swedish Jewish woman who survived the Holocaust, as well as of André Schwartz-Bart. I will not mention the touching literary works signed by Elie Wiesel, winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace, which are based on a very precise documentation process. Sonia Palti's work *"Jews, Cross the Dniester River"*, was also very impressive for the Romanian readers. Sonia Palti was deported to Transnistria as well. How could we forget the accounts wrote by



Miriam Corbek (the wife of the late writer, playwright and great poet, Israil Bercovici). We shall never forget the exceptionally humanitarian document titled "The Man Who Stopped the Trains that Were Going to Auschwitz" by George Mantello.

Following the subject matter of this last chapter "*After... Holocaust*", it is worth mentioning the account, study and drama of exceptional value "*How I feel the Holocaust after two or three generations*", written by Nava Semel, in "*Glass Hat*". Another account has a direct connection to our times, as paradoxical as it may seem. It belongs to Arnold Daghani, a very talented painter, and it was published in the work titled "*The Pit is in the Sour Cherry Orchard*". In the same context, in a work signed by a German ethnic of Romanian origin, Klaus Stephani, "*Aaron the Brave*" – bilingual edition – the account is doubled by the exactness of documents. Time does not allow me to mention other works which were dedicated to the terrible tragedies of the Holocaust, edited some time ago by Zigu Ornea, a literary historian and former manager of our publishing house. Also, I will not list the various photo exhibitions (first of all, the permanent exhibition from the Great Synagogue, as well as the various exhibitions of religious items taken from desecrated synagogues and from the homes of the Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. These exhibitions were organized by Lya Benjamin and Irina Cajal). The suffering of the Jews were also mentioned in various documentaries and feature movies (the most recent is an emotional film made by "*Looking for Gruber*"), a man killed during the pogrom from Iași.

As the present manager of the Hasefer Publishing House confesses, all these accounts are valorized by encyclopedic studies about scientists and men of culture, literature and art, personalities included in the work: "*Contributions of the Romanian Jewry to Culture and Civilization*", as well as the recent lexicon which includes



a few hundred Jewish personalities who lived in Romania in the last 200 years. All these shadowed by the touching, always too limited presentation of the great rabbinical personalities who lived in Romania before or during the War of Independence, the First World War or during the terrible years of the Holocaustului, 1940-1945. More than 2.000 names. This work was written by Baruch Tercatin, a man of great culture, and by historian Zeev Herşcovici. Both are Romanian Jews who are living in Israel. Their work includes more than 2.000 entries. It is a huge work, referring to the rabbinical personalities who lived in Romania. Some of them died before the Second World War, others went to Israel after the war, but a lot of them died in the Holocaust. I did not mention, in this short list, neither the works published in Israel, nor the contribution of writers and publicists or Romanian origin who live in Israel. I will only remind you of the five-volume monograph about Dorohoi, a town on the right side of the Prut River. Its Jewish population was



deported to Transnistria during the war. So many Jewish children who were deported to Transnistria, together with their families, suffered the horror of the years of deportation. As time went by, some of them became prestigious writers all over the world, such as Norman Manea, humorist I. Schecter, who was an exceptional publicist as well, or a poet from Piatra Neamţ, Martin Abramovici. The Romanian language publications from Israel, such as "The Weekly Magazine" and "Our Life", included many commemorative pages. Last but not least, the Unconventional Dictionary of Jewish Writers of



Romanian Origin, edited by the dramaturge and publicist Al. Mirodan, who lives in Israel, included many comments about the lives of the respective writers during the war and the Holocaust.

Arguments not to lose our faith in life

It is a great merit that the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania did not allow the flame of Judaism to fade out in Romania, today. Hundreds of thousands of Jews used to live in this country, but only a few thousands are left now (up to 10.000, including those who only have a parent or grandparent of Jewish origin in their families). Their lives were not easy. On the contrary. Many times, they went through years of survival only, years of a dramatic clash between the tendency to be themselves, to refuse assimilation and the tendency to prove, by their whole lives, their love for the modern State of Israel, their historical land, as well as for their country of birth. Together with the Romanian majority, they went through the hardships of history. We saved our cemeteries, no less than 800. Many of them are not being used anymore. With the help of the Romanian state, of Jewish organizations and of Jewish sponsors, we were able to rebuild and rehabilitate old synagogues: in Braşov, Târgu Mureş, Piatra Neamţ (the old synagogues that was built during the reign of Stephen the Great), the Great Synagogue from Bucharest, another synagogues which hosts the Museum of the Jews from Romania, the synagogue where the Chabad organization is holding its services, as well as the Coral Temple, the central edifice of religious Jews from Bucharest. This last building is being renovated.





*The Synagogue from
Târgu Mureș*



The Synagogue from Brașov

We also developed Jewish Communal Centers, with the help of the Joint, in Bucharest, Oradea, Cluj and Timișoara. We were offered a detailed presentation by journalist Luciana Friedmann.



The Great Synagogue from Bucharest



The partnership between FEDROM and JDC also resulted in the existence of the Jewish communal Centers (JCC) from Bucharest, Oradea and Iași. The family of these authentic “Jewish homes”, which bring together all generations, within modern programs of interest, extended, having two new branches in Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca. Soon, there will be branches in other towns, as well. The collaboration between dr. Aurel Vainer, FEDROM’s President, and the energetic Joint Country Director for Romania, Mr. Israel Sabag, was the basis of this multi-generational team. Pleasantly painted rooms are waiting for children to learn by playing. Youngsters may relax, study or attend programs meant to aid the elders and the people in need. The so-called “golden generation”, whose life experience and story is really cherished at the JCC, have a Daily Center and a program which is called Bait Ham (a Warm Home) – both of them are a remedy for loneliness and lack of activity. The whole family is welcome at the JCC, which is a real alternative to programs offered by the capital city or the great towns. The large-scale shows organized at the Romanian Athenaeum and at the National Theater, the celebration of Israel’s National Day, attended by more than 1.000 people, included many special moments during the two years since the JCC opened. Programs such as Bereshit – a university for European Jews and Limud, a cultural project that promotes the right to choose one’s field of interest, brought together hundreds of participants from all over the country. The five “Shabbatons”, which were organized in several places in the country, were a real celebration of the Queen among the Weekdays, as well as an opportunity to socialize, to learn and relax as a participant.

We also have three homes of rest and study, in the localities of Cristian, Borsec and Eforie Nord. In these last years, the old villas, which were built before 1940, were renovated and “embellished”. FEDROM’s President, Dr.





Aurel Vainer, wanted to modernize them. He used funds from the Federation, from the “Caritatea” Foundation and from sponsors in order to implement this project. Unfortunately, it was not finalized because of the economic crisis. Thus, of the two villas from Borsec, only one was modernized. At this time, all the rooms of the Bagolyvár Villa (the Owl’s Fortress)

have central heating, a bathroom, parquet and modern furniture. The cafeteria was also provided with modern furniture, due to a generous sponsor (Eng. F. Koppelman, the President of the Jewish Community of Oradea). There are plans to modernize the second villa as well.

The camp from Cristian has changed a lot. A new building was erected here. It has a large, well-lit cafeteria, as well as other areas for rest and fun. The old villa was also equipped with bathrooms and the courtyard of the complex is, in fact, a real park. It includes sports areas, lots of plants, a gazebo for various activities and even a stage for shows (Mr. Ivan Truțer fulfilled these projects). Cristian really is a training center, since both the Rabbinate and the JCC organize classes of Judaism there. It is open for all generations and specific programs are developed, depending on the age of the participants.

The “Mira” Villa from Eforie Nord was also rehabilitated. Here too, every room has its own bathroom. There is a nice terrace and a cafeteria that underwent



a first stage of modernization. The next stage refers to the modernization of the central heating system, so that the villa may also be used in the wintertime for those who wish to undergo treatment. All the members of the Federation have access to these services, as well as other persons, depending on the available beds. All three centers provide kosher meals.

Also due to subsidies, we are trying to live decently. We have a medical unit that employs specialized doctors in the capital, as well as other doctors and medical offices in many Romanian towns.

Still, our most impressive accomplishment is that we succeeded to gather, train and educate a young generation of Jews. Some of them belong to the current leadership of the Federation and of our branches, such as the President and Vice-President of the Jewish Community of Bucharest. The leadership of the Social and Medical Assistance Department is also young. Our rabbi is young. Rabbi Şlomo Sorin Rosen was trained in an American Yeshiva a few years ago.



It is worth mentioning that, due to the endeavors of a former leader of the Romanian Jewry, Chief Rabbi Dr. Moses Rosen (z.l.) we were allowed to publish our own "Magazine of the Mosaic Religion", despite the fact that all Zionist publications were banned in the first years of the communist regime. It had an important role during the years of totalitarian regime, before 1989. It did not have a name proper, it was simply called the "Magazine of the





"Mozaic Religion". After rabbi Moses Rosen died, in the 1990's, the publication became an authentic mirror of the *"Jewish Reality"*, of the new Jewish reality. Due to its scope, it now reflects the whole Jewish life of the country, communal and religious life as well. Its pages include accounts about the life of the youth, members of the Organization of Romanian Young Jews, as well as about the cultural and

artistic life of the Jewry which still lives in more than 40 Jewish communities from all the large towns of the country. Our communities have valuable leaders, such as Mr. Pincu Kaiserman, Felix Kopelmann (Arad), Solomon Heinrich (Piatra Neamț), Paul Costin (Timișoara), Ionel Schlesinger, David Segal Iancu (Brăila), Tiberiu Roth (Brașov), Rosza Emerich (Cluj), Friedman Carol (Constanța), Iancu Isidor (Botoșani), Blumer Sorin, as well as many others who we often mention, without exceptions, as important personalities of the Jewish communities.

Due to this publication and to the support provided by former and current FEDROM leaders, such as Acad. Nicolae Cajal, Adv. Iulian Sorin or Dr. Aurel Vainer, MP, we cultivated and revived our traditions and cultural memory. We organized a large-scale festival in 2000 and we presented the various cultural, scientific and artistic fields where we were best at. Thus, we reasserted that



we are alive, after the Holocaust. Our members include well-known members of the Romanian Academy, such as mathematician Solomon Marcus and chemistry professor Eugen Segal, a winner of the prize for National Literature – Radu Cosașu, and other great cultural personalities, such as Architects Dorian Hardt, Caffé Mihail, Dorian Hardt, Benedek Tiberiu. There are Jewish personalities of plastic arts, such as the late sculptor Martin Iszak, the painter Lovit, the painter and poet Toma Hirth, Margareta Sterian, Eva Cerbu and Tia Peltz, plus the creative Alma Redlinger and Yvonne Hassan, Petre Solomon's wife. A lot of Jewish writers, poets and playwrights are acknowledged due to their professorial and literary activities (poetry, drama, essay writing). Here, we need to remind of important men of culture, University Professors, mentors of several generations, such as Paul Cornea, Dr. Ștefan Cazimir, Ion Ianoși, Harry Kuller and Lya Benjamin, Ștefan Iureș – the manager of the Hasefer Publishing House, Tania Lovinescu, Toma George Maiorescu, the current Chief Editor of the Jewish Reality Magazine, Dr. Aurel Storin, the late Iosif Sava, Theodor Wexler, Henri Wald and many others). I did not forget about the whole series of Romanian language writers and journalists from Israel, starting with Al. Mirodan. Also, let me mention our remarkable leaders at the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania – Mr. Paul Schwartz, Albert Kupferberg, Dr. José Blum and Ovidiu Bănescu; José Iacobescu – the President of the B`nei B`rith Romania Lodge or the community presidents and men of culture that I already wrote about.

No, this list is not complete. It is not a statistical chart. My intentions was to show that, out of the ashes of the Holocaust, there appeared not only good Jewish leaders and spiritual values, but the Jewish spirit proper was reborn. They kept the creational capability of the community and their talent brought important contributions to Romania's life.



In 2008, we celebrated 60 since the creation of the State of Israelul. We paid our respects to the life that we are living with dignity and devotion in the new, democratic Romania. By our power of work, we integrated into the country's patrimony of values and spirituality, as well as by our sometimes too short publication, *"The Jewish Reality"*, as well as by the monographs edited with the exceptional help provided by Geo Șerban, a literary historian. These are works about great writers, rabbinical values, important men of culture, as well as monographs included in our magazine (about Mihail Sebastian, Margareta Sterian, Leon Volovici, the late publicist – Eugen Relgis, Camil Baltazar and many, many others). We read again our articles notice that many of the photos did not have the proper captions that would have enlightened us about great leaders of Romanian Jewry in the period between the two world wars, about the dramas of the Holocaust or immediately after the war: many pages should have been dedicated to Wilhelm Filderman, Alexandru Șafran, to the great Zionist leaders such as A.L. Zissu or Mișu Benvenisti. We owe so much to those great personalities who did their best in



Wilhelm Filderman



Alexandru Șafran



those times of sadness, by their courage and dignity. They contributed to the rescue of many thousands of Jews: Viorica Agarici, Queen Mother Elena, Traian Popovici, etc. There are almost 60 such remarkable personalities who deserve to be better known by future generations, not in order to pay their respects once more, but to combat the few very dangerous, aggressive people who deny the Holocaust on the basis of lies, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. This is still present in certain areas.

May we carry on! We should never be ashamed of our double commitment: to our country of soul, the reborn state of Israel, as well as to the country where we live, the mother country of our continuity by culture, traditions



A.L. Zissu



Viorica Agarici



Regina Mamă Elena





Traian Popovici



Bishop Bălan

and by the Romanian language that has been a token of our continuity for centuries in this area. All these are part of what I referred to in the beginning of this essay: *living in a state of normality.*

DOREL DORIAN

1948-2008

ISRAEL 60

EDIȚIE SPECIALĂ

Herzl

Cuvânt înainte la Programul de acțiuni inițiat de F.C.E.R.

La 60 de ani de la crearea sa Israelul a redevenit Pământul Făgăduinței

„Țară veche, țară nouă“

Herzl

La 60 de ani de la crearea sa Israelul a redevenit Pământul Făgăduinței

„Țară veche, țară nouă“

Postscript

It is during these days, when I was preparing this short account of the suffering endured between 1940 and 1945, that we remember a time of suffering, but also a time of emotional displays of courage and dignity; in that period, Romanian Jews significantly decreased in number, from various reasons. Thus, after hundreds of thousands of Jews died during the Holocaust, other hundreds of thousands of Romanian Jew went to Israel after the war.

Today, less than 10.000 Jews are living in Romania. They have been living in the area of the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube for centuries and are forever connected to their maternal language, Romanian. In this context, I recently witnessed a joyful event: an old place of our culture, tradition and Mosaic religion, the Wooden Synagogue built during the reign of Stephen the Great in the old town of Piatra Neamț (100 years ago it was also called “the Small Jerusalem”), was renewed as never before, in its times of splendor. Its new existence was reasserted on the third day of Hanukah – the great holiday of religious re-affirmation and rule of the Maccabean dynasty in Israel, almost 2.200 years ago.

These lines are meant to be a short ending, since I am privileged as the offspring of the 12 families of Jewish butchers which, together with a famous Jewish doctor recalled by Delavrancea in his writings, were called by Stephen the Great to beat terrible epidemics. They came and lived here for more than 500 years, as dignified people of the country. During these years, we rehabilitated the beautiful synagogues from Brașov, from Târgu Mureș, the Great Synagogue from Bucharest, the Synagogue from Mămulari Street, which hosts the Jewish Museum, the Synagogue from Amzei Street, which hosts the traditional



Chabad organizations, having roots in many countries. The Coral Temple from Sfânta Vineri St. is undergoing a rehabilitation process. Romania still has more than 800 Jewish cemeteries. Three of them are in Bucharest – on Filantropiei and Giurgiului Streets, plus the Sephardi Cemetery, being the final resting place for hundreds of thousands of Jews. Romania still has a Jewish Theater - the former Barașeum Theater – a continuator of the famous Goldfaden Yiddish theater from Iași, at Pomul Verde. We have the “*Jewish Reality*” Magazine and the “Hasefer” Publishing House, symbolizing the book for the people of the book. We are doing our best so that so that our cultural influence and progress in this part of Europe is not lost. The Jewish cultural heritage is still alive and we fully celebrated it in 2000. Our synagogues are still full during the important, traditional holidays. I will end this short book, this list of continuity that we are trying to honor due to our traditions, with a certain entitled pride, not due to our number, but to our structure, as it happened when Stephen the Great called his Jews. We are trying to do all that we promise, as a result of our vocation, dedication and sacrifice for Romania today, as it happened in the past.

Some people do not get it. Some people are still looking for trouble, where there is none... Some people see only old Jews and people that are being accused precisely for their commitment to continuity... They see us and they only want us to end... but we are alive, we endure, we have our brothers and friends here. We do our best to study the Romanian language, as well as our ancestors, starting from Gaster, Tiktin, Bick, Candrea, Graur, who never really left us, as well as Mihail Sebastian, Relgis, Rosen and Halevy, Victor Brauner, after Rosenthal and Iscovescu, after great doctors and scientists like Solomon Marcus or Eugen Segal, today. God, I don't have enough space to list all those whom I remember... all those for whom I have moral debts, for my parents, for our ancestors and our



sons who live with their “mother language”, Eminescu’s language that we are all speaking as well as the great Romanian intellectuals who honor us by calling us “our Jewish brothers”. We thank you, we embrace you and we promise that there will be many other works as well!

DOREL DORIAN

