

Stefan Guth

Stefan Guth

Brasov

Romania

Interviewer: Andreea Laptas

Date of interview: September 2003

Mr. Guth is a 72-year-old man, who in spite of his old age appears both imposing and witty; talking to him makes one feel that he is ageless, especially when he talks about his youth, his pranks as a boy. He likes jokes, even at the other's expense, and he demands to be accepted the way he is. He lives in a three-bedroom apartment in a house with his wife, Maria, who seems to share his youthful mind and has the body of a ballerina. He is a very cultivated man; you can see that by the antiques and art objects he keeps in his living room. But moreover, you get the feeling that he is a man who lived to the fullest everything life threw at him: he gets all passionate about sports, about injustice, about writers, about love, about politics, and there seems to be no thing he hasn't tried.



[My family background](#)

[My parents](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the war](#)

[Post-war](#)

[My time at Gordonia](#)

[Cultura](#)

[My college years](#)

[Married life](#)

[Glossary](#)

My family background

My paternal grandfather, Guth, was a clerk at the Hungarian consulate in Belgrade. I don't know his first name because I never got to know him; he died when my father was still very young. I don't know if he died in Belgrade or in Oradea, and when exactly. I only knew my paternal grandmother, Serena. After my paternal grandfather died, she remarried a Jew named Schwartz. My grandmother didn't dress traditionally, but she observed Sabbath and lit the candles on Friday evenings. She spoke Hungarian; I don't remember if she spoke Yiddish as well. However, I only saw her a few times because she lived in Oradea and my family lived in Brasov, so back then, in the 1930s, the distance was huge. I remember that when we visited her she was nice to me, like every grandmother I guess, but that's all I remember about her. I never knew her second husband, he also died very young. When I met my grandmother, she was already a widow for the second time.

My father, Iuliu Guth, also had a sister, Bella Honig, nee Guth. She married a Jew named Miklos Honig. Miklos was the administrator of the restaurant of the fanciest hotel in Oradea, Pallas, and Bella was a housewife. She had two sons, Otto and Tomi Honig; Otto was four or five years older than Tomi, and he published several poems in magazines, he was considered a very talented poet.

My grandmother had another son from her second marriage, Felix Schwartz, born in 1912, who was my father's half-brother. Felix studied medicine here in Romania, I don't know in which city, and in 1939 I think, he emigrated to France. I knew him briefly, I was only eight years old then. I remember, however, that one time he had to come and visit a person, a neighbor of ours who lived upstairs, when she was sick. He allowed me to watch him at work. I was interested in his job. During the war, Felix was part of the Maquis [1](#), the French resistance movement during the German occupation, and after that he practiced medicine at Le Havre University. He had a wonderful villa on the Cote d'Azur. He was married to Renee Schwartz, but he had no children. His only heir was I. But it was impossible for me to inherit that house during the communist regime, in 1980 when he died, so I think he donated it to the Jewish community there.

After Felix had been in France, he bought his mother the house she had always dreamt of, as my father told me: a big house in Oradea with a walnut tree in the courtyard. My grandmother occupied only two rooms and the kitchen, the other two apartments in the house were being rented out. She never had a servant as far as I know, she was used to doing the housework herself. She didn't grow anything in the garden and she didn't raise animals; but she always had walnut jam, made from the walnuts in the garden. I went to Oradea 15 years ago, and I was curious if the house would still be there: it was, and the walnut tree was huge.

My maternal grandfather, Emanoil Lobl, lived in several villages near Fagaras [in Brasov county]: in Venetia de Jos, Vistea de Sus, Scoreiu [Sibiu county], with my grandmother, Hannah Lobl, nee Fendrich. My grandfather didn't have any siblings, but my grandmother had two sisters, Ida Goldstein and Helen Grundfeld [nee Lobl]; their husbands were Jewish and they were both housewives.

My grandfather had a restaurant in Scoreiu, after which he could afford to move his business to Fagaras. His restaurant there was called Mercur and it soon became the most popular restaurant in the city. It had a big courtyard and a garden where the guests could eat outside during summer. My grandfather told me that it happened one time - it was Hungary's national holiday [20th August], an important holiday in Fagaras as back then it was under Austro-Hungarian rule - that the whole upper crust of Hungarian society in Fagaras came to celebrate this holiday in his restaurant, in the summer garden.

A band of musicians, gypsies, was brought in to sing the Hungarian anthem. Gypsies were very good musicians, they could play anything by ear, and of course they knew the Hungarian anthem as well. However, they weren't extremely reliable, you couldn't trust them not to drink too much at a party, so they were locked into two rooms: their instruments in one room, and the gypsies in the other, so that they wouldn't get drunk before singing in front of the guests. But one of the gypsies was struck by terrible diarrhea, and desperate because there was no toilette, he rushed into the room with the instruments and relieved himself in the helicon, the big blowing brass instrument that keeps the rhythm. Of course the helicon was stopped up as a result. And when they came out to play, the poor gipsy who blew the helicon couldn't make one sound come out of it. My

grandfather told me that the conductor was all red with anger, his eyes were bulging out of his head, and he was waving his fists at the poor gipsy with the helicon who couldn't keep the rhythm. So the gipsy blew as hard as he could, and blew the excrements on all the guests sitting in the first row! The scandal was terrible, terrible! Nobody knew who was responsible for that, except the gipsy of course who had used the helicon as a toilette, but he kept his mouth shut.

My grandfather found out later who it had been, but he said nothing. He didn't have problems with the authorities, although the restaurant was his, because nothing against him could be proven. Moreover, Mano bacsi [Uncle Mano], as my grandfather was called, was a very witty, light-hearted man, and everybody in Fagaras loved him. Only after World War I, when Transylvania was returned to Romania [after the Trianon Peace Treaty] [2](#), did the guilty gipsy come out and said that it had been him, and he became a small-town hero for a while because he was responsible for that incident and most of the people in Fagaras didn't sympathize with the Hungarians!

I never got to know the famous Mercur. When I visited my grandparents they had a smaller restaurant, in the center of Fagaras, near the bank. I don't remember its name, but everybody said, 'Let's go to Mano bacsi!', that's how he was known in town. The restaurant was in their house: two large rooms were sort of a pub, where people had a mug of good cold beer, for which my grandfather was famous, and there was another room where people could eat. In the back, there were two more rooms where my grandparents lived.

My grandmother was a housewife, but she had a lot of things to do: she was in charge of the restaurant's kitchen; she was supervising everything. The cooks and the servants were cooking her recipes, and she herself cooked wonderfully. I still remember one of my favorites, borsostokany [in Hungarian]. It was pepper veal stew, I can still see it being served in deep plates, with a lot of dark peppered gravy and meat, it was awesome! Every Sunday morning the upper crust of society in Fagaras came to Mano bacsi for this famous stew, served with a mug of cold beer. This was the Sunday ritual in Fagaras, for Hungarians and Romanians alike, it was in the Sunday program as certain as the minyan is for Jews in the Saturday program!

I stayed with my grandparents a lot, all my holidays when I was in elementary school were spent there. I had a lot of friends there, and it was also there that I learnt to swim and to fish in the Olt River. My grandmother was busy with the restaurant, but she always found time to pamper me, so I was rather spoiled as the only grandson. She followed my every whim, cooked my favorite dishes. But that didn't happen very often because I had the restaurant's menu to choose from. I remember I liked to play the waiter and serve the clients myself. Grandma and grandpa were so proud to see me going to the tables with the white napkin on my arm. People liked me, or at least I think they did, and they kept congratulating my grandparents for the wonderful grandson they had! I was 11 years old back then, because I know I was in elementary school.

My grandmother was more religious than my grandfather, she observed all the traditions: she cooked kosher food for the family, and she would have liked the restaurant to be kosher as well, but of course it wasn't possible. I didn't observe the kashrut, I was always tasting from every pot in the restaurant's kitchen. They both observed Sabbath, and went to the synagogue on Saturday, and my grandmother lit candles on Friday evenings. I went with them to the synagogue on Saturdays, and I remember there was a tennis court near the synagogue, where we kids would gather and play. I remember seeing two young Jewish ladies playing tennis there who were putting

on the most incredible airs and graces! The one who served called out, 'Plaaaay!', in a shrill voice, and the other answered, 'Ready!'.

My maternal grandparents weren't politically involved. It's interesting that, although they lived in Hungary, or to put it more precisely, in Transylvania under Hungarian rule, they didn't speak Hungarian. They spoke Romanian, and Yiddish between themselves, when they didn't want me to understand them. In fact, my grandfather sympathized with the Romanian regime: I remember he told me that when he had the restaurant in Scoreiu, there was another incident. There was a pole, or a tree in the courtyard, and on 10th May [later called Victory Day] [3](#), Romania's national holiday, somebody hoisted the Romanian flag on that tree. The scandal was imminent, of course, and this time my grandfather knew who it had been; he was part of the plot, but he didn't say anything. The gendarme, the csendor [in Hungarian] had to come, in his uniform with the cock feathers on his helmet, climb on the tree and take the flag down. They even wanted to cut the tree down, but they changed their mind, it seems, because they didn't do it. They investigated who it might have been, but with no result.

My parents

My mother, Estera Guth, nee Lobl, had an elder brother, Arnold Lobl, born in 1902. Arnold lived in Turda and then in Cluj-Napoca, where he was married to Zita Lobl; I remember she was named after an Austro-Hungarian princess, but I don't know who exactly. [She was the last Empress of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Archduke Karl Franz Joseph married Princess Zita of Bourbon-Parma in 1911.] He emigrated to Israel and that's where he died in 1993. They have two children, Lucia and Andrei Lobl, who live in Israel.

My father, Iuliu Guth, was born in Belgrade, where his father worked, in 1902. After he died, he moved with his mother and her second husband, Schwartz, to Oradea. He graduated from commercial high school in Oradea, where he studied in Hungarian. He met my mother, Estera Guth, in Fagaras, and after they married they came to live in Brasov. My mother was born in 1907 in Sibiu county, near the village of Scoreiu, and she studied in Cluj [Cluj Napoca], at the Tarbut Jewish Lyceum [4](#), also in Hungarian. She always considered that period, 1920-1924/5, her 'golden times': she enjoyed high school very much; she was a star in that place, very, very popular, and from what I understood, her Jewish and Zionist feelings there were very strong. My parents spoke Hungarian to each other.

They got married at the synagogue in Fagaras in 1930. It wasn't an arranged marriage, but they probably got to know each other in the Jewish circles, because Brasov is close to Fagaras. My father told me that he had made a huge blunder at the wedding: he was a quiet, well-red man, and there was an elderly fellow who was making quite a scandal. And my father asked my mother's best friend, Sari, 'Who is that causing all the scandal?' 'My father!', she replied. 'No, I know Tig bacsi, I meant the one next to him', my father tried to explain. 'That's my brother!', she answered.

My father worked as a proxy for the Romanian Banking Society in Brasov, which was actually a branch of a German bank. It was an important position; he had the authority from the general managers of the bank to take decisions in their name.

My parents weren't very religious at all. My mother wasn't religious, but she always lit the candles on Friday evenings and said the blessing, something she had learnt from her mother. But there was

no challah in our house, and the food wasn't kosher. My father led the seder, and said the prayers, and I think before Pesach there was a big cleaning. But we didn't dress up for Purim; that was something the Orthodox Jews were doing. These are about all the Jewish traditions kept in my parents' house. My father worked on Sabbath and didn't observe the kashrut, but he did observe all high holidays. He was a Neolog [5](#), but he strongly identified himself as a Jew and he was a fervent Zionist. I remember that my mother had a ketubbah, and that my father kept a violet velvet sack with a Magen David embroidered on it, with the clothes for his funeral, his tallit and his siddur. My father was never in a political party, but we had the Keren Kayemet [6](#) box in our house, and anybody who came to our house had to put something into it.

My father had been a member of Ivria [7](#), one of the first Jewish organizations in Brasov, which became Zionist only later. I don't know for sure, but I think he was a key person there. He never talked much to me about it, except that they used to play football. I think my parents had an exclusive circle of friends: they were entirely Jewish. My mother was a very open person, and very sociable, she was well known in Brasov, at least in the Jewish circles. My father was a good friend of Feiler Dezideriu, who had been with him in Ivria and later became the president of the Jewish community in Brasov during World War II. He also knew Citrom Molnar, who became the president of the community under communism.

The Jewish community in Brasov consisted of about 6,000-7,000 Jews in the interwar period. We did have functionaries, we had Rabbi Deutsch, two hakhamim, and these are only the ones I remember, I wasn't very religious when I was young. There were two synagogues, one Orthodox and one Neolog, just like the community was split in two. But after the communists came to power, the two communities united. Today only the Neolog synagogue is open.

Growing up

I was born in Brasov in 1931. The first house we lived in was rather big, and it had a huge garden, more of a hayfield with wild flowers actually because nobody planted anything in it. I used to play there, run, catch butterflies; it was heaven on earth! We lived on the ground floor of the house, and there was probably another family living upstairs because the house was two-storied. I don't remember the tenants, I was too little. We had three big rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. The furniture was modern back then, my father bought it after he married my mother. I still have that furniture in my house now, but it's considered rather antique today.

My mother looked after me, but I also had a Fraulein [governess]; it was an elegant and fashionable thing for upper class Jewish families, to keep a Fraulein. We always had one or two servants in the house as well. I don't remember the Fraulein's name; she was a young Saxon woman, about 19 years old, whose job was to be around me all day long and talk German to me. As a consequence, I learnt German better than any other languages I ever learnt, but unfortunately I forgot some of it because I haven't practiced it in a while. But my mother used to tell me that when I was three or four years old and got up at night because I was thirsty, I didn't say, 'Egy pohar vizet kerek szepen' in Hungarian, I said, 'Bitte ein Glas Wasser!' [Please give me a glass of water!] in German. Of course I spoke Hungarian as well, which I learnt from my parents, but until I went to kindergarten, I couldn't speak a word in Romanian. I learnt it at kindergarten for the first time. My mother reprimanded me rarely, she only muttered when I did something wrong. My father was more severe, he was raised differently, but by the time I grew up times had changed, and I wasn't the

most obedient child in the world; actually, I wasn't obedient at all! So, of course, there were sparks between us from time to time.

We moved from this first house when I had to start elementary school, and my father decided to send me to the Jewish elementary school, which was far away. So, we moved into another villa to be closer to the school, where we occupied the ground floor and also had three large rooms. There was a Hungarian living in the basement; he was the janitor. On the ground floor there was us and another Hungarian family I think, and upstairs there were two Jewish families, Ehrlich and Smuck. My family wasn't exactly on visiting terms with the neighbors, except the Smucks: my mother was a good friend of Mrs. Smuck, and she became my teacher later, in the second grade. I was a friend of Miki Ehrlich, who was the nephew of the other Jewish family; we played together. He was my classmate later, but we had known each other since we were small kids.

We had books in our house, but not religious ones, except the siddur that I remember my father had. And my parents never advised me what to read, and they didn't have to because I was a fanatic when it came to reading. The books from the house were soon not enough, I started exchanging books with my classmates; I devoured books, anything from classics to *The Dox Submarine* [weekly serial about the adventures of a German submarine that had got out of control]. I read both in Hungarian and Romanian.

I was a bit shocked when I entered the first grade of the Jewish elementary school because I got to know a category of Jews I had never met before: the Orthodox Jews, who, with their look, their payes, appeared stranger to me than my Romanian buddies I played out in the street with. Of course, we got along well, but I still made friends with the Neologs: it wasn't something premeditated, but I think the life styles were just too different: they prayed all the time, we read all the time, we didn't have many things in common except school. I didn't have any favorite subjects, I was more fond of the breaks. But I was a good pupil, even if I didn't study at home: I caught up during classes; I remember my mother used to call me, 'the first of the boys', because I was the best pupil from the boys' side, but there was a girl, Cica Nagy, the daughter of Citrom, the president of the community, who was better than me.

The school was in another wing of the Neolog synagogue, and I studied there until 1939 I think, when some new Jewish kids came to our school, not because they wanted to, but because they had been thrown out of the state school due to the anti-Jewish laws in Romania [8](#). I remember that when I was in the second grade, I went with my class to march on 10th May, even though we were a Jewish school; I remember my friend Miki Ehrlich had a wonderful photo taken then, us marching as watchmen. It was 1939 I think, probably the last time it happened. I was in the 3rd grade I think, in 1940, when we had to leave the building, and the school was moved to another place, into the courtyard of the Orthodox synagogue, where we finished two more grades. I remember a teacher from the 1st grade, Biri neni [Aunt Biri]: she hit me on the palm with a bamboo stick, I don't remember why, but I probably deserved it. After two years we had to move from there as well, and the Jewish community rented a house somewhere else, and I went there until I finished elementary school, which was four years. High school, however, lasted for eight years.

I started high school in 1942, but of course Jews weren't accepted to state high schools, so I went to the Jewish high school: it had an industrial profile, but it was just the name, nothing more. We only had to have a workshop, where we had to file different pieces of metal. The first assignment

was to file a piece of metal in a perfect, 90-degree rectangle. I remember one teacher, Engler, who wasn't in good relations with my father, I don't know why. But fact is that he gave me the most terrible piece of metal to file into a rectangle. We had like ten such assignments that year, but I finished the year still filing on that lousy piece of metal. I passed the grade, at great pains, but I did. Engler was full of hot air, he didn't realize that what he was teaching wasn't very important. The other teachers were Jews from Brasov as well as Engler, but they were cultivated people.

During the war

It was probably at the beginning of World War II when my paternal grandmother and my father's sister and her family were deported to Auschwitz. [Editor's note: The deportation in Oradea took place in May and June 1944; 27,215 Jews were deported.] My father was very fond of his sister Bella, and when the war broke out, he waited for them to come to Brasov. But he waited and waited and nobody showed up. And after a while the news that Jews from Transylvania had been deported to several camps by the Hungarians started to spread. So my father, after all the waiting, was somewhat expecting to hear the worst. That was the case, unfortunately; the only one who came back was Miklos Honig's brother, Bella's brother-in-law, who had also been deported to Auschwitz. He survived, and he brought the news that all the others were dead. Their names are mentioned in a book, *The Jews from Oradea*, a book about the horrors of the Holocaust. [Terez Mozes: *Varadi zsidok*, Ed. Literator, Oradea, 1995.]

I also studied English at home during the war, with a wonderful teacher, Mrs. Pelin, she was a judge's wife. Her English was admirable, and after she taught me the basics, we had so much fun: I remember reading together Jerome K. Jerome's book, *Three Men in a Boat*, with the subtitle 'To Say Nothing of the Dog!' She knew how to raise my interest in what we were reading, not just in the language itself.

During World War II, we had to move again from the villa, which belonged to a Jew. I don't know exactly what happened, but we were evicted, actually all Jews who had good houses were evicted, and we had to move near the railway station. It wasn't a very fortunate location that one, because they started bombing the railway station and the Seewald mill [mill in Brasov, later called Horia, Closca and Crisan], and we were exactly in the middle of the area that they bombed; we were very lucky to survive. I remember it was the Orthodox Easter when the bombing took place, and we were in a ditch in the courtyard where we lived, trying to take shelter. And my father told me, to calm me down; 'Recite Shema Israel and nothing will happen to you!'. I did, I started reciting, I knew that from school. And because the bombing didn't stop, my father sent my mother and I to live in Stupini [a village 5 km from Brasov], in a rented house for a while, until it was over. But ironically, we had barely moved there, when the air force was moved to Stupini, to a nearby field. But we didn't have any more problems. My father didn't come with us, he had to stay in Brasov and work. He eventually lost his job at the bank because of the anti-Jewish laws, the bank was German and of course all anti-Semitic decisions taken in Germany were implemented here as well. He had to work at the black market, doing some bookkeeping for different companies so that we could make a living.

I myself didn't suffer from anti-Semitism as an individual, but I had problems with my classmates from the Jewish elementary school. The Hitlerjugend [9](#) started to be popular among young boys in Brasov, especially Germans or Saxons. The Honterus High School [high school in Brasov named

after Johannes Honterus, where all the classes were taught in German] was near our school, and when we finished our classes and were on our way back home, they were already organized in groups and started fights. We were only two or three, so we usually got kicked, but we were no milksops either, we hit back as hard as we could. These fights happened rather often. And one boy from their band did something really ugly one time, he poured boiling hot water over us, from the balcony where he was living. That one we remembered, and after 23rd August 1944 [10](#), we, some Jews, paid him a visit: we knocked on the door, pushed his parents aside and beat the hell out of him. Of course, he kept quiet after that, the former German sympathizers didn't know how to make themselves invisible in that period!

During the war, my uncle Arnold Lobl, who was an underground communist, was incarcerated here, in Brasov, in Fekete Var [Black Castle], which was a political prison. That was in 1941-1942 I think. He escaped with my father's help; when he was fired from the bank my father received, however, a large sum of money as a compensation. All that money was used to bribe a commissary, who closed his eyes and so my uncle could escape. After his escape he took refuge in Turda, where he led the communist underground movement. After 23rd August, he became the secretary of the Communist Party in Turda, and brought his parents from Fagaras to live with them. My grandmother died there in 1953, and after her death grandfather came to live in Brasov, where he died in 1960. Uncle Arnold had studied political economics in Basel, Switzerland, and he had graduated Summa Cum Laude, so he was appointed university professor in Cluj; after that he became pro-rector of the Babes-Bolyai University there.

Post-war

When the war was over, I went to an ordinary state high school. And back then, we had religion classes in high school, and because we were Jews, we had two classes a week here, in the synagogue's building, with Rabbi Deutsch. Once a week he taught us two hours, with one small break between them. I can tell you, the prophet Habakuk I will never forget! There was a big fuss about it. The story goes like this: Deutsch bacsi was deaf, almost deaf. And he always wore a hearing aid, with something in his ear and a round thing on his chest, with a battery in it. But we kids knew he didn't hear well with it either because he always said, 'Quiet, children!' when we didn't make a sound, and when we were noisy, he didn't say anything. He tried to conceal the fact that he didn't hear well, but we figured it out. And whenever he asked us something he had taught us about, we only moved our lips and that was it! Deutsch bacsi would say, 'Good, lovan, good!'

I had a good friend, Kurt Sapira, his father was a famous doctor here in Brasov. And one time, during the first class, Deutsch bacsi asked Kurt something. Kurt knew, of course, that he didn't hear well, so he just mimed, moved his lips, and he was off the hook. After the break, the first person he calls out is I. And he asks me about the prophet Habakuk. 'Habakuk it is!', I said to myself and started to move my lips. And Deutsch bacsi said, 'Yes, yes', and drew closer and closer to me. And when he reached a convenient distance, he slapped me so hard that I thought my head would fly right off my shoulders! Who the hell knew Deutsch bacsi had changed his batteries during the break! The row that followed was terrible, he called my mother to the synagogue, told her how I had made fun of religion, and so on. Of course my mother could hardly restrain herself from bursting out laughing, and at home my parents made a lot of fun about the whole situation; they didn't punish me. They just asked me how hard the rabbi slapped me! My father used to call Rabbi Deutsch 'aldott rossz ember' in Hungarian, that is a blessed wicked man; Rabbi Deutsch was very

respected and feared, but unfortunately not very liked in the community in Brasov.

I went on vacations with my parents, I remember going to Tusnad [a spa resort in the vicinity of the superior gorges of the Olt river, upstream, 32 km from the town Miercurea Ciuc, having at its sides the massifs Harghita and Bodoc]. And when I was little, before I went to school, I remember my parents sent me to a camp for Jewish kids, Bruderlein I think was the name, near Oradea. It was during the summer, and I liked it, there were a lot of kids to play with, we learnt Jewish songs. But when I grew up, when I was in high school, I was happy when my parents left on vacation for ten to twelve days, to the seaside or the mountains, I don't remember the places, and I was home alone. Of course, my friends and I took over the house, and one day before my parents came back the place was a mess! So, I summoned four or five of my friends and we cleaned it so well that my mother was surprised how good the house looked!

My father was worried once that I might become too religious because me and my friends were taking part in Oneg Shabbat celebrations organized by the rabbi, but he soon realized that it would not rub off on me: it was simply about a circle of friends and more things to do for me. We met once or twice a month with the rabbi, but we didn't do anything special, except the regular Shabbat ceremony. The rabbi talked, we were bored and couldn't wait for him to finish so that we could go out and play. One time we carved our initials in the synagogue's brick wall; even though it has been restored, you can still see it there: GS, 1948.

My time at Gordonia

In high school I became involved in a Zionist organization, Gordonia [11](#). It was a left-wing social-democratic organization, but not an extremist one. My father had nothing to do with me becoming a Zionist; the truth was very simple: I played ping-pong, and Gordonia had the best ping-pong table in town. So I started to go there, and the whole gang followed me there. And we stayed there, we were very united and Gordonia started to have a very good reputation. One very important role that it played was that we made contact with young Jews from Bessarabia [12](#), from Cernauti, like Manin Rudich, Melitta Seiler, Erika Seiler and others. We were so united at Gordonia, we could hardly remember who was from where. This was an important role of the Zionist organization back then, in the early 1940s. And I remained a social democrat in my political convictions ever since.

At Gordonia, we had classes about Jewish writers, Jewish politicians, about the political situation every week: it was before 1948, before the state of Israel was established, that we talked about the Balfour Declaration [13](#); we were well informed. I took part in other activities as well: Gordonia had a camp at Sacalaz [village in Timis county]. It was a camp for training future sheliachim and I was sent there to train to be a sheliach for the moshav. The moshav was a summer camp where you did a lot of sports, where you received a Zionist education and also some paramilitary training. There was another training camp in Moldova, but the Jews there were from all over Romania, from Transylvania, from Moldova and from Wallachia, and we were all very different.

It appeared that the Jews from others regions had already had some paramilitary training because they knew the orders in Hebrew. We, the Jews from Brasov, didn't know any of that. And at one point, my friend, Noru Weinstein, and me had to join a column and rehearse marching with the others. We didn't know how to march, so we stayed behind the column and just tried to do what the others were doing: we had the best intentions. We made a few moves, and then suddenly there was an order in Hebrew, which of course we didn't understand, and everybody went left, and all of

a sudden we were leading the column! We marched a bit, then there was another order and the column turned right, except us, we kept on marching straight forward. There was a huge scandal, the halfwit leading the instruction thought that we wanted to mock him; we tried to explain to him in vain that we didn't know the orders. Unfortunately, there was this resentment on the part of the Jews from Moldova towards the Jews from Transylvania, and they wanted to send us, Noru and I, back home. But when the news spread, all the Jews from Brasov threatened they would leave with us; and after that, all Jews from Transylvania wanted to leave with us, so they eventually had to let us stay. They needed a good football team anyway, and that was Hacua, the team from Brasov. No need to say we won the football contest at Sacalaz.

Cultura

After Sacalaz I went to Cultura [14](#) in Bucharest. Every Zionist organization from all over the country had its own hut there. We received military, paramilitary training and we were also trained for agriculture. The living conditions weren't very good, we lived in wooden barracks, there were 30 people and we had to share the toilette and the shower. Food was never enough and it wasn't very good. My friend, Peter Neuman, and I signed up for viticulture, we figured we would get to eat a lot of grapes! There were different classes you could sign up for, viticulture, horticulture, grain farming and so on. So we took these viticulture classes, but we didn't see any grapes: the hunger was terrible. To be honest, I think there was a lot of stealing going on: whenever some supervisor from Joint [15](#) would come, there was good food, but the rest of the time, if you got your hands on a piece of bread and some onion, you were lucky. Maybe it was something planned, this thing with the hunger, maybe they wanted to see how much we could take.

There were seven of us from Gordonia, but five went home. I stayed with Peter Neuman. I was a big surprise for most people because I was a spoiled child, nobody thought I would last. But I did. I remember one time, Peter and I had to unload a truck full of fruit gems. And after we finished, our reward was a can of fruit gem. We could hardly wait to eat it, but when we got back to the hut, Butu Sames, who was the sheliach for Gordonia, saw it, and we had to share it with everybody. We only got a teaspoon of gem for all our work, but it was an important lesson.

The five who went back were a bit ashamed that they did, so they started telling everybody how terrible the conditions were, and, so that everybody would understand the 'horrors', that even I, Pista, fainted [Pista is Stefan's nickname]. It was true, but I didn't faint at Gordonia, like Misi Mendelovici said. It was like this: we were allowed to leave the camp from time to time, and one time we went to a football match in Bucharest. We went there by tram: and the tram was full, the smell of sweat was terrible, and just then somebody near me farted. It turned my stomach and I passed out for a moment, I was indeed a bit of a sensitive guy when it came to things like that. And this was the famous fainting Pista, that is I, had at Cultura! Misi didn't tell my mother the whole story, but the news among Jews spread rapidly, just like it does now, and my mother found out the entire story. She got scared, of course, and came to Bucharest in the twinkling of an eye. She entered the courtyard of the camp, saw Norbi Weinstein, my friend, who was always in our house so she knew him well, and she cried out, 'Norbi, hol van Pista?!' [Norbi, where is Pista?!] And Norbi, though unaware why she was so desperate but willing to help, started to look around. That's when my mother finally relaxed, because she figured that if Norbi was looking around for her Pista, then her Pista had to be there, at least able to walk!

Cultura had to be dissolved, when the law abolishing all youth organizations except the UTC [Young Communists' Union] was passed in 1948. By then we were rather organized, with all the military training we had had for kibbutzim, and we had to guard the camp in some barracks, be it winter or summer. I remember I was the only one with a pair of huge fur-lined gloves, the only pair in our hut, and everybody borrowed them when they were on guard. I also had an eiderdown my mother brought me when she came to Cultura; it was so useful during cold nights. And that night, when the news about the law spread, Peter and I, who were considered to be 'tough', were sent to be on guard at the sentry-box at the main gate. The leaders of Cultura thought that the Jews from the CDE [The Jewish Democratic Committee], who weren't Zionists, would come and try to get as much from the camp as they could.

When we reached the sentry-box, I remember there were two overlapped beds, and Peter chose to go sleep in the upper bed; I would have liked that too, at least until I heard the ones who had slept there before us tell Peter, 'You fool you will choke from heat like a dog up there!' Even today we remember and laugh about the upper bed, Norbi and I: 'choke like a dog!' Anyway, the gate was locked, and in front of the gate we put harrows with the prongs up, so that if cars or trucks came, they would puncture their tires and wouldn't be able to drive away. And indeed, that morning, at about 6 o'clock, a truck full of people from the CDE wanted to get inside the camp. Peter and I came out with clubs, whistled the alarm, some others came as well, and we stood there for a few minutes staring at one another. Finally I think they understood that we weren't to be trifled or fought with, so they turned around and left. No more than half an hour later, the people from Joint came, gathered from the camp what they could, and told us to spread like partridges, quietly and not in groups, to our homes.

It seemed an eternity the period I spent at Cultura, it was that full of events. I went when I was in the 6th class of high school in 1948, so I was 16 years old, and it lasted for several months, I don't know exactly. It was interesting that my parents allowed me to go, although my father was very strict about my education, so you can imagine the Zionist feelings he had.

After Cultura, I couldn't go back to being a quiet regular high school student; I felt I couldn't fit into that quiet environment, so I finished high school in private. But for that I had to work, because only workers were allowed to skip classes and only show up at exams. So I got a job as a worker at the Schil factory [hardware factory in Brasov]; I was totally inexperienced at first, but I liked to work, so I ended up being in charge of the tool warehouse. I worked for two years, until I finished high school. I didn't have to study much because there was no way teachers were to spur a young worker.

I remember an episode with my friend, Ini Brauning, who was also a worker, and I. We had a maths examination with professor Goia, a renowned teacher in Brasov at that time; he used to call four students to the blackboard and give them an exercise to solve. The first from our group knew something about the subject, but he got stuck; the second student scribbled some figures on the blackboard, but he couldn't finish the exercise. 'You go on!', the professor told Ini Brauning. 'But...you know, I don't know!', Ini answered. Then the professor points at me. But Ini said, 'He doesn't know either!' 'How do you know?!', the professor asked him. 'We studied together!', Ini answered. And he answered truthfully, Ini was so funny because he meant it, he didn't say it as a mockery! Fortunately, the professor enjoyed the answer, said, 'Go to hell!' and gave each of us a '5', so we passed the exam.

My college years

After I finished high school, I went to the Faculty of Biology in Cluj-Napoca in 1950. I had to take an entry examination, and I wasn't very well prepared because I had spent my last two years working and not studying. So my mother came to me to Cluj, and we stayed in two houses, whose owners were Jewish families. We found them with my mother's help, because she had been a student in Cluj. Uncle Arnold could have helped us as well, but it wasn't necessary. She stayed with me for about a month, until I took the examination. I started some preparations with a university assistant; he was a nice fellow, but we both got bored of studying pretty quickly, so we decided to go study in the open air, at the swimming pool to be more precise! But I did study, and I passed the examination – true, not among the first – without any help from my uncle Arnold Lobl, who was the pro-rector of the Babes-Bolyai University. I didn't want to use this relation.

In my first year of college I was a mediocre student, but beginning with the second year I was a good student, all my grades were 'excellent'. I only flunked one exam, comparative anatomy, but not because I didn't know the subject. It was the last exam of that session, and the teacher wanted to go on a trip and rescheduled the exam for three days earlier than planned. I was the chief of my study group, and the rest of the group decided not to take the exam as a protest, and that was our final decision. On the day of the exam, I went first, followed by the other good students. I was a good student, I could have taken the exam, but I wanted to stand by the others. So I picked a note from the stack the professor had before him, I didn't even look at the subjects and gave it back. The student after me did the same, all did, up to a certain student, Daisa was his name. The professor 'corrupted' him, that is encouraged him to say anything, and Daisa understood that the professor was about to let him pass, no matter what he said, just to make a point and break the group. Daisa gave in, got a 'sufficient', and after that, the group broke, of course, when the other students saw they could also pass. So the only ones who didn't were the best students from the group, some others and I! Ironically, after college, I met Daisa and he was a fervent trade union activist. He had the right character for the job. As far as I know, I was the only Jew among all my colleagues.

I liked biology, but not everything they taught us there, most of it was Soviet crap. I remember Lepeshinskaya, who was famous for proving Virhoff's theory wrong: the theory said that a cell can only be born from another cell, and she proved the contrary with photos, how from organic matter cells were built to form an egg. [Olga Borisovna Lepeshinskaya, born in Russia in 1871, claimed to observe the formation of cells in egg-yolks of birds and fish and also during the process of wound healing.] But it was proved some years ago that all the great Lepeshinskaya did was cheat because she simply inversed the photos taken from the most simple and natural degradation of an egg into unorganized organic matter and presented it as the break-through of the century in biology.

We also studied the theories of Lisenko and Miciurin. [Lisenko believed that socialist agriculture needed a profoundly biological theory, whose full swing would enable it to have big and stable harvests. Miciurin, who was the founder of 'creative soviet darwinism', abjured genetics and the laws of heredity, invoking instead the theoretical principles of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.] But we were lucky that we had some good teachers, like professor Preda, they still belonged to the 'old true school'. This was in 1951-1953, they didn't have time to change all professors. He taught us, in a subversive manner, true biology. The communists considered the theories of Mendel to be idealistic, but Mendel was perfectly right, as science proved later.

[According to Mendel's theory an individual has two 'factors', or genes, for each trait, one from each parents. Each copy of a factor is called an allele. The two alleles may or may not contain the same information. When they differ, the allele with the dominant information will be manifested.] Anyway, professor Preda held a splendid lecture on Mendel's theory, with proof, and ended with the words, 'This is Mendel's theory, and it's not true!'

All the time I was in college in Cluj, I had absolutely no contact with the Jewish community there; I had no interest in religion; as a future biologist I thought there was falseness in it. Moreover, I had other hobbies. I've always been a passionate sportsman, at least until I went to college, when I had to give something up because I couldn't study and do sports at the same time. So I gave up swimming, although I had been a regional champion and in the youth batch of the country, and all I had left was table tennis. I became university champion in Cluj at table tennis during college. I never felt rejected by my colleagues because I was a Jew, as a matter of fact I don't think many of them knew, many came from the countryside and weren't familiar with all the past problems with Jews. I remember one time they went carol-singing to some professors at Christmas, a thing that wasn't really allowed, and they asked me to join them, and I did.

I never had problems with communism because I was a Jew, but I never mentioned in any of my résumés that I had been a fervent Zionist at Cultura, I had no reason to do it.

After I graduated I had a repartition at Oradea as a teacher of natural sciences, and I had no calling for that, so I chose to stay at home at my parents' house. I stayed at home for a year, I think, until my father, who was strict, got tired of me doing nothing, used some relations he had and had me hired in Sfantu Gheorghe [a town in the vicinity of Brasov], by a mineral water company, as chief of the CTC [Technical Quality Control] laboratory. There were all sorts of people in Sfantu Gheorghe. I remember I was still single and considered a good catch, an 'akademikus' [academician in Hungarian] and that some women tried to show me how well they were situated, and they used the expression 'a falso tizezer', which comes from an English expression in vogue at the time in New York: 'the upper ten thousand' [the 'high society']. It was absolutely ridiculous, considering that Sfantu Gheorghe had no more than 8,000 souls.

I liked the job there and after a while I was appointed manager of the laboratory. After a while there was some kind of reorganization and I was appointed chief engineer. I was very surprised, and so was everybody else. That was very interesting because Jews weren't usually appointed for managerial positions, and moreover, without being a member of the Communist Party; and I was a Jew, and I wasn't a party member. At least at the time of the appointment, because a week later the party secretary showed up at my office with my application for entering the Party. I was facing a dilemma because I had a family and two sons: if I hadn't signed it, I would have lost everything, not just the new job, but the former one as well, so I signed it and became a party member; but my involvement in the Party was never more than having a membership card.

Married life

I got married in 1957 to Maria Maftei, whom I met here in Brasov. She had studied choreography in Cluj at the same time I studied biology, but we never met there. She isn't a Jew, she's a Christian, and she isn't religious at all, she's like me, so there was no religious wedding. Maria has a rather interesting story herself: when she was small, she lived with her parents somewhere in Moldova, in Roman I think, and then they moved to Burdujeni [Suceava county], the railway men were always

on the road back then – her father was chief of the railway station there. At one point her father was relocated to a place in Bessarabia, I don't know exactly where. When the Russians began their offensive, all railway men, together with teachers and notaries, the important people from those places, got a wagon to load with their belongings and go to Romania. But 23rd August came exactly then, the Germans stopped the train, attached a few more wagons with armament to the train, took over and didn't stop until they were in Salzburg, in Austria.

There they were POWs I think, they were in a camp, her father was forced to work for the Austrian railways, and her mother, along with other women who had a sewing machine, was forced to sew German uniforms. My wife was nine years old at the time, and for nine months – the period they were there, from 1944 to 1945 – she studied with the other Romanian prisoners there, who were teachers. When she visited Salzburg later, she found the place where they were imprisoned; today it's a hotel. She is trying to get a pension from the Austrian government, but it's hard to prove that she was there, when she was only nine. Her parents are dead, the others who were there died as well; she only has a picture that she had on the permit, which gave her the right to use the air-raid shelters when there was a bombing.

We had two sons, Dan, born in 1958, and Adrian Petrea, born in 1960. We kept servants in our house for quite a while, and we even helped them marry well; I remember one girl, a country girl, but very sweet and kind, who married a man from the Electrica factory, a manager who came to our house. My mother helped her with the wedding dress and all, and she turned into a fine lady, with a much better financial situation. All this time I lived in Brasov with my wife, but I was commuting every day to Sfantu-Gheorghe for work, and I did so for 26 years, until I started working in Brasov.

My mother was a housewife, but when I went off to college, in 1950, she took a job at the town's second hand bookshop – back then the only one in town – which she ended up running for a long time. There was a funny incident involving my mother as a librarian, which later became a good anecdote in all the bookshops in the country. In those times, under communism, you entered whatever shop, asked for something, and the invariable answer was, 'We don't have any'. It was true. So an elderly gentleman entered my mother's bookshop and asked her, 'Do you keep any books in ancient Greek?'. The answer was, 'We don't have any.'. The man, probably aware that that was the standard answer, tried again, 'You know, the ancient Greek, Hellene' 'I know, Sir, but we don't have any' 'But ma'am, the ancient Greek language, in which the Iliad and the Odyssey were written...' 'I know, Sir!', answered my mother and started to recite the first verses from the Iliad, in ancient Greek. The man was stunned. He blushed, bowed, and said, 'Please excuse me, dear madam!' And he kept on bowing and walking with his back to the door until he went out like this.

Although my father was a fervent Zionist, he never intended to make aliyah himself; it is a paradox, but he had very strong bonds here, he was very attached to his house, to his family. However, he supported the Zionist cause quite strongly. My father died in 1978 and he was buried in the Jewish cemetery here, in Brasov, and my mother died some time after him, in 1985. She is also buried in the Jewish cemetery. There was no rabbi at the funerals, only a minyan, and I recited the Kaddish.

I didn't care about the regime; I cared about the affairs of the company. The company went well, and I like to think that it was like that thanks to me as well. In those times, there were two kinds of leaders: the ones who became leaders because they were very active as party members, and the ones who became leaders because they were needed. I like to think I was one of the latter. Of course, I cursed among friends about the heating and food problems, but I wasn't a revolutionary. I listened to Radio Free Europe [16](#) at home, all throughout the communist period.

Although I was trained at Cultura for aliyah, I never filled in the emigration papers. I was married and we already had children. And I didn't want to leave my parents behind, the home was like an anchor for this family.

I never had problems with communism, but my wife did because the Securitate [17](#) wanted to recruit her as an informer. By that time I was export representative of the Ministry of Agriculture for the counties of Covasna, Brasov and Sibiu, so I worked in foreign trade, and I was also a Jew, and they were probably interested in the Jewish community in Brasov. So she was repeatedly visited and pressured by a Securitate officer, who of course introduced himself under a false name, under the threat that if she wouldn't collaborate, I would lose my job. It would have been a problem, both my children were studying medicine in Cluj and we needed money to support them, but my wife said 'No' and that was definite. Nothing happened after that, I didn't lose my job. My wife told me that after the Romanian Revolution of 1989 [18](#) she saw this officer in the street, coming towards her. When he recognized her, he immediately crossed the street and disappeared.

In 1987 I was downtown. I heard that there was some kind of scandal outside, so we went out into the streets; there couldn't be a scandal without me present! We ended up in front of Modarom [a building in the center of Brasov], where there were already militiamen, we saw how the headquarters of the county Communist Party organization was being vandalized, files and portraits of Ceausescu [19](#) being thrown out of the windows by the people inside. I stayed there until we were forced to go back to our homes.

When the Revolution of 1989 started, I was also downtown because my wife taught ballet there. When we heard all the noise, we went outside. We stayed in the central square of Brasov, and we ended up kneeling with the others and singing. Then there was a column that started to march towards the headquarters of the Securitate. By that time I worked in Brasov, and I was very surprised to see in the column some colleagues who were known as fervent activists shouting in the same column; we smiled at each other and went on.

The column split in two, and we reached the back gates of the Securitate, and my wife and I were in the first row, which we hadn't at all intended. I remember that the gates were opened, and, I'll never forget, there was a poor wretched soldier, not a Securitate, on guard, he didn't even speak Romanian very well, he was a Hungarian. He was scared to death, and he didn't say anything. And someone rushed at him shouting. I stopped him, I told him that he was just a simple soldier and that he should leave him alone. I think I was pretty convincing because they let him go, all pale and barely standing. When we entered the courtyard, others were already inside; they had entered through the other gate. Somebody started to throw out papers from the offices. We stayed there for a while, and then we went home. We weren't afraid of shootings, the shootings started only later that night, when they broadcast on the radio that people should go downtown to guard I don't know what, and they were shot at; it was a simple trap, because the revolution needed heroes.

I didn't raise my children in any religion, but they both identify themselves as Jews very strongly, I might say. They aren't religious, but they are Jews in every other respect. And my wife, even though she is Christian, makes an excellent Jewish woman! During the wars in Israel [the Six-Day-War [20](#) and the Yom Kippur War [21](#)], she was more afraid and more worried than I was, about the people there, and our acquaintances. We have relatives there, there was Uncle Arnold who died in 1993. And there's another relative of ours, Judith Sandberg, we call her Juti, a nephew of my maternal grandmother's, who was more like a sister to my mother, because her parents died when she was small, so she was raised by my grandmother.

I visited Judith in 1975, she lives with her family in a village near Tel Aviv, in Kiryat Shmuel. Her husband's brother was Moshe Sandbar, who was the governor of the National Bank in Israel. I saw a lot of places in Israel while I was there, even more than Juti and her family did, because I had a lot of friends there – friends who had left from Brasov – who took me on trips, sightseeing. I traveled through the Negev desert, and I got as far as Muhammad Rashid in Yemen. And when I returned, I never had problems with mail during communism.

Before 1989, my wife used to paint eggs on the Christian Easter, but it was something purely symbolical, she just wanted to have some red eggs in the house. We also had a Christmas tree on Christmas. I think it's a beautiful custom but we did it more for the kids, when they were little, because otherwise they would have felt frustrated that other kids had one and they didn't. I went to the synagogue only on Yom Kippur and other high holidays, not every Saturday.

During communism, I had to take part in marches, like on 1st May and 23rd August – I was the manager of a state company, after all. I was sometimes invited to tribunes as well. Life under communism was rather simple for us, my wife and I worked, we went to the cinema, to the theatre or to concerts a lot. I also used to watch my wife teach ballet lessons, it was very interesting.

My sons never had problems under communism because they were Jewish; they were very open and people liked them; and our house was always open to all their friends. Adrian traveled a lot, to England; he worked for a non-governmental organization under British supervision, I don't know its name, and from there the World Bank recruited him. Now his work takes him to Bulgaria and Russia. He never thought of making aliyah. We talked about it, but their bonds here were too strong; they had their families here, and their friendships have always been extremely important for them. Their friends are more like brothers. My daughters-in-law are both physicians; Adrian's wife is Rodica, and Dan's wife is Nadia. Their weddings weren't religious, Rodica and Nadia are Orthodox Christians, they only got married at the city hall. My elder granddaughter, Oana, is 22, she is a student in Bucharest, she studied languages; the other one, Dana, is in high school. They are Dan's daughters. Adrian's daughter, Diana, is in the 5th grade. My sons' wives aren't Jewish, and neither are my granddaughters', although I saw that my elder granddaughter was wearing a necklace with a Magen David, which belonged to my mother. It made me happy to see that. Dan, my elder son, who was a physician, died in a car accident in 1997. [Editor's note: the subject is very painful for Mr. Guth and he doesn't want to talk any more about it]. We get together during summer holidays, when my granddaughters are on vacation and my daughters-in-law and Adrian leave from work, but it's not very often.

I believe life has got better since 1989, there's a freedom of speech, which is important – I was never good at keeping my mouth shut. But words are easily forgotten, and they don't make a lot of

a difference. Today I'm vice-president of the Jewish community here, in Brasov. I became involved in the Jewish community in 2000, when I was first elected secretary of the community, and then vice-president. I'm in charge of all the administrative matters of the community, of its image: I spent most of my time delegating others, and supervising all the ongoing activities.

We don't observe any holidays at home, be they Jewish or Orthodox Christian, and my wife doesn't celebrate Easter or Christmas. She only wants me to remember that she is Maria and that I always get her a present on her name day. Today I live a private life; I don't socialize much. I'm at the community only when I work, otherwise I prefer to spend my time at home, with my wife.

I prefer to consider myself a conservative rather than a Neolog, because the term 'Neolog' was first used by the Hungarians. When the Neolog synagogue was first built in Brasov in 1901, it was Hungarian. It became Romanian in 1919, after the Trianon Peace Treaty, but it kept its original name. However, what the Hungarians understood by Neolog is what we understand now by conservative; they practically mean the same thing, only the name is different, and I personally prefer to call myself a conservative. Being Jewish for me has no religious connotation, I'm not a religious man; it means tradition for me. I have experienced Jewishness through Zionism, and not through religion. But I'm proud of it, never in my life did I think of hiding the fact that I'm a Jew.

Glossary

1 Maquis

Undeground resistance movement in German-occupied France and Belgium from 1940-1945. It posed a real threat to the Germans and the French collaborators by blowing up bridges, cutting telephone wires and derailing Nazi trains. The British Government supported the French Resistance with arms and secret agents.

2 Trianon Peace Treaty

Trianon is a palace in Versailles where, as part of the Paris Peace Conference, the peace treaty was signed with Hungary on 4th June 1920. It was the official end of World War I for the countries concerned. The Trianon Peace Treaty validated the annexation of huge parts of pre-war Hungary by the states of Austria (the province of Burgenland) and Romania (Transylvania, and parts of Eastern Hungary). The northern part of pre-war Hungary was attached to the newly created Czechoslovak state (Slovakia and Subcarpathia) while Croatia-Slavonia as well as parts of Southern Hungary (Voivodina, Baranja, Medjumurje and Prekmurje) were to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later Yugoslavia). Hungary lost 67.3% of its pre-war territory, including huge areas populated mostly or mainly by Hungarians, and 58.4% of its population. As a result approximately one third of the Hungarians became an - often oppressed - ethnic minority in some of the predominantly hostile neighboring countries. Trianon became the major point of reference of interwar nationalistic and anti-Semitic Hungarian regimes.

3 Victory Day in Romania

9th May commemorated the signing of the capitulation of Germany, which was the end of World War II in Europe. In Romania the communists attributed a special significance to this day because

they tried to supplant 10th May, the former national holiday in the collective memory of the nation. Until the communist takeover in Romania, 10th May commemorated the crowning of the first Romanian King, and the creation of the Romanian Kingdom, which took place on 10th May 1883.

4 Tarbut Jewish Lyceum

Jewish high school founded in Kolozsvár/Cluj in 1920 and operating until 1927. The school was reopened in 1940. The staff consisted of Jewish teachers and professors who had lost their jobs in 1940 as a result of the anti-Jewish laws. Students of the school recalled that for some time in the beginning the teachers held university style lectures instead of regular secondary school classes. They did not have regular tests to give them grades as was common in ordinary high schools; and they addressed the students with the formal you as was customary at university. Many teachers and students of the school perished in Auschwitz during the Holocaust. The Jewish Lyceum was closed in 1948 as a result of the nationalization of denominational schools.

5 Neolog Jewry

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into two (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions.

6 Keren Kayemet Leisrael (K

K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box'. They threw in at least one lei each day, while on Sabbath and high holidays they threw in as many lei as candles they lit for that holiday. This is how they partly used to collect the necessary funds. Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism.

7 Ivria

Jewish student organization, set up in Heidelberg in 1911, which established a Zionist organization from 1919. It organized trips to Palestine and classes of Hebrew.

8 Anti-Jewish laws in Romania

The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941-1944 under the Antonescu regime. According to these laws all Jews aged 18-40 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery. More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All

rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the 'Romanisation campaign'. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc. Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

9 Hitlerjugend

The youth organization of the German Nazi Party (NSDAP). In 1936 all other German youth organizations were abolished and the Hitlerjugend was the only legal state youth organization. From 1939 all young Germans between 10 and 18 were obliged to join the Hitlerjugend, which organized after-school activities and political education. Boys over 14 were also given pre-military training and girls over 14 were trained for motherhood and domestic duties. After reaching the age of 18, young people either joined the army or went to work.

10 23 August 1944

On that day the Romanian Army switched sides and changed its World War II alliances, which resulted in the state of war against the German Third Reich. The Royal head of the Romanian state, King Michael I, arrested the head of government, Marshal Ion Antonescu, who was unwilling to accept an unconditional surrender to the Allies.

11 Gordonia

Pioneering Zionist youth movement founded in Galicia at the end of 1923. It became a world movement, which meticulously maintained its unique character as a Jewish, Zionist, and Erez Israel-oriented movement.

12 Bessarabia

Historical area between the Prut and Dneestr rivers, in the southern part of Odessa region. Bessarabia was part of Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In 1918 it declared itself an independent republic, and later it united with Romania. The Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union but the Soviet Union never accepted this. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. The two provinces had almost 4 million inhabitants, mostly Romanians. Although Romania reoccupied part of the territory during World War II the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed their belonging to the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Moldavia.

13 Balfour Declaration

British foreign minister Lord Balfour published a declaration in 1917, which in principle supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. At the beginning, the British supported the idea of a Jewish national home, but under the growing pressure from the Arab world, they started restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. However, underground Jewish organizations provided support for the illegal immigration of Jews. In 1947 the United Nations voted to allow the

establishment of a Jewish state and the State of Israel was proclaimed in May 1948.

14 Cultura

Zionist youth organization active in Bucharest in the 1940s, which reunited all other Zionist organizations from across the country.

15 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)

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

16 Radio Free Europe

Radio station launched in 1949 at the instigation of the US government with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features, produced by Central and Eastern European émigrés, from Munich to countries of the Soviet block. The radio station was jammed behind the Iron Curtain, team members were constantly harassed and several people were killed in terrorist attacks by the KGB. Radio Free Europe played a role in supporting dissident groups, inner resistance and will of freedom in the Eastern and Central European communist countries and thus it contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet block. The headquarters of the radio have been in Prague since 1994.

17 Securitate (in Romanian)

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

18 Romanian Revolution of 1989

In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-

government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife. A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.

19 Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989)

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

20 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

21 Yom Kippur War

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.