

Alexandru Kohn

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Arad

Romania

Interviewer: Oana Aioanei

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Despite the fact that the apartment of the Kohn family is situated in the city center, it lies behind some high buildings. This gives you the feeling that you are in an oasis of quietude, a feeling enhanced by the great number of flowers that enchant the senses. The walls are covered with paintings, which contribute to the agreeable atmosphere. Mr. and Ms. Kohn, both extremely hospitable, rejoice over each occasion when they can have a talk with somebody. Mr. Kohn is tall, likes to play chess and particularly enjoys debating all kinds of subjects.



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My family background

What I remember about my great-grandparents from my mother's side, whose family name was Schillinger, is that my great-grandfather was very religious. He was sort of an autocrat. He was well to do, owned some 60 hectares of land, and was very much concerned about his offspring, both his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Great-grandpa helped one of his grandsons, who would become Doctor Schillinger, finance his studies and finish university. To his great astonishment, this doctor became the first Jew in the Schillinger family to marry a non-Jewish woman. A great scandal came out of this, and great-grandfather, as he was an authoritarian character, forbade his grandson to ever visit him again, disowned him and sat shivah for him. I know that great-grandfather wanted to maintain tradition by all means.

Great-grandfather was very much the center of the Schillinger family. Everybody came to congratulate him and greet him on his birthday, and he gave presents to each grandson and granddaughter when they got married. Great-grandfather was the center of the family because he

had the most money and the most open mind. He wasn't interested in politics, but he was religious. He died before my mother got married – so sometime before 1926 – and is buried in Chisineu Cris. [Editor's note: Chisineu Cris is a town situated in northwestern Romania, around 42 km from Arad. Arad is approximately 550 km from the Romanian capital city of Bucharest.]

My maternal grandfather, Emanuel Schillinger, was born in Elek, Hungary, in 1858. [Editor's note: Elek is a town located in southeastern Hungary, approximately 248 km from the Hungarian capital of Budapest.] He grew up with both German and Hungarian as a mother tongue. He had five brothers and two sisters, and I know many of them only from pictures. [Editor's note: upon further inspection, it seems that the grandfather had three sisters instead of two. Their names are Elza, Nina and Etel.] One of Grandfather's brothers was called Desideriu Schillinger, but I don't know anything else about him. His other brother was Ervin Schillinger. I do have a photo of him, which was originally a greeting sent from Italy to my grandparents for Pesach in 1917. It is written on the back of the photo that it was sent while Ervin was in the army.

I also have a photo of Elza Erdos, one of Grandfather Schillinger's sisters, together with her husband, Artur Erdos. They had two daughters, Clara and Vera. The photo was taken in Budapest and it was sent to my mother, Gizella. The other sister of my grandfather was called Nina. She eventually married a man by the name of Schwartz, and they had a daughter, Rozalia, who married Doctor Bercovici. Together they had a son, Pisti. My mother's other cousin was Ileana; she got married to Isidor Wolberg, and they had a daughter, Eva, whom I eventually met in Israel. Ileana Wolberg's mother was called Etel. Schillinger was her maiden name. Her sister was Nina Schwartz

My grandfather did his army service in the Austrian-Hungarian Army [1](#). Grandfather finished seven grades – finishing the agricultural school – and became a tenant farmer. [Editor's note: at the time of the grandfather's childhood, the first six grades of school were compulsory. It is probable that he finished sixth grade and possibly spent some additional time at an agrarian school of some sort.] Grandfather leased a tract of land from a baron and managed an estate; that's how he could eventually afford to buy land in Sinte Mare [49 km northeast of Arad]. What I remember of the house in Sinte Mare is that my grandfather did the farming and my uncle Iosif, my mother's brother, had a tinsmith workshop in the house. My grandparents were on good terms with the neighbors, and the family was united and prosperous. My grandfather was interested in politics at the time, but he didn't get involved in any way.

My immediate family and I went to Sinte Mare two or three times a year after holidays. My grandparents – who lived in Sinte Mare – would, however, go to Chisineu Cris for holidays. Great-grandfather had a brother there, whose family name was also Schillinger, and he and my grandparents spent holidays in each other's company. My grandparents went to Chisineu Cris because it was considered a town, one with a significant Jewish community and a synagogue. Sinte Mare had neither of these things.

My mother, who was in better financial shape than Grandfather, supported her parents because Grandpa's business never went particularly well. Farming depended on the seasons and the weather. In times of drought, things were particularly difficult. In those times irrigation didn't quite exist, meaning that agriculture hinged very much on nature.

My maternal grandmother, Iuliana Schillinger – nee Blum – was a housewife. She also lived in Sinte Mare and spent one year – after she fell sick in Beliu – with me and my parents. She didn't

stay with us for long because she was extremely ill. We were better off, and, as she didn't have the means to pay for her treatment, we brought her a doctor. My mother's brothers could not stand to watch my grandmother as she struggled with her illness, and they stood outside with my grandfather. It was my mother who actually took care of her, but she died nonetheless in 1938.

My mother, Gizella Schillinger, was born on 31st January 1904 in Sinteia Mare. She grew up in Chisineu Cris. My mother finished high school, and, before getting married, she worked as a cashier in Chisineu Cris. My mother had one brother and one sister, both of whom were younger than she was. Iosif, who was born in 1906, had a tinsmith workshop, as I have already mentioned. He married Magdalena Gros and died in Arad in 1974. He didn't have any children. My mother's sister, Liliana, was born around 1909. She was a housekeeper, never got married, and lived in Arad, where she died in 1947.

My great-grandparents on the Kohn side of the family are originally from Vienna. My paternal grandfather, Alexandru Kohn, was born in Vienna. His mother tongue was Hungarian because at that time Hungary constituted a principle part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He finished four grades and did his army service with the Austrian-Hungarian Army. Later he worked as a trader. My grandfather lived in Sebis. [Editor's note: Sebis is located in Arad County in western Romania, near Arad.] He died when my father was two years old, so I know very few things about him. I know only that he had a brother in Vienna who was a supplier to the court of Emperor Franz Joseph [2](#) and a sister who worked in the fur trade in England.

My paternal grandmother, Netty Kohn - nee Blau - also lived in Sebis, and she had a brother in England. She met Grandpa there. My grandmother was a housewife. The house that my grandparents owned in Sebis wasn't any different from the other houses in the village. It was a simple middle class home, complete with a shop, a store and two or three rooms. In those times the trade was a mixed one. My grandparents sold everything, from nails, to bread, shoes, brandy and other spirits. They also ran an inn. They didn't have animals and the garden was very small, with a few fruit trees and assorted flowers. Grandfather Kohn died in Sebis in 1898, and grandmother died in 1931. Both passed away before I was born.

My father, Eugen Kohn, was born on 14th August 1896 in Sebis. His mother tongue was Hungarian. My father completed four grades of school and two years of apprenticeship. [Editor's note: it's very likely that he actually finished six grades.] He was enrolled in the army at the age of 17, in 1913. My father has told me that he fought at Monte Cassino, Italy during World War I with the Austrian-Hungarian Army. [Editor's note: Monte Cassino was not a theater of operations during World War I, but rather World War II; the interviewee's father more likely served at the Isonzo front.] Shortly thereafter he lived in Budapest with the army until the communist revolution of Bela Kun [3](#). I don't know exactly when he came home to Romania, but he told me that the Romanian troops - for Romania was on the side of France and England - had entered Budapest [4](#) and defeated the troops of Bela Kun. This enabled him to return to Romania.

My father had five sisters: Sarolta, Gizella, Reghina, Roza and Netty, all of whom were housewives in Sebis. At that time the three 'Ks' applied to women, meaning Küche, Kirche, Kinder - kitchen, church and children. Sarolta married a Mr. Haas, who was a driver, and they had two children: Bandi, a trader, and Caterina, a housewife. Gizella was married to Emanuel Schwartz, the Neolog rabbi from Sebis [5](#). They had a son named Fredi in Jerusalem. He eventually became a clerk.

Reghina got married to Alexandru Steiner, a trader, and they had three children: Iosif, Alexandru and Irina. Alexandru had a daughter, Elena, whom we used to call Bobo. Today, she's a doctor in Israel. Irina married a man by the name of Roger. They left for the USA and eventually had a son, Tibi. He was born around 1926 and became a dentist. Tibi's son came to Romania and studied here, also graduating with a degree in dentistry.

Roza married Bela Marton, a trader. They too had three children: Alexandru, an electrician, Rudolf, a merchant, and Elena, a housewife. Netty got married to Klein, a merchant, and they had a daughter, Maria, who also became a merchant. From a financial point of view Aunt Gizella was the most comfortably off. My cousins and my father worked as her employees.

My father and my mother met each other through mediators. My father was a merchant at the time, and my mother was a cashier in Chisineu Cris. The marriage was arranged because this was the custom among Jews. My parents got married in 1926, and the wedding took place in Sebis at the local synagogue. Shortly thereafter they moved to Beliu because they had found employment there. [Editor's note: Beliu is located in the western part of Romania, some 29 km northeast of Arad.] My mother became a housekeeper, as she was busy raising us at the time, and my father worked as a trader. My brother Toma Nicolae and I were both born in Beliu, where we lived until 1940. I was born on 19th October 1932, my brother on 16th March 1936.

While in Beliu my parents opened a mixed and textile shop. My childhood home was located at a corner opposite the Catholic church. The house was actually owned by a Romanian citizen who worked in the United States, and we rented it from him. We had three rooms: a kitchen, the shop and a very nice yard with flowers. We didn't have a vegetable garden or any animals at home, only flowers. Our carpets were hand-made, manufactured by my mother. We heated with wood, as we had tile stoves in the rooms. We also had two servants, neither one of whom was Jewish. One of them worked in the kitchen, and the other helped take care of us.

My parents had taken over a bankrupt shop from a Jew and made it prosperous. And indeed, the shop went very well. At the beginning Uncle Schwartz vouched for them and enabled them to get a loan. By 1940 they managed to pay back all the debt and buy a house in Arad. At first they had tenants in the house, but later it was nationalized and confiscated by the Antonescu regime [6](#).

The shop did so well, in part, because of my father's work ethic. I remember that in those days peasants would go to the fields at four or five in the morning, and they often knocked on our windows early in the morning in case they needed sugar, bread or cigarettes. My father got up and served them - many times even without getting money for it. Merchants were fighting for clients, and my father's generosity proved to be a useful means of attracting business.

Market day in Beliu was always on Wednesday. On that day all the villagers from the surrounding area came to purchase industrial materials and textiles. People also sold their agricultural products. It was thus on Wednesdays that my parents sold the most, and the shop was always full. We had three apprentices, as there was a lot of work. Beliu was a district center, which explains why so many people came to the city on market days. The district, a subdivision of the county, consisted of ten or fifteen villages. Thus Beliu had its own court and local police force. There was a glass factory in Beliu, two mills and a sawmill. It was a developed village where Romanians, Catholic Hungarians and Jews all lived side by side. Everybody had their own house and a shop where they carried out their activities. Most of the Jews living in Beliu were merchants. A rare exception was a

man called Werner, who collected leather and was a tanner, although there was also a Jewish physician, a Jewish clerk and a Jewish driver.

My parents wore modern clothes, not traditional ones. [Editor's note: this is to say that they wore neither typical Orthodox Jewish clothing nor Hasidic Jewish clothing. The father did not, for instance, have a beard, and the mother didn't wear a wig.] They were interested in politics but weren't members of any party. They did, however, support Israel and purchased a piece of land in Palestine. Zionists had long been wandering around in the village spreading their point of view, and my entire family could see that one certainly couldn't live under the increasingly virulent and anti-Semitic legionary regime [7](#). My father thus realized that a Jewish country was needed. When one particular group of Zionists came to Beliu, they gave him a 'dunavi' in exchange for a sum of money. 'Dunavi' refers to the measurement of land that was bought in Israel.

I remember that we had many books growing up because my mother always read a lot of literature. My parents read newspapers as well – these were in Hungarian. We also had religious books, including a prayer book belonging to my mother. At the end of the prayer book all of our birthdays were written in – my parents, myself, my brother, my grandfather, etc. I don't know what happened to the book, although I imagine it's with my brother.

Most of our relatives, including my father's sisters and their families, lived in Sebis. We kept regular contact with these relatives but spent most holidays and the weekends in Beliu. When the Sabbath started my mother always lit the candles – this was something unalterable. On every Friday evening the candles were lit. It was my father and I, however, who went to the synagogue, as neither my brother nor my mother came along. We went to the synagogue on Friday evening and on Sabbath morning. On holidays a cantor came to assist the rabbi, who didn't have a good voice. I remember one cantor came and slept in our house. He came on Yom Kippur and was a relative of Schwartz. He, like most Orthodox Jews [8](#), was much more of a traditionalist, better in music and more attentive to detail in religious matters. [Editor's note: it is probable that this cantor may have been a Hasid [9](#).]

My parents were Neolog Jews. As such, we observed Neolog customs, not Orthodox ones. We ate pork meat, but not pork fat. Animals were cut in the kosher fashion. When we cut a goose or a chicken, my parents took it to the rabbi, or 'hakham'. [Editor's note: according to Alan Unterman and the "Dictionary of Jewish Traditions", Sephardic Jews often referred to rabbis as the 'hakham' – meaning wise in Hebrew. According to Dr. Slomo Leibovici-Lais, the President of the World Cultural Association of Jews from Romania, the term 'hakham' in Romania refers to the 'shochet', a book supported by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Biroul pentru Comunitati din Agentia Evreiasca – the Office for the Communities of the Jewish Agency Liscatha Kehiot.] I remember that for the Sabbath my mother often prepared goose liver, something I liked a lot. The chest and the legs were smoked and preserved over the winter, and the fat and the liver were cooked fresh. Liver was a very delicious and traditional meal. We rarely had fish then, although occasionally we ate stuffed fish.

We weren't religious. We did observe holidays, but that was the extent of our religious fervor. We didn't observe Seder at all, although I went to Sebis a few times to visit my uncle Schwartz, who was a rabbi, as he always observed it. I was a child, maybe four or five years old, when I experienced my first Seder. My uncle and his family were well off – wealthier than we were – and I

remember being amazed that their cutlery was placed on supports made of silver. In our home the cutlery was placed on the right or on the left, but I had never seen supports like that. I also remember that I learned the song 'Eliahu HaNavi' from my uncle. [Editor's note: the Havdalah ceremony, the service which marks the end of Sabbath, is often concluded by singing traditional songs like 'Shavua Tov' – Good Week! – and Eliahu HaNavi, whose refrain is 'Elijah the Prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah the Gileadite.']

My parents shared in Jewish traditions by supporting the community. In Beliu the Jewish community consisted of thirty families. These families went to the synagogue every week. We also had a local rabbi, and at the age of six I was sent to him in order to learn the alef-beys. At the time of our forced evacuation I was only seven or eight years old, so the rabbi taught me for only a little over the year. I eventually had my bar mitzvah in Arad.

Our local rabbi was called Kaufman. He conducted all the services, and he also taught children the alef-beys and the prayers. We started learning from him at the age of six. I remember he liked garlic, and he always smelled like it. I also remember that he had a son who was studying in Budapest who eventually became a notorious character. His legal predicaments appeared in the press during 1936 and 1937.

The story of Kaufman's son is unfortunate. The young man had a degree in engineering, and, due to certain circumstances, he became involved with the daughter of Admiral Horthy [10](#). The leader's family was in Budapest when their car broke down in the middle of the city. By chance Kaufman's son was at the scene. As he was a skilled engineer, he repaired the automobile and thus inadvertently began a romance with Horthy's daughter. The main impediment was that the boy was Jewish, and he thus couldn't become part of the state leader's social circle. I think both out of love and out of the wish to become somebody important, Kaufman's son changed his name from Kaufman to Kenyeres. That's how he started to have a new life. Horthy eventually made him a deputy in a rightist nationalist party. In order to deny or further hide his origins, Kaufman's son started to propose anti-Semitic laws within the Hungarian parliament. The opposition party initiated an investigation and soon discovered that Kenyeres was Jewish and that his father was a rabbi.

I remember that the whole affair caused quite a stir, and some well-dressed people came to Beliu to take the rabbi to Budapest and expose Kenyeres. They managed to fool the rabbi and brought him by car to Budapest. I seem to remember that they went by car to Arad, and from there they took the train. When they arrived to Budapest they were met at the train station by a lot of reporters and journalists, who peppered the rabbi with questions.

Back then, just as it is today, the last word regarding such issues lay with the state leader, who had absolute power. In order to clarify the issue, Horthy brought the rabbi and his son together, face-to-face. When the rabbi came home, he told me with tears in his eyes that he had had to declare that Kenyeres wasn't his son. I don't know anymore what happened after that, but I do know that the boy sent a lot of money to his father, both before and after this incident. Before being taken away with us during the evacuation, I remember the rabbi dug some holes in the yard of the synagogue and buried several kilograms of gold. It is very interesting that, on one hand, Kenyeres denied his father, while on the other hand he clearly helped him a lot financially. I must tell you that the rabbi did not survive the war, as he was already quite old at the time.

[Editor's note: The story of Kenyeres contains some real facts, but it is essentially a legend. In a letter from Istvan Bibo to Gyula Borbandi – Istvan Bibo: Valogatott muvek, III. Magveto, Budapest – one of the notes states that during the 1935 Parliamentary elections a swindler politician called Miklos Kenyeres was nominated as a result of pressure from the local administration in Talpan in Szabolcs-Szatmar County and subsequently elected by fraud. The election court was forced to deprive Kenyeres of his mandate because of various protests against him. Peter Sipos, in “Orsegvaltas szavazocedulakkal”, or “Guard Change by Ballots”, also mentions that Kenyeres claimed to be a Lutheran engineer, though in fact he was neither Lutheran nor an engineer. His original name was Jakab Mozes Kahan, the son of the rabbi of Beliu. It is worth mentioning that Horthy's daughter Paula would have been alive at this time, as she did not die until 1940.]

Growing up

When I was a child, my favorite holiday was Purim. In general I liked all the holidays however, as I could meet with my friends and it got us one more day without school. I attended the state kindergarten with other children, but I didn't manage to finish the first primary grade in Beliu because I was kicked out of school. [Editor's note: Mr. Kohn started school in the fall of 1939, so he would have finished the first grade in the spring of 1940. It is very probable that the family was evacuated from Beliu to Beius during this period, which would explain why he couldn't finish the first grade in Beliu. From October 1940 onwards it was officially forbidden for Jews to go to public schools. The public was, however, allowed to establish Jewish elementary and middle schools. It may have been that in some places the discrimination of the Jews had started even earlier at the behest of local politicians.]

My mother tongues growing up were Romanian and Hungarian, the two native languages of the part of Transylvania [11](#) that had been under Hungarian rule. [Editor's note: Mr. Kohn refers to the fact that before 1920 Transylvania was part of Austria-Hungary.] At home we spoke both Romanian and Hungarian, although I also speak German and some French.

Before 1940 an anti-Semitic trend was already in existence in Romania and Hungary, with its center in Nazi Germany. After Hitler came to power, the anti-Semitic movement became stronger both in Hungary and Romania. One could feel the oppression and discrimination that all the Jews in neighboring countries were experiencing. In Romania anti-Semitic papers were published that imitated those issued in Germany. Even a paper edited by the German Embassy was published.

I sensed the rise of anti-Semitism throughout my childhood. When we went to bathe, for example, all the children would stare at me because I was circumcised. I was different from those of my age, and children had learned all kind of things at home that gave them an aversion to Jews. Walking through the village we were sometimes told, 'Hey Yid, go to Palestine!' Everything only got worse when the legionaries came in the 1930s [12](#). In Beliu, a lawyer and the priest from a neighboring village were the leaders of the local legionary grouping. From 1938 onwards there was an anti-Jewish atmosphere throughout the area, and many Jews realized that it wouldn't be good for Jews.

I recall from the time of my childhood that a group of legionaries once entered our shop in Beliu and said, 'It's over for you, Yid! You have stolen our wealth, and what you own doesn't belong to you! And you have to give it back!' The presence of the legionaries probably had something to do with one of our apprentices. None of our apprentices were Jewish, but they took meals with us and were like a part of the family. My father presided over acquisition and selling, but it was my mother

who was responsible for the supervision of the apprentices. She discovered that one of the apprentices was stealing and told him, 'Listen Iosif, I kindly ask you to be honest. Be honest and don't pilfer anymore.' This probably upset him, and he soon became a legionary and started causing troubles for us. His name was Negui Iosif.

The whole situation with the legionaries was something of a nightmare. They came and brought us to the cemetery. They probably wanted to kill us. My parents were frightened, and the legionaries threatened to take the shop. They kept us in a state of terror in the cemetery for over an hour. At one point a car came, as the Jewish cemetery was along the road to Beliu. The legionaries weren't happy about seeing the lights, and so they let us go. We came home, but I remember that from that moment we didn't sleep alone. A woman or a man from the village would stay with us because my parents were overcome with fear.

All of this took a great toll on me, as did reports from the rest of Europe. We would often listen to the news before Jews had their radios confiscated. [Editor's note: After a certain point Jews were not allowed to have a radio in their own house, one of many humiliations endured by the Jews in Romania. Jewish physicians, for example, could only continue their praxis with Jewish patients. Jews were also obliged to surrender clothes to the authorities for the reason that the Romanian army and the rest of society needed them. Jewish properties, businesses, factories, land and farms were all confiscated. And although these were governmental decisions, they were not totally legal. Usually the orders were followed on the basis of verbal commands given by the legionary leaders. With the advent of the Antonescu regime all of these decisions became official and continued during 1941 and 1942. Source: Victor Neuman, "Evreii din Banat și Transilvania de Sud în anii celui de-al doilea război mondial," or "Jews from Banat and South Transylvania During the Years of the Second World War," in "România și Transnistria: Problema Holocaustului," Curtea Veche Publishing, 2004, Bucharest, p.152.] Every time they transmitted a discourse of Hitler it was a catastrophe, an event that saddened me and threw my family into despair. This was a period of great anxiety for the entire family, but particularly for my little brother, who was only some five years old at the time of our evacuation. He kept on having nightmares. When we were evacuated, he shouted, 'I want my little bed, my little bed, my little bed. Why did you take me out of my little bed?' It was terrible.

My parents' material situation was good until 1940, and my father didn't have any legal problems. He had non-Jewish friends who helped him and didn't let him down. When the possibility arose that our shop might be taken away from us, my father gave the merchandise and the textiles from the shop to friends for safekeeping. This was our great luck. In 1940, when the war started and we were evacuated, Jews were forbidden from working or doing anything of the sort. Thankfully, we were able to live off of these hidden goods, as I will explain later. We were on very good terms with many inhabitants of our village, and many regretted seeing the Jews leave.

During the war

In 1940, once the anti-Jewish laws [13](#) were introduced, Jews weren't allowed to own land anymore. The authorities took everything from my grandfather, and he too was evacuated. According to the law regarding the evacuation procedures, everybody was sent to their county town. My grandfather lived in Sinteia Mare, which was in Arad County, so he, together with my mother's brother and sister, was sent to Arad. I don't know how my grandfather got there, although he probably took the train. He lived on very moderate means in Arad. He was given some support from the community,

and later my mother helped him as well.

The whole evacuation process was more of a forced resettlement, even if it was called ‘the evacuation of Jews from the rural environment.’ The authorities didn’t actually care about where people lived. Jews were gathered and registered in the registry of the Jewish community of the town or village where they were evacuated from. If you were very poor, the community supported you if it could.

In 1940 we were evacuated as well. A gendarme came and told us that according to the order of Marshal Antonescu [14](#), the leader of the state, we only had the right to take 20 or 30 kilograms of belongings with us. They gathered us and took us by cart to the forced residence. We were taken to Beius, as the Jews of Beliu belonged to Bihor County. Between 1940 and 1944 we lived in Beius, Tinca and Ginta at different periods. [Editor’s note: Tinca is located some 60 km northeast of Arad, while Ginta is similarly located and only around 55km northeast of Arad.]

First we had the forced residence in Beius, where all the Jews from Bihor County were taken. I remember that the route getting there was quite complicated. First we had to go to Santana, and from there to Ciumeghiu, which, after Transylvania’s annexation in 1940 [15](#), became a border village. [Editor’s note: Santana is a little over 20 km northeast of Arad. Ciumeghiu is approximately 50 km northeast of Arad.] Had the original borders been in place we would have been evacuated to Oradea, but instead we went to Beius. [Editor’s note: Beius is situated 64 km northeast of Beliu, yet the route described by Mr. Kohn would imply a detour to the southwest towards Santana, then to the north towards Ciumeghiu, and finally to the east and Beliu. This distance would total 94 km. It should be added that Oradea is located in extreme northwest of Romania, some 600 km from Bucharest.] We traveled some 100 kilometers by cart in mud, as the roads were not asphalted.

The cart went to the courtyard of the synagogue in Beius, where we found ourselves amongst all the Jews of the entire county. Upon arrival we had to find our way through town all alone. And so my parent walked the streets of Beius to find a place to rent. At the beginning we stayed with a Jewish family, and after a while we found another place. Eventually a prefect complained that prices would go too high if Jews were brought in, and the authorities said they would find us a different location.

A special system was applied to Jews within the resettled areas. Everything was carried out in accordance with the government’s representative, the prefect. How did Jews find out about the decrees? There was a registry kept by the communities, which were subordinated to the authorities, which informed Jews of the various decrees. Within the framework of the state authorities there was also a representative who was responsible for Jewish issues.

From Beius they took us to Tinca, where the same story reoccurred. We all had to find a host, and then the local authorities accused us of raising prices. After that they moved us to Ginta, where we lived until the war ended in 1944. Grandfather Schillinger joined us in Ginta. I have a photo taken in Ginta in 1941. One specific memory I have of this period is of being assembled in the yard of the gendarmerie because of an unexpected census. I remember them calling us – the gendarme was shouting out the names of Jews – and we had to present ourselves with our families. We worried about whether they would ever let us go home.

My father was better off, so my grandfather came to join us in Ginta in 1941. He had to be provided for due to his advanced age, and my mother's sister and brother didn't have the means to take care of him. My grandfather was very deeply affected by the fact that his land was taken and that he no longer had anything to live on. Eventually he went mad. He would leave home and say all kinds of dangerous things about the leadership on the street. He died in Ginta in 1942.

Until 1944 my parents lived on their savings. My father had worked very hard after he got married, and he had saved a fortune big enough not to feel the want of anything. He even had bought a house in Arad, and he had his shop full of goods. When we were evacuated, as I already mentioned, we gave many of the goods to our loyal neighbors. Some of them gave these goods back to us later on, and the value of the merchandise increased dramatically during the course of the war. Indeed, after the war started in 1941 one couldn't buy anything, not even shoes. Textiles were out of stock, and no one was delivering cotton anymore. My father began selling some goods under the counter, and that's what we lived on. Meanwhile, those that had their fortunes in cash grew poor as the money depreciated in value. 100 lei were good for nothing, and banknotes of millions and tens of millions were issued.

During the Holocaust my father also did work service in Varciorog. [Editor's note: Varciorog is located some 44 km north of Beius.] He managed to come home for visits through bribery. If you gave something to the chief of the work department, for example, it was widely known that he would let you go home for a few days. In Varciorog my father worked at excavation sites. What he did I do not know - I imagine he was constructing fortifications to impede the Russians or something of that nature. In 1942 he was sent to do work service in Tinca, where they manufactured cement and concrete tiles.

During the evacuation they established a school for Jewish children. There was a schoolmistress who had also been evacuated, and she taught the children under the community's guidance. This is how I learned until the fourth grade, after which I learned privately. Thank God we were in a decent financial situation, which enabled my parents to hire a private teacher who prepared me for the first year of high school. I started with high school at the age of eleven or twelve, in 1943. I finished the first year of high school - which corresponds now to the 9th grade - at the Jewish Theoretical High School in Timisoara. I only actually went to Timisoara for the exams. During this period my parents lived in Ginta. [Editor's note: there were no "theoretical" high schools at this particular time, so Mr. Kohn is using a modern day expression for the 1940s.]

In Timisoara I stayed with a relative on my father's side of the family. Roza Marton, my father's sister, had a daughter, Elena, married to a man by the name of Bela in Timisoara. They had one child, who was some two years older than me, and whose name I can no longer recall. I do remember that they lived in the Mehala district, where I stayed with them.

After the war

In 1944, after the war had ended, I came to Arad, while my parents returned to Beliu. I stayed with my aunt Rozalia Bercovivi for a while. She was my mother's cousin, and she lived on the street parallel to the one where our house was. Her husband was a physician, but since he didn't have Romanian citizenship he had left for Hungary during the war. He was killed there. I took meals with Aunt Rozalia, but, because she was living in quite harsh conditions along with her son, her mother and her father, I didn't sleep in her home., Instead, her son Pisti and I slept in the house my father

had bought. The house was quite large; it is a nice house even today. It had a garden, three rooms and a kitchen. It was located on Eftimie Murgu Street. In 1940 a police superintendent called Barbat Corolian had moved in. Later he was transferred to Odessa. In 1944 a law was introduced stating that all properties taken by the Antonescu regime in 1940 had to be returned, and we thus got the house back.

At first all the Jews were happy when the Soviet army arrived, as we thought they had saved us from death. This is what we heard from our parents. One day Pisti and I woke up with Russian troops surrounding our house, calling us 'fascists.' They took us away, calling us 'fascists' the whole time. This was after 1944, and my parents lived in Beliu in those days. Pisti and I were taken to the police station, where the Russians put us in a room down in the cellar and refused to even talk to us. Eventually they saw that we weren't fascists, but they were so brutal. At that moment I became completely disenchanted with the Russians. It was not long before we saw them stealing in the night as well. I kept to my conviction that Zionism was the best option for all of us in the Jewish community.

From 1944 until 1945 I attended the Jewish high school in Arad, where I finished the second grade of high school. We had two subjects relating to Judaism in the Jewish high school: religion and Hebrew. The school was located in the city center, next to the present headquarters of the Liberal Party. We were some 23 in my class - quite a lot. Upon graduating we had the right to enroll in a state school, so from the third grade onwards I attended the Moise Nicoara College. In school I always liked chemistry a lot, although my favorite teacher taught Romanian and grammar. Of course I liked the chemistry teacher as well. My least favorite subjects were those relating to accountancy. After graduating from Moise Nicoara I attended the Textile Technical School in Arad.

During school I had both Jewish and non-Jewish friends, although, truth be told, I had more Jewish friends. This was partly due to the fact that I was active in the local Zionist organization in Arad after 1944. I was a member of the Hanoar Hatzioni [13](#) organization, providing me with a group of Jewish friends that I met with after school. In my free time I also went to Hanoar Hatzioni for sports. I played table tennis, and canoed.

In the summer, on the weekends, we often went to Trei Insule - Three Islands - a place along the Mures River around five kilometers from Arad. We went there with Jewish friends for excursions in the hills around Siria [30 km northeast of Arad]. In the mornings we would meet at the Zionist organization's headquarters, and we spent the day singing, playing and just generally having fun. During holidays we also went to ski with Jewish friends. I still have one very good friend from my childhood, but I don't even know if some of the others are still alive. I believe two of them are in the USA, but we are not in contact anymore.

Following school I worked as an unqualified worker in construction for some time, then as a technician at a textile factory. I did my army service in Bucharest - in the air defense - between 1951 and 1954. I liked the military and the outdoors, and I wanted to make a career as an officer. Unfortunately, I couldn't become an officer because of my origins. They told me: 'Mister, you don't have a good background, and you can't become an officer.'

Life was very hard in the army. Indeed, it was miserable. We wore deplorable clothing, with equipment from World War II that had been mended because of the bullets. On top of that the food was awful - we ate only barley water. Sometimes when we were free we bought bread together

with the privates. It was a 'brick' type of bread, 'Stalin's bread,' as they called it. Despite its horrible taste, I often ate two kilos of bread at once.

When we stayed in Beliu my brother was still going to kindergarten. He attended school while I was in the army. At that time I told my brother to make all possible arrangements not to get into the army because I was very attached to him. I even had the right to slap him sometimes, but nobody else in the world had the right to touch him. They didn't dare to anyway because I was such a combative character, and I always looked out for him. So I told him to do whatever possible to go to university, as life in the army wasn't for him. He eventually did graduate from the University of Technology in Timisoara, and he became a good engineer. [Editor's note: Timisoara is the fourth largest city in Romania, located 600 km northeast of Bucharest.] Unfortunately, he couldn't have much of a career because he was not a Communist Party member. And it was obvious that if you didn't join, you couldn't be a successor professional. This was simply reality. A lot of work and low salaries were the norm for non-party members. Exactly the opposite was true for party members.

I still have the merchant license of my father. It is dated 1939, and the text is as follows: 'Kohn, Eugen, born on 10th August 1896 in Sebis village, is authorized to run a mixed grocery on his own account, under the firm name of 'Kohn Eugen,' having its headquarters in Beliu village.'

After they came back to Beliu, my parents once again engaged in commerce. They ultimately ran their shop until 1946/7. They lived with some Jews while in Beliu because they didn't have a house there after the war. As I mentioned before, we had originally lived in a rented house before the war. My father got in touch again with traders from Arad, and he would come to Arad for merchandise. Acquisition was extremely troublesome - he had to come to Arad by train and then carry all the goods to Beliu. As such, he didn't purchase too much merchandise. As it was, he didn't have much money, and besides, the acquisition of goods was also becoming dangerous. I recall that once he had all of his merchandise stolen.

After they got back the house in Arad, my parents also moved there. Later we sold the house. They didn't open a shop in Arad, instead choosing to sell at the local Serbian market. My father had a booth there. He sold textiles again, acquiring the goods from factories or wholesalers. As all this was after 1948, there weren't private shops anymore, and my father instead got regular employment in a textile shop in the town center, opposite to the Red Church. He sold remains - pieces that were left from exports. He was paid according to how much he sold. Eventually my father moved to another textile shop on Andrei Saguna Street. The shop went so well there that people were queuing up. My father knew exactly what to bring, and many people came from the countryside to purchase goods from him. My father retired after his work at this shop.

My mother never had a job. As I have said, she was primarily a housewife. Before 1960, however, while we were living in Arad, my mother did sew bed covers and sold them on the open market. [Editor's note: it is very probable that Mr. Kohn means that his mother was sewing bed covers between 1946 and 1960, given that his parents moved to Arad around 1946-7.] She earned quite a bit because people needed linen right after the war. The money helped her support a cousin from her maternal grandfather's side of the family, a woman who is now married to Iosif Conta. [Editor's note: Iosif Conta was elected freeman of the city of Arad in 1999. His son Vladimir is a well known conductor.]

My mother died in Arad on 12th July 1977, and my father passed away in Arad on 27th December 1982. My brother died on 19th May 2002. My parents are buried in the Jewish cemetery in Arad. Rabbi Neumann came to all three funerals from Timisoara. I paid him to come. I sat shivah for my brother, and also for my father and mother.

When the state of Israel was established, I felt an indescribable joy. Anti-Semites often said Jews were a parasitic nation, incapable of living by themselves and not needing a country to call their own. And even if they had one, so the saying went, Jews wouldn't know their way about because they were nothing more than parasites living on the backs of others. Israel has proven exactly the opposite. It can be taken as a model country. Look at how much they have created from nothing! I must also add that we were always being told in my childhood that we were from Palestine and that we should go to Palestine. I think and I feel it now too that Israel is the land and the root of all Jews. Jewry as a nation has, in my mind, three pillars – one being Israel, the other consisting of the Jews from the United States, and the last consisting of the Jews of the Diaspora.

I didn't leave for Israel because I was unfortunate or perhaps lucky to have tried to enroll in a university in Romania in 1956. I even became famous in the process, as everybody was astonished that I went to the secretariat and said, 'Sir, there is a mistake. I'm not on that list.' I was told I didn't have the right to be on the inscription list because I didn't have a good social background given that my father had been a merchant. In the Nazi era I had suffered because I was a Jew, and now the Communists made me suffer because my father was a merchant. I was told that these were the laws, and I answered that most of the Jews were and always had been merchants and that the policy amounted to discrimination against Jews, just as there had been under the Nazis. The secretary asked me how I could compare socialism to Nazism, and I answered that these were the same and walked out. Shortly thereafter I was arrested, and I got sentenced in 1956 to hard labor on the Danube-Black Sea Canal. I was there for two years, between 1956 and 1958, before they let me free. [Editor's note: the construction of this canal, connecting the Danube with the Black Sea, began in 1949. Many of the workers were political prisoners from Communist prisons. Work ceased in 1955 and restarted only in 1975. The canal was finally completed in 1984.]

When I got back, I wanted to leave for Israel. But when I went to ask for my papers, the authorities told me that I could never leave because I was an enemy of the Communists. They feared that I was going to make anti-communist propaganda abroad. I tried many times to obtain a passport, but I didn't succeed. I intended to flee across the border, but I never did.

At the workplace I also experienced discrimination as a result of my political leanings. I didn't have problems on account of being Jewish, but because I wasn't a party member. My wife too had problems for not being a party member. She was the only engineer who had to work three shifts, for example. I wanted to become a party member because I felt humiliated. I was getting bad, low paid jobs because those who weren't party members were placed where it was worse. In order to become a party member, you had to be taken into the basic organization first and then approved by the County Committee. A party member had to recommend you. Unfortunately, Tibi, whom my mother had helped financially, wrote that my mother was a speculator who was engaged in trade. As a result, the County Committee said I couldn't be a member because I didn't fit in. I tried to obtain membership again in 1958, after my spell in prison, but then they said I didn't have the proper moral qualities.

My wife, Emilia, was born in Ionesti, in Valcea County, on 16th August 1941. [Editor's note: Ionesti is located in central Romania, north of Bucharest.] She is Romanian, not Jewish. She studied at the Textile Faculty in Iasi, and she is now an engineer. [Editor's note: Iasi is the second largest city in Romania, after Bucharest, and was briefly the capital of Romania during World War I. It is located in the northeast part of the country, some 433 km from Bucharest.] I met her in the factory, as she had been placed in Arad after graduation. We got married on 12th August 1971. We have never celebrated any of the Christian holidays within the family, but we have always observed all of the Jewish traditions, even though my wife isn't Jewish. As I was already 40 at the time of our marriage, I found it difficult to change my habits and wished to continue celebrating the Jewish holidays.

Our son, Emil Dan, was born on 28th December 1971 in Arad. He took part in Talmud lessons, and in 1994 he left for Israel. He now lives in Tel Aviv. He graduated from the Technion University, the Israel Institute of Technology, and subsequently took postgraduate courses in Haifa. He works as a software developer.

In 1989, during the revolution [17](#), I was actually on the barricades here in Arad. In fact, I helped disarm a troop of Securitate [18](#) men who were shooting about in the streets. I was with a man called C. P. and one called G. I felt such a strong hate for the Securitate men that I broke down the door to their place of residence and walked right in. Until that moment I didn't feel any fear because I was very impetuous. When I got there, face to face with them, and I saw them armed with pistols, I started to get anxious. I remember precisely that there were various kinds of license plates on a stand as well as telephones and some boxes with munitions and field beds strewn across the room. There were four of them, all armed. When they told us they stood by the revolution, I asked them why they were shooting. I suggested they call Voicila, who was in the committee of the local Council. They called him, and an army car soon came and took them away. I remember that there was a sergeant in the car, and I suspected that something wasn't quite right. I'm afraid to say that this event, in many respects, was a microcosm for the revolution. The whole thing was a spectacle. The revolutionaries capitalized on the public's hatred and distrust of the Communists, but it was actually the Communists themselves who were orchestrating the whole thing! [Editor's note: Mr. Kohn is referring to the theory amongst some political scientists that Communist politicians provoked the events of 1989 in order to shift Romania to the capitalist system.]

I wouldn't want to praise myself, but I worked a lot in the years prior to the revolution. I worked very long shifts during the evening and during the day. What's more, it was very hard in the department where I worked. People weren't competent at all, and those in the Party weren't interested in the work either. When something got misadjusted or broke down, they would come for me at two or three o'clock in the morning to bring me to the factory and set things right. So I worked a lot. And I got less money than those who didn't do anything, causing me much frustration.

1989 brought a change., After I retired from the factory, I bought myself a print shop and established a cotton wool factory. I was very successful initially because I was the only one to do something like this in Romania. The customers literally queued up at my store, although eventually I had some competition after a similar place opened in Constanta. [Editor's note: Constanta is Romania's largest port, located approximately 173 km east of Bucharest on the Black Sea.]

At present, though I am officially retired, I have a lot of occupations. I started to work again, and I am currently operating as the Romanian representative of a firm called Baltic Wood. I gather information regarding the purchase of wood for their factory in Poland. For this purpose I travel a lot all across the country as well as internationally, to places like Moldova [19](#) and Serbia.

Chess is a passion for me. I am also somewhat involved in community life because I want Judaism to have continuity. I am strongly convinced that Bolsheviks are part of a mafia organization that does no good for humanity. By its very definition it renders humanity rootless through atheism, and I would like to see the Jewish communities get rid of all communist habits. That's why I have gotten involved.

Concerning religious life, I do believe in God. This is somewhat of a problem for me, since I believe in Spinoza's God [20](#). I want to know whom I believe in. Some things appear to me to be outdated, but in my soul I have a strong faith in God.

Glossary

[1](#) KuK (Kaiserlich und Koeniglich) army

The name 'Imperial and Royal' was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system. Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name 'Imperial and Royal'.

[2](#) Franz Joseph I Habsburg (1830-1916)

Emperor of Austria from 1848, king of Hungary from 1867. In 1848 he suppressed a revolution in Austria (the 'Springtime of the Peoples'), whereupon he abolished the constitution and political concessions. His foreign policy defeats - the loss of Italy in 1859, loss of influences in the German lands, separatism in Hungary, defeat in war against the Prussians in 1866 - and the dire condition of the state finances convinced him that reforms were vital. In 1867 the country was reformed as a federation of two states: the Austrian empire and the Hungarian kingdom, united by a personal union in the person of Franz Joseph. A constitutional parliamentary system was also adopted, which guaranteed the various countries within the state (including Galicia, an area now largely in southern Poland) a considerable measure of internal autonomy. In the area of foreign policy, Franz Joseph united Austria-Hungary with Germany by a treaty signed in 1879, which became the basis for the Triple Alliance. The conflict in Bosnia Hertsegovina was the spark that ignited World War I. Subsequent generations remembered the second part of Franz Joseph's rule as a period of stabilization and prosperity.

[3](#) Kun, Bela (1886-1939)

Hungarian communist politician of Jewish origin. He became a member of the Social Democratic Party in 1902 as a secondary school student, after which he worked as a journalist. He was drafted in 1914 and two years later fell into Russian captivity. In 1917 he joined the Bolshevik Party in the prison camp of Tomsk and after his release he was acquainted with the communist leaders (Lenin,

Buharin) of Russia. In November 1918 together with Ernoe Por, Tibor Szamuely and others, he formed the Hungarian branch of the Bolshevik Party. After returning to Hungary he organized the statutory meeting of the HCP. When Count Karolyi resigned in March 1919, he headed the new Hungarian Soviet Republic, the world's second communist government. After the regime collapsed he fled to Vienna and then Russia. In 1921 he became a leader of the Comintern. In 1936 he was removed from his post as a result of a show trial, then arrested and later probably executed, though the circumstances and the exact date of his death remain unclear.

4 Incursion of the Romanian Army into Hungary

By April 1919, the Romanian Army advanced to the Tisza River, well beyond the demarcation lines specified in the armistice treaties. The Hungarian Soviet Republic's Red Army tried to resist, but stood no chance. The Romanian army continued with the invasion and by August occupied the capital as well as territories to the North of the Tisza, even reaching Transdanubian areas. They immediately started transporting Hungarian crops, livestock and machine equipment to Romania. The requisition of gold treasures of the Hungarian National Museum was stopped by the American member of the allied military mission. The Romanian Army helped Istvan Friedrich's government to gain power, but it wasn't regarded as legitimate by the Western powers. The Romanian occupation was not favorable for the Entente either. The Romanian army withdrew as a result of diplomatic efforts, but Hungarian territories on the E of the Tisza remained under occupation until April 1920.

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 to (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions. The third group, the sop-called Status Quo Ante advocated that the Jewish community was maintained the same as before the 1868/69 Congress.

6 Antonescian period (September 1940- August 1944)

The Romanian King Carol II appointed Ion Antonescu (chief of the general staff of the Romanian Army, Minister of War between 1937 and 1938) prime minister with full power under the pressure of the Germans after the Second Vienna Dictate. At first Antonescu formed a coalition with the Legionary leaders, but after their attempted coup (in January 1941) he introduced a military dictatorship. He joined the Triple Alliance, and helped Germany in its fight against the Soviet Union. In order to gain new territories (Transylvania, Bessarabia), he increased to the utmost the Romanian war-efforts and retook Bessarabia through a lot of sacrifices in 1941-1942. At the same time the notorious Romanian anti-Semitic pogroms are linked to his name and so are the deportations - this topic has been a taboo in Romanian historiography up to now. Antonescu was arrested on the orders of the king on 23rd August 1944 (when Romania capitulated) and sent to prison in the USSR where he remained until 1946. He was sentenced to death for his crimes as a war criminal and was shot in the same year.

7 Legionary Movement (also known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael)

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

8 Orthodox communities

The traditionalist Jewish communities founded their own Orthodox organizations after the Universal Meeting in 1868-1869. They organized their life according to Judaist principles and opposed to assimilative aspirations. The community leaders were the rabbis. The statute of their communities was sanctioned by the king in 1871. In the western part of Hungary the communities of the German and Slovakian immigrants' descendants were formed according to the Western Orthodox principles. At the same time in the East, among the Jews of Galician origins the 'eastern' type of Orthodoxy was formed; there the Hassidism prevailed. In time the Western Orthodoxy also spread over to the eastern part of Hungary. In 1896, there were 294 Orthodox mother-communities and 1,001 subsidiary communities registered all over Hungary, mainly in Transylvania and in the north-eastern part of the country. In 1930, the 136 mother-communities and 300 subsidiary communities made up 30.4 percent of all Hungarian Jews. This number increased to 535 Orthodox communities in 1944, including 242,059 believers (46 percent).

9 Hasid

The follower of the Hasidic movement, a Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word. The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.

10 Horthy, Miklos (1868-1957)

Regent of Hungary from 1920 to 1944. Relying on the conservative plutocrats and the great landowners and Christian middle classes, he maintained a right-wing regime in interwar Hungary. In foreign policy he tried to attain the revision of the Trianon peace treaty - on the basis of which two thirds of Hungary's territory were seceded after WWI - which led to Hungary entering WWII as an ally of Germany and Italy. When the Germans occupied Hungary in March 1944, Horthy was forced to appoint as Prime Minister the former ambassador of Hungary in Berlin, who organized the

deportations of Hungarian Jews. On 15th October 1944 Horthy announced on the radio that he would ask the Allied Powers for truce. The leader of the extreme right-wing fascist Arrow Cross Party, Ferenc Szalasi, supported by the German army, took over power. Horthy was detained in Germany and was later liberated by American troops. He moved to Portugal in 1949 and died there in 1957.

11 Transylvania

Geographical and historical region belonging to Hungary until 1918-19, then ceded to Romania. Its area covers 103,000 sq.km between the Carpathian Mountains and the present-day Hungarian and Serbian borders. It became a Roman province in the 2nd century (AD) terminating the Dacian Kingdom. After the Roman withdrawal it was overrun, between the 3rd and 10th centuries, by the Goths, the Huns, the Gepidae, the Avars and the Slavs. Hungarian tribes first entered the region in the 5th century, but they did not fully control it until 1003, when King Stephen I placed it under jurisdiction of the Hungarian Crown. Later, in the 12th and 13th centuries, Germans, called Saxons (then and now), also arrived while Romanians, called Vlachs or Walachians, were there by that time too, although the exact date of their appearance is disputed. As a result of the Turkish conquest, Hungary was divided into 3 sections: West Hungary, under Habsburg rule, central Hungary, under Turkish rule, and semi-independent Transylvania (as a Principality), where Austrian and Turkish influences competed for supremacy for nearly two centuries. With the defeat of the Turkish Transylvania gradually came under Habsburg rule, and due to the Compromise of 1867 it became an integral part of Hungary again. In line with other huge territorial losses fixed in the Treaty of Trianon (1920), Transylvania was formally ceded to Romania by Hungary. For a short period during WWII it was returned to Hungary but was ceded to Romania once again after the war. Many of the Saxons of Transylvania fled to Germany before the arrival of the Soviet army, and more followed after the fall of the Communist government in 1989. In 1920, the population of Erdély was 5,200,000, of which 3 million were Romanian, 1,400,000 Hungarian (26%), 510,000 German and 180,000 Jewish. In 2002, however, the percentage of Hungarians was only 19.6% and the German and Jewish population decreased to several thousand. Despite the decrease of the Hungarian, German and Jewish element, Transylvania still preserves some of its multiethnic and multi-confessional tradition.

12 Legionary

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

13 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.

14 Antonescu, Ion (1882-1946)

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

15 Second Vienna Dictate

The Romanian and Hungarian governments carried on negotiations about the territorial partition of Transylvania in August 1940. Due to their conflict of interests, the negotiations turned out to be fruitless. In order to avoid violent conflict a German-Italian court of arbitration was set up, following Hitler's directives, which was also accepted by the parties. The verdict was pronounced on 30th August 1940 in Vienna: Hungary got back a territory of 43,000 km² with 2,5 million inhabitants. This territory (Northern Transylvania, Seklerland) was populated mainly by Hungarians (52% according to the Hungarian census and 38% according to the Romanian one) but at the same time more than 1 million Romanians got under the authority of Hungary. Although Romania had 19 days for capitulation, the Hungarian troops entered Transylvania on 5th September. The verdict was disapproved by several Western European countries and the US; the UK considered it a forced dictate and refused to recognize its validity.

16 Hanoar Hatzioni in Romania

The Hanoar Hatzioni movement started in Transylvania as a result of the secession of the Hashomer organization in 1929. They tried to define themselves as a centrist Zionist youth organization, without any political convictions. Their first emigration action was organized in 1934. Five years later (1939) they founded in Palestine their first independent colony called Kfar Glickson.

The Hanoar Hatzioni organizations of Transylvania and of the old Regat (Muntenia and Moldova) formed a common leadership in 1932 in Bucharest called Histadrut Olamith Hanoar Hatzioni. In 1934 the Transylvanian organization consisted of 26 local groups.

17 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.

18 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.

19 Moldova

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

20 Spinoza, Baruch (1632-1677)

Dutch philosopher of Portuguese-Jewish origin. An independent thinker, he declined offers of academic posts and pursued his individual philosophical inquiry instead. He read the mathematical and philosophical works of Descartes but unlike Descartes did not see a separation between God, mind and matter. Ethics, considered Spinoza's major work, was published in 1677.